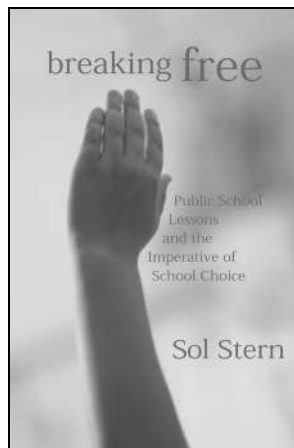


★ **Stern, Sol.** *Breaking Free: Public School Lessons and the Imperative of School Choice.* Apr. 2003. 239p. Encounter, \$24.95 (1-893554-07-4). 379.1.



When his son Jonathan was accepted at New York's premier elementary school, P.S. 87, city-schools-educated Stern presumed the boy was off to a good start. He was, though not as good a start as Stern's own in 1941. In the intervening decades, the teachers' union (a 1950s innovation) and a mushrooming, politicized education bureaucracy had rendered most city schools ungovernable and scholastically ineffective. Even P.S. 87 and the secondary schools both Stern boys attended—all among the system's finest—were forced by union work rules to tolerate incompetent senior teachers and teachers who wouldn't put in a minute more than the contractual 6-hour-and-20-minute day. Ultimately, Stern and his wife had to resort to supplementary homeschooling to help their sons attain the highest scholastic levels. They succeeded at that, but what, Stern tellingly asks, are less well educated and more time-constrained parents to do? Ultimately, Stern advances education vouchers as a means for fostering better schools and argues for them

more persuasively, because less ideologically, than do most other voucher-boosters. Meanwhile, he has told his case history in the union-and-bureaucracy-hamstrung New York system and presented a brief against the teachers' unions that vitally supplements such looser, more general arguments as Peter Brimelow's *Worm in the Apple* [BKL F 1 03].

—Ray Olson

Social Sciences

**Kindsvatter, Peter S.** *American Soldiers: Ground Combat in the World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam.* Apr. 2003. 480p. illus. index. Univ. Press of Kansas, \$34.95 (0-7006-1229-7). 355.

Thoroughly mining twentieth-century foot soldiers' memoirs and novels, Kindsvatter integrates this literature of personal experience into a generalized assessment of what combat was like and how men reacted to it. The author was a U.S. Army officer for two decades but does not discuss his own war experiences, if any; however, he plainly brings to his task an understanding of military life and death. It all starts, in all wars, with turning a civilian into a trained killer, the jolt of boot camp being just the initial step in acclimating soldiers to the radical differences between peacetime and wartime. Most of the soldiers Kindsvatter quotes admit some awe about the literally incandescent, surreal spectacle of the combat zone, followed by profound intimidation born of realizing the pitiless randomness of death. Kindsvatter's illuminating work is about coping with that fear at the foxhole level, and it (via soldier-writers such as William Manchester or Tim O'Brien) powerfully conveys the psychology and military sociology of combat in the draft-era armies. —Gilbert Taylor

**Lowry, Beverly.** *Her Dream of Dreams: The Rise and Triumph of Madam C. J. Walker.* Apr. 2003. 480p. illus. index. Knopf, \$27.50 (0-679-44642-7). 338.7.

Lowry inserts herself and her research process into this absorbing biography of Madam Walker, America's first black woman millionaire. This technique only adds to the incredible journey of Sarah Breedlove (Walker's original name) from abject poverty through virulent racism and Jim Crow laws to the height of business success with her hair-care products for black women. Using

research, historical accounts, speeches, interviews, and biographical sketches, Lowry conveys Walker's ambition and determination. The order is generally chronological, but topical as well, as she diverts from the chronology to detail Walker's later life and the social, political, and economic context of the times. Here are the basic facts of Walker's life from laundress to entrepreneur, her failed marriages and mostly single motherhood, her marketing strategies, and famous contretemps with Booker T. Washington, as well as the racial politics of accommodation versus assertiveness and Walker's involvement in antilynching campaigns. But Lowry's meticulous research invites readers to consider differing accounts of Walker's early life, how she started her company, and the more profligate life of her daughter A'Lelia. —Vanessa Bush

**YAL:** *Very long, but it reads fast and the success story is riveting.* HR.

**Pipes, Richard.** *The Degaev Affair: Terror and Treason in Tsarist Russia.* Apr. 2003. 153p. illus. index. Yale, \$22.95 (0-300-09848-0). 322.4.

The organization People's Will, which was responsible for the assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881, is pertinent not only to the genealogy of Russian radicalism but also, as one of its earliest modern exponents, to the practice of a terrorist. In one member of the People's Will, eminent historian Pipes has found a roiling theater of the inner psychology of terrorism. From a comfortable Muscovite family, Sergei Degaev was, like many students of the time, sympathetic to the People's Will. Although they inducted him into the organization, its leaders regarded Degaev as intelligent but dreamy and weak willed. These traits cross-fertilized bizarrely with those of Pipes' second protagonist, the gendarme who suppressed the People's Will: Georgii Sudeikin.

Disgusted with czarism, like Degaev, though for careerist rather than idealistic reasons, Sudeikin apparently turned Degaev. Guilt-wracked, he confessed to the People's Will, who turned their traitor back against Sudeikin, whom Degaev eventually murdered. As well as a true-crime account, Pipes offers shrewd insights about the revolutionary mind. —Gilbert Taylor

**Raggio, Louise Ballerstedt and Castleberry, Vivian Anderson.** Texas

*Tornado: The Autobiography of a Crusader for Women's Rights and Family Justice.* Apr. 2003. 304p. illus. index. Citadel, \$24.95 (0-8065-2448-0). 305.4.

As a jurist, she ranks alongside such outstanding women lawyers as former Attorney General Janet Reno and Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. As a feminist, she has been as tireless a crusader for women's rights as Gloria Steinem or Barbara Jordan. At age 83, Raggio (with the assistance of coauthor Castleberry) reflects on a lifetime of unrivaled professional and personal accomplishments in an exceptional memoir of her extraordinary journey from an impoverished rural Texas childhood to an impressive career as one of the most influential legal advocates of her generation. At a time when women were prevented from even serving on juries, Raggio was practicing law and pioneering legal, financial, and humanitarian measures that would impact countless families, her own included. Through a tumultuous 47-year marriage that produced three children and seven grandchildren, Raggio battled life-threatening illnesses, crippling depression, financial upheaval, and political subversion yet never lost sight of the abiding principles by which she was destined to live her life. An inspiring and illuminating look at the unequalled contributions in one woman's quest for equality. —Carol Haggas

**Stanush, Claude and Stanush, Michele.**

*All Honest Men.* Apr. 2003. 320p. illus. Permanent Press, \$28 (1-57962-084-1). 364.3.

Although most readers have probably never heard of them, the Newton gang—J. Willis Newton and his brothers Joe, Jess, and Dock—were bank and train robbers who, during their relatively short career in the 1920s, grabbed more cash than did the Dalton gang, Jesse James, and Butch Cassidy put together. The gang was the subject of the 1999 movie *The Newton Boys*, for which Claude Stanush cowrote the screenplay (his cowriter here is his daughter, a journalist). This account, written as the autobiography of Willis Newton, is wonderfully entertaining whether or not you've seen the movie. The authors are intimately familiar with their material—Claude met and became quite close to Willis and Joe in the early 1970s, by which time the notorious outlaws had long been retired—and the book thrusts us into the roaring twenties and keeps us spellbound. The Stanushes have created a voice for Willis that's lively, impertinent, jocular, and honest. A rollickin' good time for true-crime fans. —David Pitt



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