

*Dear Poppa: The World War II Berman Family Letters*, compiled by Ruth Berman and edited by Judy Barrett Litoff. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1997. xxii, 314 pp. Illustrations, genealogy. \$29.95 cloth, \$15.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY TERRENCE J. LINDELL, WARTBURG COLLEGE

In May 1943 Reuben Berman, an Army Air Forces physician, departed for duty in England. His family, which had followed him from assignment to assignment while he was stationed stateside, returned to their home in Minneapolis. Reuben's wife, Isabel, began a voluminous correspondence to keep him in touch with what was happening at home, especially in the lives of their four children, all under ten years of age. As part of her routine, she asked the three older children (the baby of the family being too young to talk) what they wanted to say to their "poppa." As they spoke, she typed their comments. The result is a substantial collection of children's letters that is far more detailed than one would find if the children themselves had done all of the writing.

This work, containing about a third of the surviving correspondence, touches on themes experienced by millions of families. Reuben's letters speak of the conditions he found overseas, his daily life, advice to his children, and his yearning for loved ones. In November 1944 he plaintively asked for home movies because "I want to see what my family looks like. I'm away so long I'm beginning to forget" (224). Isabel's letters describe the children's health and activities, the family's social outings, and household management. However, it is the children's letters—replete with accounts of playmates and paper drives, Hebrew school and music lessons, war toys and longing for their absent father—that make this book a unique and significant addition to the growing literature on the World War II home front.

*F. K. Weyerhaeuser: A Biography*, by Charles E. Twining. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1997. ix, 332 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliographical essay, index. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY ROBERT J. GOUGH, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EAU CLAIRE

Frederick King (F. K.) Weyerhaeuser, grandson of nineteenth-century timber magnate Frederick Weyerhaeuser, was an executive in various family enterprises from 1919 to 1965, eventually heading the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company. He and his wife, Vivian O'Gara Weyerhaeuser, were leaders of civic and social life in St. Paul and encouraged the establishment of what became the Forest History Society. F. K. also

supported conservative political and social causes, such as the Spiritual Mobilization Movement of the 1950s. After the death of his uncle F. E. in 1945, F. K. promoted family identity and cooperation into the fifth generation of Weyerhaeusers. Although one of his first assignments was as a salesman in Iowa, F. K. and the Weyerhaeusers had limited direct impact on twentieth-century Iowa.

Charles Twining, former historian of the Weyerhaeuser Company, provides a clear narrative of F. K.'s life, based closely on the Weyerhaeuser Family and Business Papers at the Minnesota Historical Society. Excellent maps and numerous photographs assist the reader. Scholars will be disappointed by the absence of footnotes, but Twining has deposited annotated copies of the manuscript at two repositories.

Twining wisely does not try to duplicate *Timber and Men*, the comprehensive business history of the Weyerhaeuser interests written in the 1960s with F. K.'s encouragement. He does provide additional details about some of F. K.'s activities, such as his involvement with Allied Building Credits, which financed housing construction during the New Deal. There is surprisingly little, however, on F. K.'s influential role in the Weyerhaeusers' adoption of sustained-yield forestry practices in the 1920s. There may not be much that is new in this biography, but Twining has written a useful book for readers interested in either forest history or the functioning of twentieth-century American elite families.

*The Iowa Precinct Caucuses: The Making of a Media Event*, by Hugh Winebrenner. Second edition. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1998. xiv, 281 pp. References, tables, illustrations, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY NORMAN E. FRY, SOUTHEASTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Hugh Winebrenner's book examines the media's influence on the Iowa precinct caucuses and the campaigns of presidential candidates who start in Iowa. To make his point, Winebrenner relies on an extensive use of tables detailing the results of the precinct caucuses, polls by national polling organizations, the number of days candidates spent in the state, expenditures by candidates' organizations, and the amount of time the major networks spent covering the caucuses.

Winebrenner's assessment of the caucus leads him to the same conclusion he drew in the 1987 edition of this book: the Iowa caucuses are a poor predictor of success in other presidential caucuses or primaries. Yet the caucus remains important as a "mediality," an event controlled by media coverage. Winebrenner attributes the influence of the

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