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### BOOK REVIEW

**Americans Outdoors: The Legacy, The Challenge (With Case Studies), Report of The President's Commission on Americans Outdoors.** 1987. Island Press, 1718 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 420p. \$24.95 paper.

**Outdoor Recreation In a Nation of Communities: Action Plan for Americans Outdoors, Report of the Task Force on Outdoor Recreation Resources and Opportunities to the Domestic Policy Council.** 1988. Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 169p. paper.

Outdoor recreation in one form or another is of great importance to many Americans. Even if we are not participants, we support the notion of outdoor pursuits and the maintenance of a diverse array of parks, forests, beaches, and other types of natural and created landscapes. Outdoor recreational areas and facilities have been provided by all levels of governments and by the private sector. The establishment of public spaces in our communities can be traced back to certain colonial settlements. The provision and development of such spaces have become progressively more important as the decades passed. The most far reaching developments have taken place during the years since 1964. The agenda for this period was established through the work of the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC) established by Act of Congress in 1958; its 28-volume report was published in 1962.

The ORRRC made many recommendations. Among these was a call for a major involvement of the federal

government in improving and expanding our outdoor recreation spaces and facilities. Many of the Commission's recommendations were endorsed by President Kennedy and enacted into law. The establishment of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation in the Department of the Interior and of a funding mechanism to channel acquisition and development dollars to federal, state, and local agencies were among the most notable actions taken. Recreation research and planning were greatly enhanced. The remaining years of the 1960s and the decade of the 1970s saw many notable developments evolve from the ORRRC recommendations; tremendous progress was made. However, commencing in 1981, the Reagan administration's philosophy emphasizing the role of the private sector and the resulting reduction in the federal government's involvement marked the ending of an era. That reality was complemented by the imminent demise of the federal funding mechanism, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which was set up in 1964 with a fixed life of 25 years. Thus, as the present decade reached its mid-point new worries emerged on the outdoor recreation front. It was felt by many concerned observers that major issues remained unresolved and that modified or new approaches were needed.

President Reagan responded to this expressed need by creating a Presidential Commission on Americans Outdoors through executive orders in January and August, 1985. That Commission was charged with reviewing "existing public outdoor recreation policies, programs, and opportunities provided by the Federal, State, and local governments, and private organizations

and entities and shall review privately provided outdoor recreation resources to the extent that they affect the demand for public outdoor recreation resources." The Commission's work is splendidly summarized in their report *Americans Outdoors, The Legacy, The Challenge*.

The Commission quite openly built upon the work of the ORRRC. Its identified goals were "to find what outdoor recreation means to the American people, and to recommend ways to make sure our governments, our communities, and our actions as individuals reflect the values we attach to it." The Commission was "directed to assess future needs for land, personnel, information, and money; to explore opportunities for innovative partnerships between the private sector and government in providing outdoor recreation opportunities and protecting outdoor recreation resources; and to evaluate how outdoor recreation contributes to our health, our economy, and our environment."

It conducted surveys (with the help of the National Geographic Society), held numerous public meetings, recruited knowledgeable advisors, used a large group of technical specialists to prepare 150 technical papers and 71 summary papers, received 700 concept papers from concerned citizens, and tapped interested groups throughout the country for advice. Americans were found to love the land, consider outdoor recreation to be important, and be willing to work and pay to ensure quality opportunities for themselves and their children. They found that we are facing a deterioration of our natural resource base and of the recreation infrastructure. The Commission urges that a "prairie fire" of local action sweep the nation to encourage the doing of what needs to be done. The starting place is clearly identified as our communities. They also support strongly the notion of partnerships among public and private, profit-making and not-for-profit organizations. They are convinced that the private sector holds great potential for enhancing the delivery of outdoor recreation. A network of greenways linking recreation areas is envisioned. Finally, their conviction that local, state, and federal governments must put a higher priority on outdoor recreation and the preservation of open space is clear. The Commission, in turn, provides specific recommendations for achieving their identified goals.

Reauthorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund as a dedicated trust fund is strongly recommended; a new institution functioning as an advisory board is suggested as an enabling entity; encouraging a strong outdoor ethic has a high priority; the need to rehabilitate many existing facilities is recognized. Numerous other specific recommendations provide a balanced set of approaches to attainment of their goal, a goal which the Commission indicates is also that of 90% of Ameri-

cans. The Commission's report and recommendations strike this reviewer as remarkably well balanced and insightful. They have addressed the central issues that confront us and have identified realistic strategies that provide a viable framework for action in the years ahead. Just as the ORRRC report set forth an agenda for meeting our outdoor recreation land and facility needs for the past quarter century, this Commission has drawn up a sensible agenda for the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century.

An interagency Task Force on Outdoor Recreation Resources and Opportunities was created in August, 1987 by the Domestic Policy Council. Their charge was to prepare proposals for the President to "further develop outdoor recreation opportunities." They were instructed to examine the work of the Presidential Commission on Americans Outdoors, to review actual practices of federal agencies, and to look at promising activities undertaken by local and state governments and the private sector. Their recently published report is *Outdoor Recreation in a Nation of Communities: Action Plan for Americans Outdoors*.

The Task Force's work, in theory, builds upon that of the Commission. There are a number of areas of agreement. For example, both documents call for a focus on leadership in our communities, encourage public and private sector partnerships, believe that a stronger and more widespread outdoor ethic is needed, and encourage better coordination of efforts and developments at all levels. Conversely, there are major differences in overall philosophy and on specifics. The Task Force report emphasizes the major role the private sector should play in the future, does not call for reauthorization of a dedicated trust fund, ignores the greenways theme, suggests that there should be less land use planning, and does not indicate that there is a critical problem for today or tomorrow in our supply of recreation opportunities.

The above examples merely sample the similarities and dissimilarities contained in these two reports. Both deal with a vitally important set of concerns in modern American society. Clearly, political, social, and economic values vary between those responsible for the two reports. The next stage in this evolving story will be unveiled when a new administration reacts to the recommendations contained in these two reports and starts to put its theories and goals for outdoor recreation in place in January, 1989.

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## BOOK REVIEW

**NEXT: The Coming Era in Medicine.** Edited by Holcomb B. Noble. 1988. Little, Brown and Co., Boston, MA. 242 p. \$17.95 hardcover; \$9.95 paper.

The greatest fault of *NEXT: The Coming Era in Medicine* lies in the first word of the title. A book simply cannot remain a believable predictor of developments to come for very long, particularly in a field such as medicine. Indeed, the frequent referrals in these essays to "impending revolutions," "recent advances," and "brand new marvels" lose their punch in the face of already outdated information on such varied topics as lumpectomy vs mastectomy for breast cancer treatment, the popularity of jogging, the names of certain genetic diseases, and "the newly unbottled genie of genetic engineering." On a more philosophical note, has there ever been a time when people did not consider contemporary and future advances revolutionary?

Perhaps it is the title that is weak, and not the book's content, however, because most of the essays are actually information-packed, highly readable examinations of important fields. Contrary to the book's title, the strength of the essays lies in the fact that they are carefully crafted chronologies. Because of their comprehensiveness, the essays are excellent resources for laypeople and students—some so well researched that students may be tempted to "borrow" from them for termpapers, especially since references and an index are lacking. But for the scientist, the essays offer nothing compelling or new.

Notes on the back cover refer to the essays as "some of the finest medical journalism available today," presumably because the writers hail from the New York Times. But the essays are noticeably lacking in the feeling of reader involvement and personalization that are the hallmarks of articles in such magazines as *Discover* or *Hippocrates*. Rather than weaving tales of scientific discovery and the suffering and triumphs of individuals coping with disease, most of these essays read like termpapers. Many quotes, for example, are second and third hand, taken from studies, reports and speeches, rather than fresh interviews.

"Progress on Heart Disease," by Harry Schwartz, for example, bombards the reader with statistics, huge numbers that evoke nothing of the terror and pain that heart disease can wreak on a family. Perhaps not irksome to anyone but a fellow science writer like myself is the frequent use of the word "victim"—anyone who has worked with sick people knows that this word makes them feel helpless and angry.

The first essay, "The Crucial Search for the Origins of Cancer," by Harold M. Schmeck Jr., is the only piece to present the excitement of scientific discovery, of dif-

ferent disciplines supplying different pieces to the same puzzle, of how basic research evolves into clinical practice. Yet the second essay, also on cancer ("Cancer Treatment: Slow But Steady Gains," by Philip M. Boffey) is a termpaper steeped in stultifying quotes. Essay number three, "The Chemistry and the New Understanding of the Brain," by Sandra Blakeslee, has a few factual errors, often the consequence of another science writers' pitfall, oversimplification. Hence, "proteins drive a cell's metabolism, supply it with energy, and build its internal structures and membranes."

The essay on organ transplants by David R. Zimmerman is the best, opening with the rivetting scenario of a transplanted organ asked to take on a most unusual task. "No man's heart had ever before withstood the rigors of pregnancy, labor, and the delivery of a baby." "Five Disorders: Frustration and Progress," by Daniel Kagan is a wonderful idea, with the choice of disorders complementing the coverage of the other essays. However, AIDS is given 36 pages, compared to the 7 to 14 pages each for diabetes, herpes, stroke and aging. (Can aging be considered a disorder?) The AIDS coverage is accurate and comprehensive, but I couldn't help comparing it to Randy Shilts' account of the epidemic, *And The Band Played On*. Shilts' effort condemns the Reagan administration's unforgivable delay in acknowledging the problem; Kagan's report whitewashes the government's role, or lack thereof.

The final essay is the most dated, a tribute to the "triple headed purple monster" public view of genetic engineering that pervaded the late 1970s. Expert quotes here are circa 1982-4 or even earlier. The statement "Drug companies will be able to produce copious amounts of human insulin" is certainly out of date considering that Humulin has been available at the corner drugstore for a few years now. Major points are minimized—the fact that genetic engineering more often refers to altering bacteria than creating a Frankenstein monster; genetic markers are described but not clearly defined; gene therapy is mentioned but real advances in transgenic organisms are not; the central challenge of controlling gene expression in a multicellular organism is barely touched upon.

However, this final essay is the only one to offer a personal peek at the impact of medical advances on a down-to-earth person—a mother of three commenting on how technology has affected her fight against sickle cell disease. But this humanization comes much too late—the next to last page.

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