

historiography of consumerism is her description of a middle ground between ideas of children as either victims of marketing and media or totally autonomous purchasers. Rather than locating power entirely in the hands of business, media, parents, or children, Jacobson's history emphasizes the complex interactions among these groups. This analysis

contributes to our historical understanding of both the child consumer and American consumerism more broadly.

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### *Presidential Leadership*

*From Woodrow Wilson to Harry S. Truman*

By Robert H. Ferrell

(Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006. Pp. viii, 168. Illustrations, notes, sources. \$29.95.)

### *Harry S. Truman and the Cold War Revisionists*

By Robert H. Ferrell

(Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006. Pp. ix, 142. Photographs, notes, sources, index. \$24.95.)

Robert H. Ferrell's two new books explore topics that he has studied for decades: the qualities that distinguish the American presidency in general and the career and reputation of Harry S. Truman in particular. I have had the pleasure and honor of knowing Ferrell for nearly 20 years, ever since I took his diplomatic history course at Indiana University in the spring of 1987. I remember him saying then that people would eventually come around to his view of Truman as one of the top two presidents (the other being Lincoln) in U.S. history. To the extent that they have, that shift in reputation may owe much to Ferrell's own prolific writings on the man: writing done, as I later learned,

through a diligent regimen that included placing a towel under the door of his seventh-floor Ballantine Hall office each morning so that no one could see that he was there working.

Ferrell's latest two books are of interest to anyone who has followed his work over the years. *Presidential Leadership* includes well-written essays on Woodrow Wilson, Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge, and Harry S. Truman, as well as an interview between Ferrell and historian John A. Garraty on the subject of American foreign affairs from 1919-1945. Ferrell shows that Wilson and his John Hopkins protégé, Secretary of War Newton A. Baker, poorly man-

aged the war effort. For instance, they thoroughly botched efforts to manufacture black powder by mishandling relations with the DuPont Company. Wilson was ill-fitted for the role of commander-in-chief, the author maintains, since he—to put it in the parlance of young Bill Clinton—loathed the military. Regarding Harding, Ferrell sees an outright conspiracy—if that is not too strong a word—to destroy the late president's reputation. Nan Britton's claim that Harding had fathered her son, another author's claim (later repudiated) that Harding was poisoned, and the scandals, which Ferrell does not see as particularly weighty, all worked to degrade people's estimation of the twenty-ninth president. Ferrell also looks at the various “debunkers” of Harding including the Sage of Baltimore, H. L. Mencken. Coolidge, the legendarily terse Vermonter, was an uptight man who suppressed his anger in public, only to blow up in private with his family. Despite these unattractive personal qualities, Ferrell writes, the White House during the Coolidge era was a pleasant place to visit.

The Garraty interview is a *tour d'horizon* of American foreign policy from 1919 to 1945 that covers the League of Nations, interwar isolationism, the Stimson Doctrine, Roosevelt's intentions vis-à-vis the Japanese prior to Pearl Harbor, and new left revisionism, among other topics. The final essay deals with Ferrell's favorite subject—and favorite

president—Truman. Ferrell touts the thirty-third president for transforming an isolationist country that sporadically intervened in European affairs into a nation perpetually engaged with the world.

In *Harry Truman and the Cold War Revisionists*, Ferrell turns explicitly to cold war historiography. Ferrell has written about the revisionists before: his essay in Richard Kirkendall's *The Truman Period as a Research Field: A Reappraisal* (1972) effectively demolished the revisionists as a group. A major culprit now, as was then, is Gar Alperovitz, the historian who concluded that Truman ordered atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki solely to intimidate the Russians—an accusation Ferrell shows to be baseless. Noting the socialist sentiments that motivated many of the revisionists, he adds that most were in any case too young to have remembered the outbreak of World War II. He points out the contradiction of the revisionists who argue that economic forces made the cold war inevitable but then assert that it might have been avoided had certain voices been heeded. Ferrell takes revisionists to task for their sloppy and sometimes even deceptive methodology, their citation of irrelevant documents, and their mistaken assertion that Truman reversed Franklin Roosevelt's foreign policy toward the Soviets when he assumed office. The author also demonstrates that U.S. armed forces were eviscerated by post-demobiliza-

tion with the consequence that the nation had nothing with which to back up its diplomacy.

A final note to those interested in the Indiana aspects of the books: in his volume on cold war revisionism, Ferrell notes that one of Truman's favorite historians was Hoosier Claude Bowers, the chronicler of Thomas Jefferson and Albert J. Beveridge.

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