

*Truman in the White House: The Diary of Eben A. Ayers.* Edited by Robert H. Ferrell. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1991. Pp. 402. Illustrations, index. \$37.50.)

President Harry S Truman began each morning in the Oval Office conferring around his desk with a group of key aides. Unknown to those in attendance, Eben A. Ayers, Truman's assistant press secretary until early December, 1950, kept a diary in which he recorded much of what was discussed. Ayers also recorded conversations within the extended White House, especially those on board the yacht *Williamsburg*, where he joined the president and others on weekend outings. Robert H. Ferrell's edited version is about one-fourth the original length of Ayers's diary.

This volume provides a human portrait of Truman that is familiar to historians. Ayers noted, for example, that Truman once delighted in having made his wife "mad as a wet hen" (p. 340), awarded mock citations to assistants, lectured foreign journalists on how to represent Americans abroad, and moved about the White House as though he were an ordinary employee. This is also the portrait of a world leader, for Ayers recorded Truman's thoughts about weighty matters such as the need for developing a hydrogen bomb. He also noted Truman's candid appraisals of Joseph Stalin, Ernest Bevin, and other world leaders.

Ferrell organized the diary into seven chapters, two for the year 1945 and one for each of the years from 1946 through 1950. He introduces each chapter with a background statement sketching the year's key events. He also provides editorial notes which identify unfamiliar persons, elaborate on context, and comment on key issues in historical interpretation. Both the introductions and the editorial notes are directed at the general reader. Indeed, though a fine source for scholars, given Ayers's clear and informative writing style and Ferrell's useful editorial work, this volume belongs in public and undergraduate libraries. The diary provides an entertaining and informative picture of a man whose presidency is crucial to understanding international relations in the last half of the twentieth century.

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*Divorce: An American Tradition.* By Glenda Riley. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991. Pp. xi, 262. Tables, illustrations, bibliography, notes, index. \$24.95.)

Glenda Riley traces the chronological and regional patterns of American divorce. Individual states took different paths: by 1850 Utah was granting consensual divorce; contrastingly South Caro-

lina continued to outlaw divorce for any reason until after World War II. Riley uses a wide range of primary sources, including archival material, statistics, and interviews. She persuasively argues that the "historical conflict between anti-divorce and pro-divorce factions has prevented the development of effective, beneficial divorce laws, procedures, and policies" (p. vii). In an epilogue, she suggests six ways Americans and American institutions could help reform divorce laws and reduce its long-term devastating effects.

While older Americans remember the Nevada divorce mills, few realize that the first divorce capital was Indianapolis. Horace Greeley branded Indiana "the paradise of free lovers" (p. 62). Indiana gained notoriety by a combination of "lenient divorce statutes and sloppy divorce procedures" (p. 62). It all began in 1852 when the Hoosier state abolished legislative divorce, gave courts sole jurisdiction in divorce suits, and provided minimal residence requirements and a "notice by publication" system. Thus a person could file for divorce by posting an announcement in an Indiana newspaper which the spouse might never see. Since Indiana divorce was recognized as binding by all states, "an un-notified spouse, divorced *in absentia*, had no recourse" (p. 64). Under pressure from citizens, the Indiana legislature in 1873 raised the residency requirement and allowed appeals on the matters of alimony, child custody, and property. While Riley chronicled the public perception of the state "full of divorce hunting men and women" (p. 67), she also examined the divorce statistics and concluded it was "difficult to either brand the state a divorce mill or absolve it of guilt" (p. 67). Whatever the reality in Indiana, by the latter part of the nineteenth century, Reno had seized the title of divorce capital.

Not only does *Divorce* provide a solid foundation for understanding the past American record but it also should help readers view divorce as a common phenomenon in America rather than an aberration; a symptom, not a disease. Too often, divorce has led to impoverished female-headed households, to children who become problems in school and are themselves likely to divorce, and to blended families which have difficulty adjusting to the "new" family and overcoming the legacies of the broken marriage. As Riley argued persuasively, "we need to reshape the institution of divorce with an eye to the people involved rather than according to our own attitudes toward divorce" (p. viii).

Riley's pioneering, ambitious, and well-written monograph should become the standard work. Only two other historians have attempted a survey—the first almost a century ago, the other thirty years ago—and neither ranks with Riley's work. *Divorce: An American Tradition* should be added to public libraries as well as college and university collections.

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