

R E V I E W S

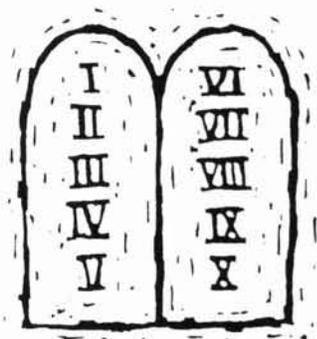
FORWARD, STRAIGHTFORWARD

GO FORWARD WITH FAITH, BIOGRAPHY OF
GORDON B. HINCKLEY

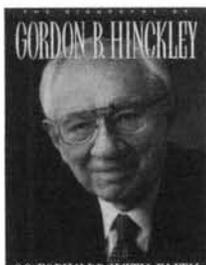
by Sheri L. Dew

Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1996

653 pages, \$23.95



Reviewed by Douglas D. Alder



Despite excessive praise which President Hinckley would be the first to say is unnecessary, he is portrayed as completely believable. His passion is helping people world-wide to live the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

AS THE NUMBER OF MORMONS grows, Church leaders at the center face the challenge of helping the members identify with them. In the 1950s the million-member church was comfortably interwoven; most Latter-day Saints had contacts with general authorities during mission calls and releases, quarterly stake conferences, even as friends. This was most helpful to an organization based on tight central authority. Now that the Church is ten times larger and heading toward twenty, many de-

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vices such as videos and satellite broadcasts, as well as leaders traveling worldwide, are used to maintain that personal link with the apostles and First Presidency. With this biography the author attempts to further that personal link between members and the current prophet.

Because the book was expected to sell widely, Deseret Book Company appointed one of its own officers, Sheri L. Dew, to write this official biography. Dew, a capable writer, had previously written the biography of Ezra Taft Benson, so the work began with the advantage of experience and talent.

Go Forward with Faith is frankly addressed to the Church's general membership and aims to help them feel a personal bond with

its president. It achieves this by portraying President Gordon B. Hinckley as a normal person, not a titan. His unflappable humor, his compassion, his workaholic devotion to his calling (like President Spencer W. Kimball), his clear writing style, his healthy family life—all these suggest to readers that their attributes and daily life are similar. Dew describes a president who is often moved to tears by spiritual experiences, but they are not dissimilar from those of the general membership. In this regard, the book reaches its mark and will be recommended by one reader to another until it is read by thousands. I hope it will be translated.

The author does not pretend to present an analytical or profound work; that is not its purpose. In some ways, that is the nature of the subject: President Hinckley is a man who uses straightforward language and concentrates on simple gospel principles. It is interesting to contrast this work with the biography of Spencer W. Kimball, also a modest man, which was nonetheless more rigorous in its candor. It, too, was widely read. Even more demanding was the biography of J. Reuben Clark. Volume one of that set, *The Public Years*, by Frank Fox, set a standard that will be rarely equaled for its keen insight and ability to deal with delicate issues.

Dew avoided heavy themes and skirted some of the tensions at Church headquarters such as the tough times of Church financial investments and tension between major leaders, all of which President Hinckley experienced. For example, Dew mentions President David O. McKay's choice of J. Reuben Clark as second counselor, after President Clark had served as first counselor in the previous First Presidency, but she avoids suggesting any reasons. She describes President Hinckley's close association with Henry D. Moyle right up to the death but ignores the building program controversy that bore so heavily upon Moyle in his last years. It is clearly the author's intent to uplift, not to analyze. Nonetheless, she achieves this in good taste.

In contrast, Dew does discuss the monumental decision in 1978 to extend the privileges of the priesthood to all races. Similarly she includes the scandal surrounding Mark Hofmann's forgery of Mormon documents and President Hinckley's candid assessment that the leaders of the Church were deceived. Also to her credit, Dew includes a frank description of President Hinckley's difficulties when both President Kimball and First Counselor Marion G. Romney were so incapacitated with age and illness that he was alone in First Presidency meetings for many months.

The book's conceptual structure is largely chronological and narrative. From the rich stories we are left to build a larger framework. Clearly, one such issue is the consequences of growth. Readers endure trip after trip with Apostle Hinckley to places such as Japan, China, Viet Nam, and especially the Philippines where the Church experienced explosive growth. Readers also watch astounding growth in South America, where Elder Hinckley travelled often. Attempts to train local leaders in these places to avoid inactivity among converts remind us of conditions in the Joseph Smith era. Dew could have analyzed this issue more.

Another issue readers could extrapolate from the narrative is the limits of central authority. While several functions were delegated to regional and stake leaders, work of the general authorities multiplied rapidly; leaders like Elder Hinckley were overloaded and often subjected to severe stress. Someone searching for help about personal tension may find this book better than therapy. Certainly President Hinckley's life has been stretched beyond the normal limit in his attempts to keep the members around the globe in contact with the apostles and presidency.

Marjorie Hinckley, President Hinckley's wife, cushions this stress. She is described as a truly amazing person in the text because she neutralizes the pressure with good sense. She knew that she would not be first in her husband's life; the Church was already the object of his total dedication when they married. She learned to cope with that reality early on. Many women today have similar challenges and may be encouraged by her attitude. By developing real independence and focusing on meaningful objectives, she avoided the depression that could have accompanied the constant strain about them; her husband travelled at least one fourth of every year and he was constantly interrupted the rest of the time. They often lived out of a suitcase and missed many crucial moments in their family's traditions. Yet, because of her constant devotion, the family is normal and enjoys a wonderful togetherness.

The book is absorbing. Despite the excessive praise which President Hinckley would likely be the first to say is unnecessary, he is portrayed as thoroughly believable. Here is a man who builds his own house and loves to remodel it. His real passion, though, is the gospel of Jesus Christ and helping people all over the globe to live its principles. Those who brave the book's thickness will find the trip (the many trips!) rewarding. ☐

REVIEWS

OUR MODERN, DIRTY MINDS

SAME-SEX DYNAMICS AMONG NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICANS: A MORMON EXAMPLE

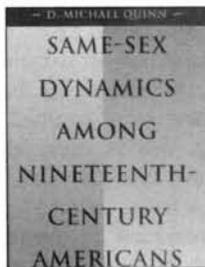
by D. Michael Quinn

University of Illinois Press, 1996

477 pages, \$29.95



Reviewed by Carrie A. Miles



Michael Quinn carefully documents a dramatic shift in Mormonism's response to same-sex activities, but he doesn't explain the cause of the shift.

I was surprised to find Michael Quinn's recent book, *Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example*, in my tiny neighborhood library. The Rosegarden Branch does not buy many books on Mormonism. It was there, no doubt, because the librarian, the editor who chose the classification heading on the book jacket, and I all expected the book to be about homosexuality. But *Same-Sex Dynamics* does not admit to being about homosexuality per se, but about more general, not necessarily erotic, relationships among members of the same sex. (Hence the vague title.) The book was probably not about Mormon homosexual relationships—our real interest, of course—only because sex acts themselves, especially stigmatized ones, leave little historical record. A

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few confessions and crime reports are pretty much all that history has left of such homoerotic behavior in nineteenth-century Utah. Faced with this lack of data, however, Quinn goes on to explore the more subtle aspects of same-sex interactions. It is unusual to find such a well-researched and documented study of one of the less sensational aspects of everyday life—the affection and camaraderie that exists with men, among men, and with women, among women.

First, Quinn discusses the "homosocial"—the tendency for nineteenth-century social interaction to be clustered by sex. Victorian and LDS men and women had their own sex-segregated meetings and clubs and didn't even sit next to each other in church. The "homotactile" expression of same-sex affection was also accepted among nineteenth-century men and women. One (non-LDS) advice book, for example, took for granted that girls would hold hands, kiss, and caress each other. Adults kissed each other "as a spontaneous expression of their religious de-

"Mormonism probably hasn't changed as much as American culture has. What happens when a sexually repressive society becomes surrounded by a permissive one?"

votion and personal affection" (91). Joseph Smith encouraged same-sex friends to talk of their love and sleep "locked in each other's embrace." (It's worth the price of the book just to read the original version of Smith's statement.) Indeed, visiting general authorities and missionaries routinely shared beds with each other, and many of Quinn's "homotactile" and "homoemotional" examples involve bed-sharing.

Quinn also reviews same-sex cohabitation and "homoromantic" love poetry (some published in the *Children's Friend*!). What proved to be newsworthy and controversial, however, was his suggestion that three prominent, turn-of-the-century Church leaders were homosexual (see SUNSTONE, Dec. 1996, 73). Quinn's intent in discussing these cases, however, is not so much to debate these people's sexual orientations as it is to point out that the articles published about them in official LDS magazines were, by modern standards, so suggestive of homosexuality that they would never be printed today. His main example, Evan Stephens, director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and composer of many LDS hymns, openly lived with a string of "boy chums" and "nephews"

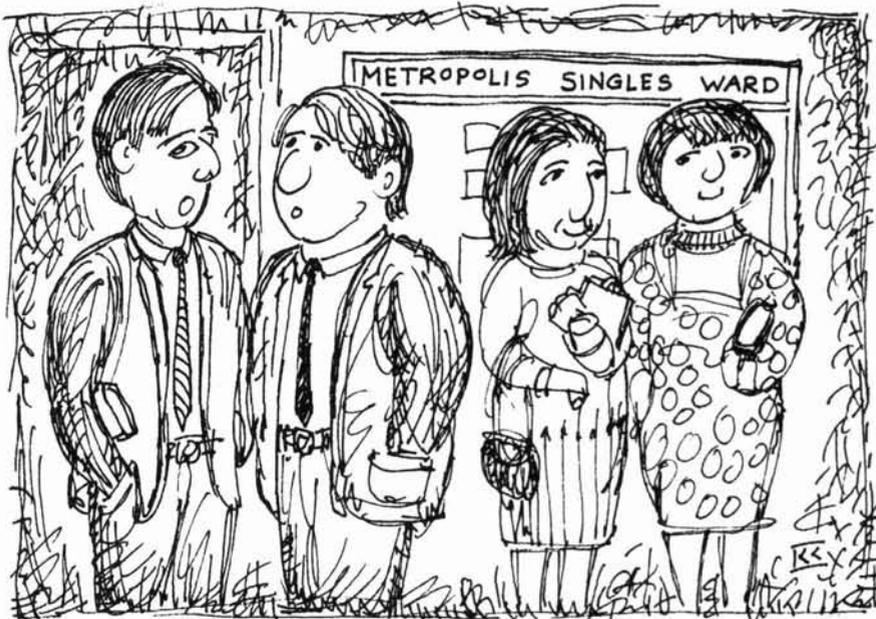
who apparently slept in his bed. No one seemed to object to either his living arrangements or to having them publicly acknowledged in Church publications. Whether or not Stephens was sexually involved with any of these young men is not known. Quinn notes that all of them went on to marry and have children. But he points out that in nineteenth-century Utah, "At the very least their stories demonstrate that these prominent Mormons felt confident about expressing publicly their intensely homosocial, homoromantic, and homotactile relationships with their same-sex domestic partners" (232).

I am not sure that I buy Quinn's interpretation that all of these same-sex associations imply meaningful relationships between members of the same sex. The "homosocial," no-girls-allowed segregation of clubs, militia, priesthood quorums, and sports teams may reflect only the restricted role of women at that time. Similarly, the sharing of beds, which Quinn notes was often required by overcrowded housing, was in many cases simply an uncomfortable fact of life. But I do accept his point that a lot of "homo"-whatever behavior was acceptable in the nineteenth century because no one construed it

as sexual. Quinn makes the case that nineteenth-century casualness about same-sex affection, touching, and bed-sharing came to be viewed with suspicion, if not sharply curtailed, only in the twentieth century. It is as if we all got dirty minds about 1920 and heretofore innocent behavior became sexualized. But Quinn still has to grapple with the questions of whether *homoerotic* behavior was largely ignored because it did not take place, because it did not occur to Church leaders that people would do such things, or because it was practiced but considered relatively innocuous.

Here I begin to suspect that this book is about homosexuality after all. To answer these questions, Quinn examines the response to homoerotic incidences (consensual and forced) that became known to the public. He concludes that for fifty years, the Mormon hierarchy regarded "homoerotic behaviors as less serious than heterosexual intimacy outside marriage." But the data for this conclusion are inferential—criminal records, for the most part—and Quinn struggles with them. The cases available for analysis are few and spread over a long span of time. Quinn also notes in some cases that politics and family connection played a part in the severity of the legal punishments, making it even more difficult to use the data to determine what Church leaders really thought of the seriousness of homoerotic activities.

The next chapter, "From Relative Tolerance to Homophobia in Twentieth-Century Mormonism," however, indicates Quinn's intent to pursue this point. While the nineteenth-century Church hierarchy had little to say publicly about homosexuality, by 1952, First Presidency Counselor J. Reuben Clark was warning members that "the homosexuals are today exercising great influence." BYU President Ernest Wilkinson reported in 1959 that the apostles on the school's executive committee discussed "the growing problem in our society of homosexuality." In 1963, BYU announced that it would not knowingly admit a homosexual, and Apostle Mark E. Petersen outlawed the sharing of beds by missionaries in Great Britain and Western Europe. "Homo-sexual acts" (rephrased to "homosexuality" in 1976) was added to the list of grounds for excommunication in 1968, and "lesbianism" was



"I think 'maritally challenged' more accurately describes my situation."

added in 1982. That these behaviors were not publicly decried or listed as grounds for excommunication until so recently supports Quinn's contention that "the LDS presidents and their counselors who reached adulthood in the nineteenth century shared less stringent views" about homosexuality than those born later (374). But although Quinn speculates briefly on possible reasons for twentieth-century "homophobia,"¹ he ends up attributing a disposition to disapprove of homoerotic behavior mainly to having reached adulthood in the twentieth century. Telling us when a cultural change occurred does not explain why it took place, however, and this is certainly Quinn's weakest point.²

I admit I'm asking much here—Quinn's book is on nineteenth-century America, and he is sticking pretty strictly to historical methods, which might not admit to the kind of analysis I want to see—but I believe that the meaning of nineteenth-century patterns cannot be understood unless we understand why the Church retreated from them in the twentieth (which, of course, must be why Quinn included this chapter in the first place). Quinn says, without much elaboration, that nineteenth-century Americans did not attach the same significance to homoerotic behavior that we do. I suggest that this is indeed the key to the nineteenth-century's "restrain[t], even toleran[ce]" (402). This explanation is inherent in Quinn's initial and concluding discussions of the cross-cultural perspectives and the difficulties of defining homosexuality.

Legal scholar and federal judge Richard Posner says that in sexually repressive societies, "a homosexual is likely to be thought of as a 'normal' person (heterosexual) who commits unnatural acts because of lust or other wickedness." Only in sexually permissive cultures are homosexuals "free to associate with one another . . . forming visible homosexual subcultures from which heterosexuals learn that there is such a thing as homosexual preference."³ When homoerotic behavior was viewed simply as the "wickedness" or "bad habits" of occasional individuals, the Church could afford to forgive a confessed or convicted act of "lust." Rather than threatening the Church's boundaries or its world view, occasional "deviant" behavior confirms them, and there is no need to undertake a public campaign against the sinful acts of individuals. But the sexual politics of the twentieth century changed the meaning of those individual acts.⁴ Twentieth-century gay advocates insist that homosexuality is an identity—innate, natural, and hence beyond moral judgment. This latter understanding of

homosexuality is incompatible with many of the Church's basic tenets, but even more alarming from the Church's perspective, it is political: "the homosexuals are today exercising great influence." It is one thing to deal compassionately with sin, especially sexual sin, which Quinn documents was widespread even in nineteenth-century Utah. But it is another thing to accept a political position that is directly at variance with the teachings of a religion that places heavy emphasis on the heterosexual, reproductive, and eternal nature of the family. In that case, a shying away from the "homoaffectionate," "homotactile," etc., is not just a matter of dirty minds or homophobia, but is also a political response to an increasingly political issue.⁵

Mormonism probably has not changed as much as American culture has moved out from under it. Posner does not discuss what happens when a sexually repressive society becomes surrounded by a sexually permissive one, but the answer could well be the kind of shift that Quinn has so carefully documented.

NOTES

1. One complaint I have with this book is that someone as careful as Quinn is in general, and as careful as he is about the use of the term homosexual in particular, uses the pejorative "homophobic" so freely.

2. Quinn says that "A major part of the explanation for that tolerance is that as children and young adults those . . . authorities were accustomed to the pervasive same-sex dynamics of nineteenth-century Mormonism" (265), but perhaps because I don't think these dynamics had the emotional content Quinn thinks they do, I find this explanation circular.

3. Richard A. Posner, *Sex and Reason* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 125.

4. I am drawing this line of reasoning from work I did on the Church's response to another social change it did not want to accept, the women's movement. See Laurence R. Iannaccone and Carrie A. Miles, "Dealing with social change: The Mormon church's response to change in women's roles," *Social Forces* 64 (June 1990): 1231–50; reprinted in Cornwall, Heaton, and Young, eds. *Contemporary Mormonism* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 265–86.

5. The politicization of sexuality leaves the individual, who may be struggling with a deep, personal, non-political dilemma, twisting in the wind; unfortunately, it is the nature of political struggles that the individuals are sacrificed for the cause.



BOOKNOTES

**RELIGION AND MASS MEDIA:
AUDIENCES AND ADAPTATIONS**

ed. Daniel A. Stout and
Judith M. Buddenbaum
Sage Publications, 1996
294 pages, \$24.00

Reviewed by Brian Kagel

DANIEL STOUT, assistant professor of communications at BYU, and Judith M. Buddenbaum, associate professor of technical journalism at Colorado State University, have recently compiled a book that merges ideas from mass communication and the sociology of religion. Observing that "scholars in both areas have worked in relative isolation, with no clear bridge of understanding between them" (6), the editors gathered thinking on topics ranging from Catholicism and censorship to fundamentalism and the media to gospel rap.

Stout and Buddenbaum not only collected essays, they authored half of the book's eighteen chapters. Stout's "Protecting the Family: Mormon Teachings About Mass Media" surveys general conference addresses and articles published in the *Improvement Era* and *Ensign* since 1897 and determines that, in recent years, specific Church guidelines or recommendations for appropriate media use "have shifted from artistically and intellectually grounded criteria to a rules-based approach" (88). In 1903, talks in the *Improvement Era* instructed Latter-day Saints to read "good books," books that are "thought-producing" and that "stimulate and awaken good and noble feelings" (93). A 1934 *Era* article encouraged readers to use literary criticism to evaluate movies, and in 1948, another article emphasized that Mormons must become "more intelligent critics" of the media (93).

But guidelines based on artistic criteria have appeared less frequently in Church publications over the past twenty-five years, Stout writes. Instead, leaders have made statements such as "Much . . . rock music is purposely designed to push immorality, narcotics, revolution, atheism, and nihilism through language that often carries a double meaning" (93) and "Would we feel comfortable during the entire program if the Savior was [sic] watching with us?" (94). The Brethren have advised members not to view any R-rated films—regardless of content. BYU's decision not to show the critically acclaimed *Schindler's List* is clearly part of this

larger trend, Stout says (see "Schindler's Taken Off BYU's List," *SUNSTONE* Apr. 1995).

Stout's work supports sociologist Armand Mauss's contention that as the Church expands, there is a "growing trend at the grassroots level toward a fundamentalist religious posture both in life style and in scriptural interpretation" (*The Angel and the Beehive*, 34). "Teachings about media effects appear to support this conclusion," Stout writes. "As church leaders continue to perceive societal threats to the family, they are likely to advocate didactic approaches to media education over those that emphasize interpretation and analysis" (96).

Two other interesting and insightful chapters tackle Latter-day Saints and the media, one on Mormon women's approaches to television viewing and another on BYU students' movie viewing habits.

The book's often antiseptic writing and occasional typos are minor irritations. Perhaps the authors err too much in adopting sociology's utilitarian writing style instead of communication's twin mission of informing and engaging. Nonetheless, *Religion and Mass Media* is not only a good initial synthesis of mass communication and the sociology of religion but also fertile ground for future studies. ☐

BRIAN KAGEL, *SUNSTONE's* news editor, earned a BA in journalism at BYU and is working on an MA in English literature and writing at UNLV.

ANIMAL THEOLOGY

by Andrew Linzey
University of Illinois Press, 1995
224 pages, \$13.95

Reviewed by Richard Sherlock

THIS IS THE latest in a series of works by British theologian Andrew Linzey, exploring the connections between animal rights and Christian theology. His fundamental thesis is that Christianity and animal rights go together, and, as such, much of our usual practice regarding them must be abandoned. This includes factory farming, hunting and genetic engineering—which the author regards as "animal slavery." Much of what Linzey argues for is standard animal rights fare, with appropriate references to the pathbreaking work of animal rights theorists Peter Singer, Bernard Rollin, and Tom Regan. The theological work done here is

suggestive and intriguing.

Fundamentally, Linzey argues that Christian theology establishes the "generosity paradigm" for the relation between God and creation and thus for the relation between humankind and creation. God is, first of all, generous toward humankind through the agency of Christ's love of the world. Second, this generosity is manifest through the goodness of creation itself as a reflection of Divine goodness. As a response to this generosity and as a part of covenant fidelity in response to God, we as humans bear a special responsibility toward the rest of creation, especially animals. This concern for animal rights flowing out of the generosity paradigm does, however, lead to an unresolved tension in Linzey's work as in animal rights theories generally. To adopt the animal rights position is to see sentient animals, not just humans, as specially valuable in creation. But if God is generous toward creation as such, then how can animals be regarded as special? Furthermore, if God is generous toward all of creation, why would he allow animals of all varieties to destroy other parts of creation? If animals have rights then are we morally obligated to intervene when one animal hunts and kills another, as we would be when human beings do the same things? If not, then how can we oppose human hunting per se?

This work is the best of a very diverse lot of material on theology and animals. It is not the last word by any means, but for both teacher and student it might be a work that is consulted first. ☐

RICHARD SHERLOCK is a professor of history at Utah State University.


Pontius' Puddle


A W A R D S

MHA PASSES ON
HINCKLEY BIOGRAPHY

IN MAY 1997, the Mormon History Association held its annual meeting in Omaha, Nebraska, to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the beginning of the 1847 Mormon trek from Winter Quarters. The previous year, the association had met in Snowbird, Utah, for the centennial of Utah statehood; in May 1998, the association will meet in Washington, D.C. Below are the awards announced at the conference. Interestingly, two regular awards were not granted this year: the best biography award, obviously overlooking Sheri Dew's best-selling biography of LDS Church President Gordon B. Hinckley, *Go Forward with Faith*, and the William Grover and Winifred Foster Reese Award for Best Dissertation.

MORMON HISTORY ASSOCIATION

Award for Best Book

IRENE M. BATES AND E. GARY SMITH

Lost Legacy: The Mormon Office of Presiding Patriarch
(Illinois)

Steven F. Christensen Award for Excellence in Documentary/Bibliography

DAN VOGEL

Early Mormon Documents: volume 1 (Signature Books)

Francis M. and Emily S. Chipman Award for Excellence in a First Book

MAURINE CARR WARD

The 1846-48 Life Writings of Mary Haskin Parker Richards
(Utah State University)

Special Citation

L. JACKSON NEWELL

Matters of Conscience: Conversations with Sterling M. McMurrin
(Signature)

T. Edgar Lyon Award for Best Article

WILLIAM G. HARTLEY

"From Men to Boys: LDS Aaronic Priesthood Offices, 1829-1996"
(*Journal of Mormon History*)

T. Edgar Lyon Article Awards of Excellence

TODD COMPTON

"A Trajectory of Plurality: An Overview of Joseph Smith's Thirty-three Plural Wives"
(*Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*)

MARK R. GRANDSTAFF

"General Regis de Trobriand—The Mormons and the USA Army at Camp Douglas, 1870-71"
(*Utah Historical Quarterly*)

BYU Women's Research Institute Award for Excellence in Women's Studies

JILL MULVAY DERR

"The Significance of 'O My Father' in the Personal Journey of Eliza R. Snow"
(*BYU Studies*)

Conference Scholarships

SCOTT ALAN CARSON, JAMES DELOS GARDNER

RICHARD IAN KIMBALL, DAVID SEAN MUTILLO

JANA K. RIESS

Juanita Brooks Graduate Award

JANA K. RIESS

Juanita Brooks Undergraduate Award

JAMES DELOS GARDNER

NON-MHA AWARDS

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WILLIAM A. "BERT" WILSON

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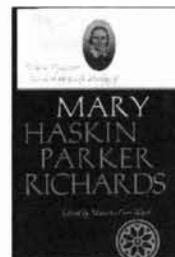
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