

Hjalmar Petersen of Minnesota: The Politics of Provincial Independence, by Steven J. Keillor. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1987. xvii, 342 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$14.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY PETER T. HARSTAD, INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

When Steven Keillor wrote this biography, he was a graduate student in history at the University of Minnesota. According to the dust jacket, "He has more than ten years of experience with Minnesota income tax law (first introduced in the legislature by Hjalmar Petersen), including four years on the staff of the state Department of Revenue." In addition to thorough research in documentary and oral history sources, the book shows evidence of the author's residence in Askov, Petersen's hometown, and of Keillor's understanding of the Danish cooperative heritage there.

Askov is located on the Great Northern Railroad between St. Paul and Duluth. Before he was Americanized, the Danish-born Petersen established a newspaper there in 1914, the *Askov American*, and continued his involvement until he died in 1968. "More than a business," according to Keillor, "the *Askov American* had been the beginning of Petersen's political career, the anchor of his political independence, and the forum for his political pronouncements" (254-55). Over the years Petersen favored and opposed policies espoused by politicians at nearly every point on the political spectrum (which in Minnesota takes in vast ideological territory). Not concerned about organizational consistency, in the 1920s Petersen twice ran unsuccessfully for a Republican seat in the Minnesota legislature. He won in 1930 and 1932 as a member of the Farmer-Labor party, and played an influential role in the passage of a controversial income tax law during the depths of the Great Depression. This, in turn, set him up to become lieutenant governor, whereupon Floyd Olson's death made him Minnesota's twenty-third governor (and an appropriate subject for a book-length biography). Petersen tried to be elected governor four times as a Farmer-Labor candidate and a fifth and last time in 1946 as a Republican. He never made it but continued to bounce into (and out of) public life with some degree of dignity into the 1960s.

Petersen had an uncanny way of being on the scene when significant events occurred—fortunate for a newspaperman. He was present in the Milwaukee Auditorium on October 14, 1912, when Theodore Roosevelt arrived with a bullet lodged in his chest, explaining, "It takes more than that to kill a Bull Moose." He was lieutenant governor of Minnesota when Floyd Olson died in office in 1936. He was present in the House gallery the day after Pearl Harbor, when President Roosevelt delivered his war message to Congress. He was

present in San Francisco when the United Nations Conference opened in April 1945. He was present in the White House on a state occasion in 1964 when Luci Baines Johnson danced the Frug and her father tried (unsuccessfully in Petersen's instance) to line up support for his Vietnam policy.

Iowans may be interested in the manner in which a Dane kept alive his optimism for a cooperative commonwealth while being Americanized in Minnesota. Political institutions and ideologies took different forms in Minnesota than in Iowa during the first half of this century. Was this, in part, because of a stronger persistence of ethnicity in Minnesota? Were it not for Keillor's thesis, there would be few compelling reasons for Iowans to read this book. Keillor argues interestingly and convincingly that Petersen played the role of the provincial in politics—one whose independence seldom allowed him to transcend his provinciality.

The Minnesota Historical Society should be congratulated for producing an attractive, readable, durable book on acid-free paper.

One Woman's War: Letters Home from the Women's Army Corps, 1944–1946, by Anne Bosanko Green. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1989. xxiv, 308 pp. Illustrations. \$22.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY NANCY DERR, SOMERSET SCHOOL, WASHINGTON, DC

Despite its title, the interest of *One Woman's War* lies not in any light it sheds on the experience of women in the army in 1944–1946. Rather, it is the particular tale of Anne Bosanko when she was twenty and twenty-one, the years in which she lived in six cities, held two jobs, and dated perhaps a hundred soldiers. She also wrote long candid letters to her parents about twice a week which are collected in this volume. D'Ann Campbell adds a good introductory essay about women in the armed services during World War II.

Bosanko's two-year stint in the Women's Army Corps began at Fort Des Moines in basic training. Only there and at El Paso, where she learned to assist with surgeries, did she focus in her letters on the new vocabularies and routines of military life. After a stay in New Orleans, she moved on to her longest assignment, near Los Angeles, where she complains, "Out here, nobody seems to be normal. . . . they all look half-dead" (158). Nevertheless, perhaps in reaction to her workday, which is filled with amputations and "gore," her social life took off at the end of her first year. We read in subsequent letters throughout two more assignments in New York City and Takoma, Washington, of a long free-wheeling party. Following V-J Day her

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