

BROADSIDE

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NOTES FOR SUMMER READING

For some, the pace of life may slow a bit when summer comes. There may be a relaxing of schedules or at least a change of routines, leaving a small free space that can be filled with reading. A good book is one of the best sources of nourishment for wounded sensibilities, flagging enthusiasms, or a bad case of the let-downs. The newspapers have been offering up pretty dreary fare lately, from Washington to Florida, leading many who hunger after other forms of righteousness to despair of being filled any time soon. The weeks of summer may provide an opportunity to wrap the newspaper in the garbage and take off into some good reading.

Passages is not a recent book, and much has been said about it already. But if you have listened to the comments and noted the reviews but not yet explored it first-hand, it's worth doing. In charting the stages that all adults must muddle through in their fashion, and in positing the notion that these stages are predictable and unavoidable, Gail Sheehy offers us the strangely comforting discovery of our un-uniqueness. In the glow of a shining moment we tend to fancy ourselves as unique beings, but during darker times it is reassuring to find that legions of others have come to the same crunch, faced themselves down, and survived.

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Wry but unacerbic observations informed by a feminist view appear throughout the book. For example: "At some point most women feel required to choose either love and children or work and accomplishment. If a man were presented with such a choice, would there be any husbands?"

Understanding and tolerance lie behind Sheehy's rendering of our mothers: "Some of them, caught unprepared in the momentous sea change wrought by the women's movement, retreated to entrenched positions and made a virtue of defending non-equal rights for women. [But most of them] simply went on as before, cleaning up after the rest of us."

Finally, in describing the passage through the "authenticity crisis" which precedes the second half of life, Sheehy notes that "one of the great rewards of moving through the disassembling period to renewal is coming to approve of oneself ethically and morally and quite independent of other people's standards and agenda." In the final stage of adult development, one learns how to "give a blessing to one's own life."

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In an entirely different vein (hundreds of them, in fact) is Anne Rice's novel, Interview With the Vampire. Besides dispelling several accepted notions about vampires - crosses do them no harm, for instance, and a stake through the heart is received with impunity - the book also enables us to willingly suspend our disbelief in vampires as we progress through the centuries with the trio of characters, Louis, Lestat, and Claudia. In answer to the question of where have all the vampires gone, since they do, after all, live forever, Anne Rice suggests an arresting idea. The burden of eternal life becomes too much for them; they weary of adapting their tastes and interests to the changing world of each succeeding age. A cosmic ennui sets in, and they allow themselves to wander forth in the daylight and wither away.

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Lancelot is Walker Percy's fourth novel. His hero, Louisiana born Lancelot Andrewes Lamar, spends his days "in a state of comfort and abstraction, waiting for the ten o'clock news - though nothing of importance had happened for years." He wakes from sleep, vents his rage on the world of the "New Southerner," who is Billy Graham on Sunday and Richard Nixon the rest of the week." Lancelot decides he will not stand for it any longer; he commits an act of violence, and then casts about "for an appropriate feeling to match the deed."

In form a "recité," Lancelot unfolds as the character tells his story from his cell in the Institute for Aberrant Behavior, where he is confined after his burst of violence. The structure of the book is impressive. Lance's monologue as a vehicle for chronicling past action and the shifts back and forth in time are presented skillfully and unobtrusively. The shape of content in an engrossing book often goes unnoticed until we recollect it; it is one of the pleasures of Lancelot.

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Books last longer, but magazines harbor small treasures too. A recent issue of The New Republic, which consistently offers thoughtful articles on a variety of subjects, contains several gems. One is a hymn of praise by William Saroyan to his favorite bookstore, Eppe's of Paris. He compares his daily visit to the bookstore to his daily visit to the baker for the loaves of fresh, golden crusted bread. Both the loaves and the books, the "daily reading-bread," are taken home unwrapped. Seeing books makes him sing, and he generally sings improvised songs to books as he browses at Eppe's, "taking care that no one is near, for the French tend to consider unpaid unprogrammed singers not really acceptable, civilized, or safe."

J. S. G.

REPRODUCTION AND ITS CONTROL

Won: Texas Representative Von Dohlen's compulsory pregnancy bill passed the House, but Senator Walter Mengden's companion bill did not have such success in the Senate. The Senate version (and, therefore, the entire bill) died in committee, thanks largely to Senator Babe Schwartz. Attorney General John Hill had issued an opinion stating that parts of the bills were probably unconstitutional.

Lost: The U. S. House of Representatives approved the language of the Hyde Amendment (denying federal funds for abortion) to the 1978 HEW-Labor Appropriations bill. This loss is particularly discouraging because Houston Representative Bob Gammage voted to retain the Hyde Amendment. Please write Gammage and let him know that his 200-vote election victory could easily have come from women and men expressing concern on this one issue alone. The people he supported by his vote on the Hyde Amendment sure didn't elect him.



HOUSE OF COFFEE BEANS

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DOES FLORIDA ORANGE JUICE CAUSE BRAIN DAMAGE?

We haven't seen any studies to that effect, but recent events seem to raise the question. Or perhaps it's the combination of Florida orange juice and Florida sunshine. We all know that the good citizens of that state are fair-minded and would not knowingly refuse human rights to anyone - so there must be another explanation for the deplorable rescission of Dade County's anti-discrimination ordinance and the state's repeated refusal to ratify the E.R.A. If you must have orange juice, remember that there are Texas brands and other non-Florida brands that taste better. Also, check your grocery store's produce department. Most have non-Florida produce.

Anita Bryant doesn't want homosexual teachers in her children's schools. We've got news for you, Anita. They are already there. Some of your best friends . . .

Isn't it strange that Bryant is so often referred to as "queen" - beauty "queen," sunshine "queen," etc. Are sex-checks done at beauty contests?

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NO PROGRAM MEETING IN JULY

The program meeting is taking a vacation during the month of July but will be back in its regular place in August.

BUSINESS MEETING

The July business meeting will be on Wednesday, July 13th, at 8:00 P.M., at the home of Jo Stewart, 2207 Bissonnet. Jo's telephone number is 522-2805. All N.O.W. meetings are open to everyone. Join us.

I.W.Y. CONFERENCE

The Texas Women's Meeting, preliminary to National Women's Conference, was held in Austin June 24-26. Workshops were many and varied and produced 122 proposed resolutions. Featured speakers were DeLores Tucker, Pennsylvania's secretary of state, and Liz Carpenter, former press secretary to Lady Bird Johnson.

Some of the resolutions passed were those in favor of ratification of the E.R.A., lesbian rights, fair credit, affirmative action, minority rights, and one urging President Carter to appoint women to the Supreme Court and to federal judgeships.

Fifty-eight delegates were elected to attend the National Women's Conference in Houston Nov. 18-21. Those from the Houston area include Jo Stewart, Nikki Van Hightower, Pokey Anderson, Sharon Macha, Sylvia Garcia, Carolyn Waddell, Penny Brown, Hortense Dixon, and Melva Bechnal. Others from Texas include Barbara Duke (Texas State N.O.W. Chair), Bonnie Lesley, and Representatives Sarah Weddington and Eddie Bernice Johnson.

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broad·side

- 1: a sheet of paper printed on one or both sides and folded
- 2: any strong or comprehensive attack, as by criticism
- 3: the simultaneous discharge of all the guns on one side of a ship



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