how politics worked. Too, Varon is successful in showing that a focus on disunion provides a way to understand how slavery took on the political weight equal to its moral transgressions; “disunion” became both a desire and a doom in the partisan slavery struggle.

Varon’s is a narrative told with liveliness and clarity, though of course some features of antebellum politics emerge as less well-lighted than others. For example, her analysis tends to underplay the intensity and flexibility of Americans’ religious faith as a means for understanding the national crisis. In the same way, race takes a back seat to the institution of slavery, somewhat underplaying many of the darker impulses of white American political power and national expansion. And, strangely, she gives very little attention to the meaning of “Union” (the term is not even indexed) as the good twin of her subject. More attention to Americans’ desire for wholeness, permanence, and harmony, even as a fantasy, might have given an extra edge to this very fine narrative of the great national unraveling.

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**Presidents, Diplomats, and Other Mortals**
Edited by J. Garry Clifford and Theodore A. Wilson


This volume is a collection of essays in honor of Robert H. Ferrell, the distinguished diplomatic historian and biographer of Harry Truman. The essays, composed by Ferrell’s former students and friends, cover a wide range of subjects from Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation to regime change in modern American foreign policy. Some of the essays deal with obscure figures: George Kennan’s uncle and namesake, whose influential travel writing introduced Americans to the mysteries of a Moscow where his nephew would later serve; or Lawrence Dennis, a minor diplomat who played a major role in early twentieth-century relations between the United States and Nicaragua. Other essays focus on minor episodes in major careers: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s brief meeting with King Ibn Saud after the Yalta conference; or Ronald Reagan’s Hollywood experiences with the science fiction stories and scripts that were later alleged to enhance his fascination with missile defense. The essays focused on recent foreign policy developments take a critical view of Clinton-era interventions and the controversial buildup to the war in Iraq.
There is no thesis that holds the essays together; there are no conclusions that sum up the contributions in the collected chapters. Instead, and appropriately, the final two essays provide personal remembrances of Professor Ferrell. Those chapters nicely capture Ferrell’s ability to combine high-quality research with compassionate and effective teaching and mentorship. Any reader of the last two essays will be impressed by a career that could easily stand as an ideal version of a successful American academic life—Mr. Chips with publications.

Doing diplomatic history is not easy. It involves both understanding complicated trends and odd events that occur all around the world and learning to see those trends and events from the peculiar perspectives of the politicians and policymakers who encountered them for the first time. It rests at the nexus of international relations and biography and requires a careful balancing of the personal and the political aspects in controversial stories. Through his scholarship and teaching Robert Ferrell has clearly trained an impressive group of diplomatic historians. This sample of their work confirms that contribution, even if the collected essays do not develop or advance any other theme or thesis.

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May 17, 2004 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the United States Supreme Court’s unanimous decision that racial segregation in public schools violated the Fourteenth Amendment and thus was unconstitutional. To this day, the impact and legacy of this landmark case continues to be analyzed by scholars, national leaders, politicians, and community activists. In With All Deliberate Speed: Implementing Brown v. Board of Education, Brian Daugherity and Charles Bolton bring together a cadre of prominent academicians, mostly historians, from twelve different states, to present a broad assessment of how well the Brown decision was implemented. Each of the twelve authors provides unique perspectives on the importance of African American activism during the 1940s and 1950s, especially the crucial role played by the NAACP; the deep-rooted racism that opposed school integration at every turn; and the importance of various aspects of both the state and federal government.