

In his organization of the book, Kirkendall included many important voices and made many wise choices. For example, he takes the broader mission of historians into consideration and includes lengthy sections on both the publication of historical works and the teaching of history. The book also includes essays about the thousands of historians who do not work in academic history departments and traces how these “public historians” have built a successful subfield.

On the whole, this volume is a must read for practicing historians of the United States. It smartly covers many topics, but would have benefited from greater attention to the rise and fall of the field of mid-western history, out of which the MVHA emerged, and to the field of western history, which now flourishes thanks to the foundational work of the founders of the MVHA.

*American Individualism: How a New Generation of Conservatives Can Save the Republican Party*, by Margaret Hoover. New York: Crown Forum, 2011. 248 pp. Notes. \$24.99 cloth.

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Margaret Hoover, the great-granddaughter of Herbert Hoover, has written a timely book — part history, part political philosophy, and part memoir. For historians, there is substantial detail about Herbert Hoover. For Iowa readers interested in Hoover lore, the book has much to offer. It includes a rich historical vein, although it is not purely historical. The author draws on the work of eminent Hoover scholars, especially in chapter one, which provides a capsule summary of Herbert Hoover’s career. The Iowa-born president’s 1922 treatise, *American Individualism*, provides the inspiration for this new work.

The Quaker president and his great-granddaughter have much in common: a philosophy whose mantra is tolerance, acceptance of a diversity of ideas, moderation, and inclusiveness. Both demonstrate a mixture of idealism, realism, and common sense. Like Herbert and Lou Henry Hoover, Margaret is erudite, sophisticated, cosmopolitan, and a world traveler. She has lived abroad, learned Spanish and Chinese, and is drawn to international interests and cultures. Nonetheless, like her famous relatives, she considers America a singular nation, a land of opportunity. Still, equality of opportunity does not ensure equality of outcome. A centrist Republican, she rejects a rule-or-ruin philosophy and explains that parties that fail to change inevitably are left behind.

Growing up, Margaret was confronted by people who demonized Herbert Hoover; she inherited the weight of history's disapproval. The family bore the scars of the 1932 election for generations. Her eighth-grade textbook blamed the Iowa native for the stock market crash and the nation's worst depression. Margaret's father had to defend himself on school playgrounds in the 1950s; in the 1990s, as a teenager, she realized that the world perceived Hoover as a cartoon villain. The crucible of conflict made her a strong individualist and an activist determined to make a difference. Individuality was the greatest gift Hoover bequeathed to her.

Margaret leads the reader on a guided tour of Republican factions and traces their evolution. She demonstrates an encyclopedic knowledge of the varieties of conservatism and offers a prescription as to how Republicans can rise above their internecine feuding, capture the White House and Congress, and change the direction of the country. Her focus is on the millennial generation, born between the late 1980s and the mid-1990s, the largest generation in history, the most technologically savvy, and the most racially diverse; and they are fiscally conservative but socially liberal. The chief purpose of the book is to provide a blueprint to offer them a rationale for choosing the GOP.

The author devotes a chapter to each major issue likely to dominate the 2012 election. Hoover and the millennial generation favor a positive government that is a problem solver rather than dogmatic and does not devolve into an intrusive, leviathan state. The crucial issue — and the potentially winning one for Republicans — is the economy. The national debt will eventually have to be paid; if we do not address the issue, the millennial generation will be stuck with the tab, minus the benefits. Among the generation's priorities are jobs, financial security, and education. Hoover calls for education reform, immigration reform within secure borders, market-based health-care reform, and practical approaches to environmental conservation. She considers such issues as gay marriage and abortion rights divisive and urges respect for opposing viewpoints. Inflexibility on such issues, she argues, will polarize the party and provide few real benefits. A moderate feminist, she dismisses the idea of a conspiracy of male oppression and rejects the adoption of a victim mentality. The real frontiers for feminism lie in underdeveloped, authoritarian nations. An environmentalist, she believes that some zealous environmentalists never actually venture outdoors and that climate change is incremental, not imminent. Neither is America the world's greatest polluter.

*American Individualism* is vividly and passionately written, cogently argued, and solidly grounded in research. It is interspersed with poi-

gnant details about the author's life story, intertwined with her family's history. The book is moderate in tone and largely nonjudgmental, although the author minces no words about the threat of Islamic terrorism. She abhors intellectual dishonesty and is dubious about anyone who represents a single-issue constituency or focuses exclusively on a single cause. The GOP, she concludes, should avoid a litmus test and resist placing blame and campaigning on clichés. *American Individualism* eschews polemics and calls for personal and community responsibility. The epistle reminds us as well of the humanitarian, moral, and spiritual dimensions of life that motivated Herbert Hoover.