

During the 1960s Mitchell became involved with the Illinois State Medical Society's political action activities which brought him into contact with Senator Everett Dirksen. Mitchell alleges to report, verbatim and within quotation marks, the very words Dirksen used in private meetings with him. If Mitchell has had thoughts which might eclipse the euphoria he experienced from being courted by Richard M. Nixon at the Republican National Conventions of 1968 and 1972, he does not share them with his readers.

Mitchell is at his best when writing about medicine. He writes with gusto about the antics of medical students, with sensitivity about his patients, and with humility about his own limitations and accomplishments.

People interested in the practice of medicine in rural America should read this book. *Dr. George* would be more useful to researchers if it had a more thorough index. For example, only two diseases (influenza and poliomyelitis) are indexed, but sections on many more appear in the text. The Department of Medical Humanities at Southern Illinois University School of Medicine in Springfield is to be commended for bringing out this volume.

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Choosing Truman: The Democratic Convention of 1944. By Robert H. Ferrell. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1994. Pp. xiii, 137. Notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95.)

One of the most important nominating conventions in the history of the Democratic party occurred in 1944. The party dumped a sitting vice-president who wanted very much to be renominated, did so with the acquiescence of the incumbent president, and changed the direction of American history. Robert H. Ferrell, professor emeritus at Indiana University and noted Truman scholar, has provided the most extensive account to date of that remarkable episode.

Ferrell's major thesis is implicit in his title: Senator Harry S. Truman did not back into the nomination. He was chosen—not simply by party leaders but by President Franklin D. Roosevelt himself, after the unwell FDR belatedly turned his attention to the vice-presidential problem. A subsidiary thesis is that Truman was less passive than he later protested, quietly did what little he could to maneuver for the nomination, and knew that it would likely take him to the presidency.

Ferrell writes "court history" of a type that would have been recognized by chroniclers of the doings and intrigues of the power-

ful at least since Machiavelli and Shakespeare. A terminally stricken king (FDR) is surrounded by powerful retainers (party officials, political bosses), and eager aspirants to his throne. Among the latter are a crown prince who has fallen out of favor (Vice-President Henry A. Wallace), ambitious dukes (Senators Truman and Alben Barkley, Speaker Sam Rayburn), and assorted lords of the kingdom (Mobilization Director James F. Byrnes, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas). From time to time, a gleam of light flashes from a stiletto; conspirators plot their courses and maneuver indirectly; the old ruler encourages the most devious of the ambitious, keeps his counsel until the last moment, then lays his hands on the most worthy aspirant.

Whether set in Rome in 44 B.C. or in the United States in 1944, this sort of story is filled with human interest and possesses overtones of tragedy. It also poses legitimate scholarly questions. No one has researched this particular problem as intensively as Ferrell. Still, no scholar will ever be certain about what was going through Roosevelt's mind, or Truman's, because neither left the necessary documentation. Nor will we ever know definitively whether a key letter from Roosevelt to Robert Hannegan was altered to place Truman's name ahead of Douglas's. Other arcane details appear equally irretrievable.

Broader questions go unasked. One suspects that in the end Truman became the vice-presidential nominee less because of the intrigues of public men than because his political profile met the needs of his party and the nation. One wishes Ferrell had more to say about this possibility.

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History from the Heart: Quilt Paths Across Illinois. By E. Duane Elbert and Rachel Kamm Elbert. (Nashville, Tenn.: Rutledge Hill Press, 1993. Pp. xii, 242. Illustrations, map, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95.)

Over the last decade a series of books associated with state quilt research projects have appeared. Taken as a group, these books detail the varied quilts that have found their way into attics, onto beds, onto walls, and into museums. They also explore the role quilts have played in the lives of women. In so doing, these books have showcased the ways in which quilts represent historical documents. *History from the Heart* falls squarely within this tradition.

According to E. Duane Elbert and Rachel Kamm Elbert, "quilts are history; they are the quiet, personal statements of our nation's unsung heroines and heroes" (p. 13). Drawing upon their knowledge of Illinois history, the information gained from numerous quilt registration days, and the published work of other quilt researchers,