

The U. S. S. "Wisconsin": a History of Two Battleships

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inclusive, literal, and figurative, and result from family, friends, home, reading, travel, and education—in short, experience.

Much the midwesterner himself, with roots in Minnesota and the Dakotas—what he more generally renames “Siouxland” in his stories and histories—Manfred singles out his own father, Frank Feikema, for poignant and respectful praise. Manfred’s actual “prime father” passed along the Frisian heritage and manner which shaped much of the substance and style of Manfred the man and Manfred the writer. Other midwesterners who offered significant counsel and camaraderie include Hubert Horatio Humphrey, who could give a rousing political speech or spin a yarn with the boys, and whom Manfred knew and worked with in early Minneapolis days, and Sinclair Lewis, a fellow writer much admired by Manfred (and much admiring of Manfred) as he started to stake out his own special western subjects and style.

Some of the best essays in *Prime Fathers*, however, are not such personal portraits, good as they are; the really powerful statements about influence come when Manfred pours out his heart and soul in “The Artist as the True Child of God,” in “On Being a Western American Author,” and, most revealing of all, in “West of the Mississippi,” an interview raised to the level of the art of spontaneity. Through all of these pieces Manfred stresses his allegiance to the American idiom, to oral and aboriginal traditions, and to manly and courageous identification with locale.

The verdict on Manfred’s own influence, his own role as a “prime father,” is not final. He continues to write and reminisce at a prolific pace. Odds are that he, too, will offer lasting inspiration to writer and reader alike who love maleness (machismo), the West, westering, and their telling.

The U.S.S. “Wisconsin”: A History of Two Battleships, by Richard H. Zeitlin, with an essay on the ships’ silver by Anne Woodhouse. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1988. 56 pp. Illustrations, bibliographical essay. \$7.00 paper.

REVIEWED BY MALCOLM MUIR, JR., UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY, WEST POINT

This relatively short history of two American battleships has much to offer, including a succinct analysis of the lineage of big gun ships and a trenchant look at the development of United States naval policy. The focus of Zeitlin’s work is, of course, on the two battleships named *Wisconsin*. The first entered service in 1900 and set many of the stan-

dards for later ships, such as long range, high freeboard, and turrets with sloping armored faces. In a dramatic demonstration of its capabilities, the *Wisconsin* joined Theodore Roosevelt's famous Great White Fleet on its forty-six-thousand-mile voyage around the world. Zeitlin justifiably devotes even more attention to the second *Wisconsin*. One of the famous "Iowa" class built in World War II, this ship, along with her sisters *Iowa*, *New Jersey*, and *Missouri*, were the fastest, best armed, and most damage-resistant battleships that the United States ever constructed. Having fought in World War II and Korea, the *Wisconsin*, fitted with new missiles and anti-aircraft defenses, recently returned to active duty in the fall of 1988 as one of the most cost-effective measures taken by the Reagan administration to rebuild American naval power.

A few minor factual errors diminish only slightly the high quality of this work. Zeitlin writes clear prose and bases his account on authoritative sources such as naval archival materials and interviews with many of the personnel who manned the battleships. The illustrations, fresh and clearly reproduced, aid the reader immensely in grasping the salient points of a most interesting story.

I Wasn't Like the Cautious Man: The Life of Roy C. Smith as Told to Robert B. King. Introduction by H. Roger Grant. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1987. xiii, 161 pp. Illustrations. \$15.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY ERIC G. PETERSON, DES MOINES, IOWA

Roy C. Smith was born in 1896. His father, a restless Iowa farmer, moved the family often but never prospered; by 1906 (in Kansas) they were near starvation. Young Smith, despising his irresponsible father, struggled to improve his own lot; he became a miner, farmer, auctioneer, grocer, and salesman. In 1925 he founded a Davenport petroleum products company that flourished through the Great Depression and had 150 employees. Later he was a banker, operated an airport, and owned a two-thousand-acre farm.

This volume relates the experiences of Smith's youth and the problems and methods of his small-business career. It also concerns the people who were important to him. Interesting anecdotes reveal the life of the times and Smith's energetic, combative, yet kindly character. H. Roger Grant asserts in his introduction that these memoirs reflect common themes of the transition from the agricultural frontier to industrial society: the prevalence of poverty; the frequent mobility between states and occupations; and the reality of Horatio Alger-type accomplishments.

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