

1932 Chicago Democratic National Convention, where McNutt, Indiana's "favorite son" candidate for president, delayed joining the FDR bandwagon until late in the proceedings. FDR never forgot this delay and indeed it was, in Kotlowski's view, the main factor that led to McNutt's failure to become FDR's running mate in 1936 (and 1940 too). Instead, FDR sent the vain and ambitious Hoosier to the Philippines where, in a bold move now largely forgotten, he defied America's restrictions on mass immigration into the United States and persuaded the Philippine leaders to open their doors to some 1,300 Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution.

Paul V. McNutt and the Age of FDR fulfills its promise regarding McNutt's life and adds some information regarding the New Deal era in national politics. For those interested in either topic, but especially in the

life of McNutt, this book is essential reading based upon massive research. However, much of McNutt's personal life, his work and study habits, his reading, and the source of many of his strongly held and capably articulated views remain hidden—Kotlowski's McNutt seems at times more robotic than vibrant.

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John Bartlow Martin: A Voice for the Underdog

By Ray E. Boomhower

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015. Pp. 408. Illustrations, notes, index. \$40.00.)

Author of well-executed volumes about such Hoosiers as Civil War general Lew Wallace, combat photographer John A. Bushemi, astronaut Gus Grissom, and congressman Jim Jontz, Ray Boomhower first wrote about John Bartlow Martin in *Robert F. Kennedy and the 1968 Indiana Primary* (2008). This impeccably researched and gracefully written biography traces Martin's career as an award-

winning magazine journalist, adviser to Democratic presidential candidates (for twenty years beginning in 1952 with Adlai E. Stevenson), and diplomatic troubleshooter (during the 1960s to the war-torn Dominican Republic).

Starting in 1919 at age four, Martin spent nineteen formative years in Indianapolis, a place he claimed to have loathed, labeling his Brookside

Avenue neighborhood a “mean street in a mean city.” With his dad, J. W., he observed Ku Klux Klansmen circling the Soldiers and Sailors Monument downtown. Martin’s two younger brothers died, perhaps unnecessarily (mother Laura was a Christian Scientist). Home life fell apart after J. W., a general contractor, suffered reversals during the Great Depression. Even so, Martin received a liberal education at Arsenal Tech and, after initial puerile acts of rebellion (“whoring and drinking,” as he put it), flowered at DePauw as college newspaper editor and columnist, adopting a flippant, condescending, Menckenesque tone. Lampooning the hallowed Indianapolis 500, Martin claimed: “It’s just like a county fair, only the bearded lady and the Streets of Paris and the Ferris wheel are missing.” Following a stint with the *Indianapolis Times* and a failed marriage, Martin embarked on a freelance career and moved to Chicago. “The horizons in Indiana seemed suffocatingly close,” he remembered, “the ceiling in Chicago unlimited” (p. 52). Boomhower concludes, “Martin had finally shaken off the mental shackles imposed by Indianapolis’s Brookside Avenue and had made it to a place ‘where the action was’” (p. 55). All things considered, Martin’s upbringing prepared him well for later success.

Martin returned to Indiana to research articles about crime and social change. Reporting in *Harper’s* on wartime hostility toward Southern white newcomers in Muncie, he repeated a joke about there being only

45 states in the Union. The punch line: “Kentucky and Tennessee have gone to Indiana, and Indiana has gone to hell.” In *Indiana: An Interpretation* (1947), Martin debunked the image of Hoosiers as simple, rustic, neighborly folk. In a section entitled “Voices of Protest,” Martin expressed admiration for visionaries such as Robert Owen, Eugene Debs, and Powers Hapgood, who had fought against ignorance, bigotry, and corporate greed.

Advising Robert F. Kennedy, Martin worried about the 1968 presidential candidate’s chances in Indiana, which he characterized as “redneck country. . . suspicious of foreign entanglements, conservative in fiscal policy, and with a strong overlay of Southern segregationist sentiment” (p. 273). He urged Kennedy to soften his rhetoric; Hoosiers, in his words, desired “change from Vietnam and from riots, but change and calm, not a summons to great adventures” (p. 278). Stress your commitment to enforcing the law, Martin recommended, and don’t write off white ethnic voters in industrial cities such as Gary and Kokomo, many of whom idolized brother John. Kennedy successfully followed the advice.

Crafting a biography of Adlai Stevenson, Martin did not explore his subject’s reputation as a ladies’ man. Similarly, Boomhower’s affection for Martin’s family may account for his silence on certain private matters, including Martin’s heavy smoking, his frequent retreats to Michigan’s remote Upper Peninsula—Martin remains somewhat of an enigma. In 1979 Mar-

tin delineated dilemmas facing biographers. Among them: how to make subjects come alive; what made them tick; and how much personal material to reveal. Boomhower succeeded on the first two counts and exercised discretion regarding the third.

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Mellencamp: American Troubadour

By David Masciotra

(Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015. Pp. 290. Bibliography, index. \$35.00.)

Rock singer John Mellencamp “has never had a permanent address outside Indiana,” notes David Masciotra (p. 247) in wrapping up his 260-page examination of the man and his work. Masciotra attributes Mellencamp’s “no bullshit” (p. 2) approach to life and music to his heartland roots; the author applies the same ethos in this book, beginning with the dedication to his “own ‘no bullshit’ grandfather.”

Mellencamp: American Troubadour is part biography (tying the singer’s songs and thought to his youth in Seymour, Indiana, and identifying Indiana places referenced in Mellencamp’s “heartland rock” lyrics), part musical history, and part social analysis. The author calls it “a case study of humanity” (p. 4) because rock music (as others also note) is “the perfect soundtrack for American culture” (p. 120), and the great rockers—Dylan, Springsteen, Lennon, Mellencamp—are social critics as well as poets and performers. Masciotra

himself is nearly as valuable a social critic as he is a biographer.

The book’s cultural analysis does produce occasional tangents as Masciotra provides a theoretical context or socio-historical model for a Mellencamp song, and this bimodality creates occasional repetitions between the book’s two halves. The first six chapters examine songs, albums, and musical styles, mostly in chronological order and with generous quotation of lyrics. The remaining chapters address big-picture themes: adult life, love, race, politics (especially farm politics), free speech, and American freedom (or what’s left of it). Readers who remember their own youth will appreciate Masciotra/Mellencamp’s celebration of sexuality and Mellencamp’s analysis of time (“All I got here / Is a rear view mirror”). Rural Americans will appreciate Masciotra’s assertion that the destruction of the family farm is just one early example of that urban, littoral “consumer-driven business civilization” (p. 55)