Howard Fast

Howard Fast, blacklisted and imprisoned bestselling author whose books such as "Freedom Road" and "Spartacus" became popular films or TV events, died of natural causes March 12 at his home in Old Greenwich, Conn. He was 88.

In a seven-decade career, he wrote more than 80 books (which sold more than 80 million copies worldwide), plus short stories, poetry, journalism, essays, plays and screenplays. New York native sold his novel "Two Valleys" in 1933 when he was 18. His first big hit was "Citizen Tom Paine" in 1943, a fictionalized biography of the revolutionary pamphleteer. "Freedom Road" won the Schomburg Award for Race Relations in 1944 and became a 1979 TV miniseries starring Muhammad Ali and Kris Kristofferson. His "Spartacus" about a slave revolt in ancient Rome, was published in 1951, became a successful 1960 movie directed by Stanley Kubrick and starring Kirk Douglas and became a bestseller after it was republished following the movie. Another latter-day bestseller, "The Immigrants' became the first of a five-part series of novels and was adapted into a 1978 TV miniseries. TV scripts he wrote include Emmy-winning "The Ambassador" about Ben Franklin.

He worked for the U.S. Office of War Information during WWII, writing for Voice of America and serving as a war correspondent in Asia. Longtime anti-fascist political activist joined the American Communist Party in 1944, was long under FBI surveillance, refused to name names before the House Un-American Activities Committee and was imprisoned for three months on contempt charges in 1950.

Subsequently blacklisted, he wrote under pseudonyms (including E.V Cunningham, under which he penned successful stories about a Nisei detective) and started a small publishing house, Blue Heron Press, which published his "Spartacus."

He ran for Congress on the American Labor Party ticket in 1952 and joined the staff of the Communist Party's newspaper, the Daily Worker, which had carried columns of his for many years.

His first wife died in 1994 after 57 years of marriage. He is survived by his second wife, Mercedes; two children, novelist Jonathan Fast and Rachel Ben Avi; three stepsons; and three grandchildren.

Howard Fast

Born in New York City in 1914 to immigrant parents. His father, Barney was from the Ukraine and his mother Ida was from Lithuania. He grew up in poverty and his mother died when he was eight, and his father was forced to send his younger brother away to live with relatives. His father held a series of low-paying jobs forcing Fast and his older brother to earn money from a newspaper route and sometimes to steal food from their neighbors. When he was 12, Fast watched a 13 year-old black youth lynched by a white gang during a rumble in Manhattan, and is forever sealed his social conscience. He wrote about it for a magazine and the article was banned in Boston. Graduated high school in 1931 and won a scholarship to the National Academy of Design, but after selling a story to a science fiction magazine, he dropped out. Wrote his first novel while working as a page in the New York Public Library system, when he was 18 (*Two Valleys*). Two novels followed which didn't sell. Rapid publication of next four novels, which included *The Last Frontier*.

Married Bette Cohen, who he met on a blind date in 1936. She was a sculptor, but also a loyal and long-suffering wife who tolerated his infidelities. " We have a marriage that endues in spite of everything because we love each other and because we agree about almost everything. Not that he's easy to get along with. I understand about his affairs. Creative guys are like that."

Fast wrote Voice of America broadcasts for occupied Europe from 1942-1944. He was pressured to resign because he associated with left-wing sympathizers such as playwright Arthur Miller. Also served as a war correspondent in the China-Burma theater. He joined the Communist party in 1944, because "I seemed to run out of reasons not to join." They were on the same page as Fast when it came to the union movement, civil rights and the fight against fascism. Wins the 1944 Schomburg Award for Race Relations for *Freedom Road*, which become a 1979 miniseries with Muhammad Ali and Kris Kristofferson. He also taught briefly at Indiana University in 1947.

He appeared before the House Un-American Activities Committee and was imprisoned for 3 months in 1950 on contempt charges. His persecution seems ironic because in the novels he had already published, Fast emphasized the importance of freedom and the heroic acts that had built American society. Inspired by his time in prison, he wrote *Spartacus* in 1951. While in jail, he developed crippling headaches, which required him to keep a tank of oxygen in his bedroom until his death. Unable to find a publisher due to interference from J. Edgar Hoover, Fast published the novel himself. Any time a mainstream publisher would consider a Fast manuscript an agent of Hoover's would suddenly show up to help them change their mind. Spartacus is the most controversial of all his works, which used the great slave revolt of 71 B.C. as a metaphor for the struggles of all oppressed people against their inhuman masters. Because he is blacklisted, writes under different pseudonyms. He attempted to run for Congress in 1952 and was awarded the Stalin International Peace Prize the next year. Was on staff of the Communist Party's newspaper, The Daily Worker and wrote a column for many years. Finally resigns from the Party after 1956 when Khrushchev gives a speech about the horrors of Stalin's

regime. Finally accepted by the mainstream releasing such novels as *April Morning*, other sci fi and detective novels under the pseudonym E.V. Cunningham. At the end of the 1970's, Fast's popularity enjoyed a renaissance with the publication of the series that began with the novel *The Immigrants*. It was adapted into a 1978 TV miniseries. Also wrote the Emmy-winning *The Ambassador* about Ben Franklin.

Dies of natural causes at the age of 88 in March 2003. Left behind a second wife and two children, one of which is novelist Jonathan Fast, who was married at one time to Erica Jong.

His Writing

Known as a prolific and politically controversial author. Career extends over the greater part of the 20th century. Wrote more than 50 novels, 20 nonfiction books and 10 plays. Has sold more than 80 million copies of his works. Some have ranked him as the most widely read writer of the 20th century. Demonstrates a talent for writing fast-paced, engaging narratives and an ability to provide realistic historical backdrops to his stories. Writing can be divided into three periods, each affected by his political leanings. First novels, published during an initial period of devoted liberalism, focus on early American history, specifically the fight for freedom. The next period revolves around his membership in the Communist party; the novels reflect not only his political beliefs but also the influence of the party leaders on him. For 13 years Communism dominates his life and his fiction. In 1957 he writes *The Naked God* describing his growing disenchantment with the Communist party and renounces his Communistic affiliations. In the last period, Fast demonstrates a more compassionate philosophy than what he provided in his Communist writings. Wrote *April Morning* and the *Immigrants* series.

Critical Reception

Earlier works tend to receive the most praise from critics. Historical novel of early American frontier establishes him as a talented writer of this genre. The writing that he release during his active years as a Communist receives the most negative comments, not surprising during the Cold War. Accused of being a party hack, allowing his Marxist themes to intrude on his storytelling. *Spartacus* returns him to mass popularity, but reviewers are unimpressed by the novel. Though the Immigrant series is well received by the public, critics are still not impressed by the work, citing a lack of subtlety and a tendency toward didacticism.

Background of Cheyenne

Cheyenne had moved from Minnesota past the Black Hills into the High Plains. They were never a large tribe to begin with, but split into northern and southern divisions after 1833. A time of fierce intertribal warfare against the Crow, Shoshone, and Kiowa enemies for rich new gamelands. Make peace among the tribes, and direct warfare against the invading Whites for the next 25 years. More than 50 engagements with troops and civilians took place. The Southern Cheyenne surrender in 1875, but the Northern Cheyenne resistance continues for several more years. 4 major battles in 1876, including defeating Custer at Little Big Horn. Surrender follows in 1877, with Little Wolf-Dull Knife band surrendering at Fort Robinson and the Two Moons' band surrendering at Fort Keogh, Montana.

The winter of 1877 and the summer of 1878 were terrible seasons for the Cheyenne. They had a horrible fall hunt; Indians from other reservations had hunted the ground over before them and driven the buffalo off. Their agent says that in the future the Indian must rely on tilling the grounds as a principal means of support. The buffalo is gone, their pony herds are constantly being decimated by horse-thieves, and they must adopt the way of the white man. They make money by selling buffalo hides to supplement their rations, but only sold $657 compared to $17,600 for the previous year.

The summer is one of unusual heat, with the Indians also suffering from chills and fever and a reduced ration. On this reservation of 5,000 people, 2,000 are sick. No proper supply of anti-malarial medicine.

The Northern Cheyenne want to go back home, but they are not compliant with the agent's wishes and "it may be necessary in the future to compel what so far we have been unable to effect by kindness and appeal to their better natures."

In September 1878 Dull Knife leads his followers from Indian territory, with the 4th regiment of the U.S. Cavalry pursuing them. Cheyenne killed those who stood in their way; nearly 100 bodies were marked and recorded by the regiment. Cowboys killed for their weapons and horses, soldiers perished because they were a threat, and the settlers because they were in the way. The band led out by Little Wolf surrender in the spring and is allowed to join the Two Moons' band at Fort Keogh.

After the band of 300 escape and are brought back to Fort Robinson, Nebraska they are confined as prisoners of war. The army officers in charge implore the Department of Interior to allow the Indians to remain in the North, to no avail. The Indians must go back to the agency. Indians refuse so food and fuel is stopped for them. At the end of two days, officer in charge asks for the women and children to come out so he might feed them. No one comes out. On the night of the 4th day (or perhaps the 6th, by some accounts), they break prison, hold back the pursuing troops for several days and then make a last stand in a deep ravine. Out of the whole band only 50 people who had been confined to another part of the fort remained alive. Men, women and children, sent to Fort Leavenworth to be put in prison. Men tried for murders for their part in skirmishes in Kansas on their way North. Women and children go live with a band of Sioux.

Later on, in a report in 1879, Commissioner of Indian Affairs tries to show that Indians not starving at the time of their escape. Actually, the quantity of beef was hundreds of pounds less than was reported.

Testifying by Cheyenne before this committee:
When asked if they were allowed to hunt—We went out on a buffalo-hunt and nearly starved while out; we could not find any buffalo hardly; we could hardly get back with our ponies; we had to kill a good many of our ponies to eat, to save ourselves from starving.

How many children got sick and died? Between 1877 and 1878 we lost 50 children. A wife of one of the chiefs testifies, "The main thing I complained of was that we didn't get enough to eat; my children nearly starved to death; then sickness came. For a long time the most they had to ear was corn-meal and salt. 3-4 children died every day for a while.))

Eventually all Northern Cheyenne reunite on a reservation on the Tongue River in Montana. During the reservation years, they make the transition from government rations to farming. After World War II, they become heavily dependent on welfare. A tribal college named after Dull Knife now a part of the reservation. Remains of the Cheyenne killed during the outbreak have been returned from the Smithsonian for reburial in the Two Moons cemetery. Other artifacts taken to historical museums have been "repatriated" to members of the tribe.

Questions

1. "It is a great story, even if the book is something short of great. Mr. Fast is not sentimental, and the agonized sympathy with which one puts the novel down is the result of what happens in its pages, not of any tears Mr. Fast sheds himself or asks us to shed." He tells a dramatic story with highly controlled passion. It is a tale that calls for denunciation and indignation, but he does not mar it by exaggeration. Too detached?

2. "Throughout out the novel, Fast impresses upon the reader the inherent racism of American settlers' treatment of the Indian and points out the irony of double standards of freedom in a democracy." Feeling of compassion and admiration for a feat of unrivaled courage and dignity.

3. "Freedom", explains Carl Schurz, Secretary of the Interior, To Sherman, is the "right of any man to choose death to slavery. If everything else was taken away, he still had his free doom left."

4. Schurz claims, "Nothing that is wrong in principle can be right in practice." Later he states, " Minorities are a nuisance. And since every majority leaves a minority, democracy is cumbersome and foolish".

5. How does the writing suit the tale? Austerely polished and austerely poetic, suited to this epic tale of a desperate effort for dignified survival.

6. "...it is unfortunate that the author does not distinguish more clearly between facts supported by evidence and details supplied by his imagination."

7. Inclusion of Bat Masterson and Wyatt Earp. To what purpose? Men of reason? Did Earp really round up a posse?

8. Ridiculous situation where 12,000 men go after 300 Indians (only 80 are men).

9. Troops save one child at the creek bed. "The fit passes, washed out, used up, expiated in blood, leaving the Fort Robinson troops cold and tired and sick."

10. Reporter Jackson interviewing Schurz—"But those guns at Ft. Robinson, they weren't only pointed at the Indians, they were pointed at you and me."

Characters:
Less concerned with characters as individuals than with what they stand for.
John Miles-weak, ineffectual, sorry for them, but what can he do? With little food, it is he who has to choose who will be fed. Those professing Christianity are favored, and Cheyenne were known to stubborn about conversion. Miles says give in love and serve in love and with love you will be received. John Seger (teacher, handyman) says to beat them into submission. Either one work?

Colonel Mizner—the only good Indian is a dead Indian. Can't reason with them.

Captain Murray—the only fictional character among the main characters. Why did Fast create him? "He goes to pieces in a losing fight against an enemy he considers inferior both as human material and military power." Others think he's weak. Other officer remarks that Murray has a lot of respect for them. Creates a balance in views?

Schurz—Only when the nation was aroused to indignation by the massacre did Schurz pen the words, which insured freedom to the second half of the wanderers. Did he fail to act before; could he? He's a foreigner, and sees the possibilities of America.

Little Wolf—very eloquent, reasonable. (p.39) in refusing to turn over 10 men for the 3 that ran away. "Sometimes it is better for people to be dead than slaves."

General Sherman—signs order to round up the Indian. Has reasons to nullify the Harvey-Sanborn Treaty—"That's all any treaty with Indian tribes amounts to—a gesture." (77) "I don't have any sympathy for Indians. If we had cleaned them out, the lot of them 50 yrs. ago, the country would be better for it.

Introduction

A prolific and politically controversial author, Howard Fast has written numerous works of popular fiction, biographies, plays, and film scripts, though is best known for his historical fiction and the novel upon which the 1960 movie *Spartacus* was based. In a career that extends over the greater part of the twentieth century, Fast has demonstrated a talent for writing fast-paced, engaging narratives and an ability to provide realistic historical backdrops to his stories. Often violent and sometimes sentimental, his novels display a respect for personal courage and a desire for social justice. At one time a devoted Communist--and then a repentant one--Fast is almost as well known for his political life as he is for his novels, which have introduced millions of readers to his liberal vision and interpretation of America's historical legacy.

Biographical Information

Fast was born in New York City to immigrant parents; his father was from the Ukraine and his mother from Lithuania. Fast grew up in poverty and his mother died when he was eight. His older sister soon moved out to get married, leaving his father to take care of Fast and his two brothers. His father held a series of low-paying jobs, forcing Fast and his older brother to earn money from a newspaper route and sometimes to steal food from their neighbors. Fast worked various odd jobs while in high school, from which he graduated in 1931. He won a scholarship to the National Academy of Design, but after selling a story to a science fiction magazine, he dropped out the next year. He ran away from home and traveled through the South with a friend, but had to return home after failing to secure a job. Fast managed to have his novel *Two Valleys* (1933) published at the age of eighteen. The book was well received but its successor, *Strange Yesterday* (1934), was not similarly welcomed. While his next novel, *Place in the City* (1937), failed to sell, Fast's career was strengthened when in 1937, *Story* magazine published his short story, "The Children." Several New England cities, including Boston, banned the story, which centers on a Halloween lynching, no doubt aiding sales. The rapid publication of several successful novels followed: *Conceived in Liberty* (1939), *The Last Frontier* (1941), *The Unvanquished* (1942), and *Citizen Tom Paine* (1944). Fast wrote Voice of America broadcasts to occupied Europe from 1942-44. The following year, he served as a war correspondent in the China-Burma-India theater. He joined the Communist party in 1944. Fast appeared before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and in 1950 was briefly imprisoned on contempt charges leveled against him by HUAC. Inspired by his time in prison, Fast wrote *Spartacus* (1951). Unable to find a publisher due to interference from J. Edgar Hoover's FBI headquarters, Fast finally published the novel himself, producing a great popular success. Politically active, he worked for the Progressive party in 1948 and in 1952 attempted to run for Congress. The subsequent year, Fast was awarded the Stalin International Peace Prize. In 1954 he joined the permanent staff of the Communist party newspaper the *Daily Worker.* However, he finally resigned from the party in 1956 after Khrushchev's speech on the horrors of Stalin's regime was released. Fast was once again welcomed by mainstream publishing and released such novels as *April Morning* (1961) and *The Hessian* (1972), as well as numerous science fiction and detective novels under the pseudonym E. V. Cunningham. At the end of the 1970s, Fast's popularity enjoyed a renaissance with the publication of the series that began with the novel *The Immigrants* (1977). Since then, Fast has continued his pattern of publishing frequently, including the memoir *Being Red* (1990).

Major Works

Fast's career can be roughly divided into three periods, during which his writing was affected by his political leanings. His first novels, published during an initial period of devoted liberalism, often focus on early American history, specifically the fight for freedom. His first novel, *Two Valleys,* is a frontier adventure set during the American Revolution. *The Last Frontier* looks at a group of Cheyenne Indians who attempt to leave their reservation in Oklahoma for their homeland in North Dakota while being

pursued by cavalry. *The Unvanquished* provides a human portrait of George Washington during the American Revolution's darker days. *Citizen Tom Paine* offers an interesting portrayal of one of the revolution's most important political leaders.

The next period in Fast's literary development revolves around his membership in the Communist party, a time in which his novels reflected not only his political beliefs but the influence of party leaders as well. *Freedom Road* (1944) presents a vision of Reconstruction as a period in which southern blacks and whites worked together to construct a new society. *The American* (1946) features a profile of John Peter Altgeld, the governor of Illinois who pardoned three anarchists in the 1886 Haymarket bombings, while *Spartacus* details the mainly fictitious revolt conducted by Roman slaves. During this time, Fast also wrote partisan works of nonfiction that demonstrated his political concerns, including *Peekskill, U.S.A.* (1951), *Spain and Peace* (1952), and *The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti* (1953). In *The Naked God* (1957), Fast's refutation of Communism, the author described his growing disenchantment with the Communist party and his renunciation of Communist affiliations. Fast would return to this subject in *Being Red,* in which he attempted to explain his experience as a member of the Communist party.

In the period following his disavowal of Communism, Fast's writings demonstrate a more compassionate philosophy than what his Communist-influenced writings provided. *April Morning* describes a teenage boy's coming of age during the Battle of Lexington, while *The Hessian* depicts the struggles of a Quaker family and a doctor during the American Revolution when a young Hessian soldier faces hanging. This period also features the novels Fast wrote under the pseudonym E. V. Cunningham, in many of which he explores his attraction to Zen Buddhism. Fast's most recent popular success has been *The Immigrants,* the title referring both to the 1977 novel and to the series which now comprises several novels--*Second Generation* (1978), *The Establishment* (1979), *The Legacy* (1981), *The Immigrant's Daughter* (1985), and *An Independent Woman* (1997). Beginning in turn-of-the-century San Francisco, the first installment focuses on an Italian fisherman named Dan Lavette who marries a Nob Hill heiress and builds a shipping empire, yet finds happiness only with his Chinese mistress. *Second Generation* centers upon Lavette's daughter, who endeavors to come to terms with her double heritage of immigrant and upper-class backgrounds. Along with the publication of these novels, Fast continued to release many additional works of fiction, notably *Max* (1982), *The Dinner Party* (1987), *The Pledge* (1988), and *Seven Days in June* (1994).

Critical Reception

Fast's reputation with critics has not, unfortunately, kept pace with his prolific output. His earlier novels, in fact, have tended to receive the most praise among his works. *Two Valleys* was welcomed as an exciting start for a promising beginner. Within the following decade, Fast's compelling novels of the early American frontier established him as a talented writer of historical fiction; many of these books became standard reading for high school students. Highly praised among Fast's early novels was *Citizen Tom Paine,* which reviewers commended for providing a convincing portrait of Thomas Paine set against an expressive wartime background. The popularity of these historical novels among both critics and the reading public was fostered by the atmosphere of patriotism that the United States experienced as the nation entered World War II. The critical esteem that Fast received during his career peaked with this group of historical novels, which also includes *The Last Frontier* and *The Unvanquished.* While many reviewers and public figures such as W. E. B DuBois and Eleanor Roosevelt lauded *Freedom Road* as a significant novel on race relations, it was also criticized for showing little resemblance to reality.

The writing that Fast released during his most active years as a Communist tended to receive negative comments, not surprising during the Cold War. In these works, Fast was accused of being a party hack, allowing his Marxist themes to intrude on his storytelling and proving himself unable to maintain an

adequate distance from his subject. While *Spartacus* returned Fast to mass popularity, reviewers were left unimpressed by the novel. Today, the fame of *Spartacus* rests perhaps less with the novel than with the 1960 movie starring Kirk Douglas. Though *The Naked God,* Fast's contemporaneous look at his rejection of Communism, was dismissed as badly written and lacking in analysis, *Being Red* was received as a more balanced account of American Communism, though criticized for its lack of introspection and historical accuracy. With the novels *April Morning* and *The Hessian,* Fast was credited as having demonstrated a more mature vision. While Fast's fame was renewed with the popular series *The Immigrants,* his critical standing was not rejuvenated. Critics applauded Fast for demonstrating that he could still tell a good story, but otherwise were not much impressed by the work, citing a lack of subtlety as well as pointing to Fast's tendency toward didacticism. While Fast has continued to publish much since the 1970s, none of his more recent works have had the critical or popular appeal of *Citizen Tom Paine, Spartacus,* or *The Immigrants.* Fast, however, has consistently shown himself capable of producing engrossing works of fiction, causing some critics to call for serious reevaluation of his massive oeuvre and literary significance.

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Howard Fast

1914-2003

Also known as: Howard (Melvin) Fast, Howard Melvin Fast, E. V. Cunningham, Walter Ericson, Walter Erickson

Nationality: American

Genre(s): Short stories; Biographies; Novels; Plays; Memoirs; Children's literature; Mystery fiction; Historical novels

WRITINGS BY THE AUTHOR:

- *Two Valleys* (New York: Dial, 1933; London: Lovat Dickson, 1933).
- *Strange Yesterday* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1934).
- *Place in the City* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1937).
- *Conceived in Liberty: A Novel of Valley Forge* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1939; London: Joseph, 1939).
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- *Spain and Peace* (New York: Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee, 1952).
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- *Thirty Pieces of Silver* (New York: Blue Heron, 1954; London: Bodley Head, 1954).

- *The Last Supper and Other Stories* (New York: Blue Heron, 1955; London: Bodley Head, 1956).
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- *The Winston Affair* (New York: Crown, 1959; London: Methuen, 1960).
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- *Sylvia*, as E. V. Cunningham (Garden City: Doubleday, 1960).
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- *The Edge of Tomorrow* (New York: Bantam, 1961).
- *Phyllis*, as E. V. Cunningham (Garden City: Doubleday, 1962).
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- *Cynthia*, as E. V. Cunningham (New York: Morrow, 1968; London: Deutsch, 1969).
- *The Jews: Story of a People* (New York: Dial, 1968; London: Cassell, 1970).
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- *The Crossing* (New York: Morrow, 1971; London: Eyre Methuen, 1972).
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- *The Outsider* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984).
- *The Immigrant's Daughter* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985).
- *The Dinner Party* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).
- *The Pledge* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988).
- *The Confession of Joe Cullen* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989).
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- *Seven Days in June: A Novel of the American Revolution* (Secaucus, N.J.: Carol, 1994).
- *The Bridge Builder's Story: A Novel* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1995).

Born in New York City, the son of Barney and Ida Miller Fast, Howard Melville Fast attended George Washington High School and the National Academy of Design. On 6 June 1937, he married Bette Cohen. They had two children, Rachel and Jonathan. Fast served on the overseas staff of the U.S. Office of War Information, with a special Signal Corps unit from 1942 to 1944, became a war correspondent in the China-Burma-India theater in 1944-1945, and was a foreign correspondent for *Esquire* and *Coronet* during 1945. Fast also has been an indefatigable writer, lecturer, and political activist.

His long and prolific career may be divided into three periods, reflecting crucial shifts in his political alignment that also affected his approach to fiction. During his first decade as a novelist, Fast was a fervent liberal committed to exploring America's heritage of freedom. Focusing primarily on the Revolutionary War period, his early work can best be characterized as "an honest effort to tell a great story from the reverse of the conventional point of view," as Steven Vincent Beneát said of *Conceived In Liberty* (1939), a grimly realistic novel about Valley Forge. As a storyteller, Fast has his greatest appeal: his knack for sketching lifelike characters and creating brisk, action-packed narratives has always insured him a wide readership, despite occasionally slipshod writing.

His first novel, *Two Valleys* (1933), written when Fast was eighteen and working as a page at the New York Public Library, is a fast-moving tale of bloodshed, romance, and thrilling escapes, set on the frontier during the American Revolution. Critics found this work "unusually successful" in reflecting the "terror and beauty of the wilderness," and in conveying "the feeling of a future full of limitless possibilities," an encouraging sign for its precocious author. While his over-ambitious second novel, *Strange Yesterday* (1934), bogged down trying to trace five generations of an American family from the Revolutionary War days to the present, such accomplished works as *The Last Frontier* (1941), *The Unvanquished* (1942), and *Citizen Tom Paine* (1943) established Fast's reputation as a gifted and compelling author of historical fiction.

Typical of Fast's unusual treatment and perspective was a novel for juveniles called *Haym Salomon, Son of Liberty* (1941), a semi-fictional life story of a Polish-Jewish broker and financier who helped the American cause during the Revolution. At this time, he began to turn out numerous other works for young people, including *Goethals and the Panama Canal* (1942), *Lord Baden-Powell of the Boy Scouts* (1941), *The Tall Hunter* (1942), and *The Picture-Book History of the Jews* (1942), written with Bette Fast. Indeed, one of the weaknesses, and strengths, of his mature work is its appeal to the sensitive adolescent. Or as one critic said of *The Unvanquished*: "Without implying any disparagement of a mature and well-documented novel, one finds in it something of the refreshing quality of a talented child's painting."

At the onset of World War II, not yet thirty years old, Fast reached the peak of his popularity and critical esteem; the novels produced during this period are as undervalued today as they were over-praised then. Of particular merit is *The Last Frontier*, a tautly written and moving tale that concerns a group of some three hundred Cheyenne Indians who, in 1878, were driven to despair by terrible conditions at their Oklahoma reservation and made a terrible hegira to their homeland in North Dakota.

Pursued and all but exterminated by the U. S. Cavalry, a pitiful remnant finally managed to reach their destination. Robert Littel observed in the *Yale Review* that "it is a great story, even if the book is something short of great. Mr. Fast is not sentimental, and the agonized sympathy with which one puts the novel down is the result of what happens in its pages, not of any tears Mr. Fast sheds himself or asks us to shed."

The Unvanquished attempts the seemingly impossible task of presenting George Washington as a believable human being rather than a one-dimensional founding father. Tracing the course of the American Revolution during its darkest days, from the lost Battle of Brooklyn in September 1776 through the rout of the Hessians at Trenton on 26 December 1776, this provocative novel also deals with Washington: "the confused, humble, indecisive foxhunter from Virginia developing slowly into a great leader of men." Malcolm Cowley wrote that "Mr. Fast writes with a catch in his breath and sometimes brings tears to his own eyes instead of the reader's....And yet if this book does not belong to the history of American literature, at least it will be important in the history of the popular mind. It restores a great figure to our mythology...." Other reviewers and readers were more generous with their praise than Cowley, and such was the patriotic temper of the times that almost everyone had a good word to say about this novel.

More controversial, and perhaps more interesting today, is *Citizen Tom Paine*, a fascinating portrait of a complex and extraordinary eighteenth-century figure into whom Fast breathes considerable vitality. As Clifton Fadiman wrote, "Paine appears as a fool on occasion, a weakling on occasion, a bad politician always, but also as one of the very few men of his time (Franklin was another) who understood `the inevitability of America [Fast's phrase], who understood that the thirteen quarrel-some jealous colonies bore within them the seeds of a new world."

This highly successful portrait of one of America's greatest radicals preceded Fast's conversion to Communism in 1943, a time when most intellectuals were fleeing the party in droves. For the next thirteen years, Communism dominated Fast's life and fiction. He has always been involved in anti-Fascist causes, and had worked in a hospital for wounded Spanish Republicans in Toulouse during the Spanish Civil War, but now Fast's political commitments became much more intense. Besides promoting various movements to improve race relations, he campaigned for Congress in 1952 on the American Labor Party ticket. In 1950 he was jailed by the House Committee on Un-American Activities for refusing to give the names of the anti-Fascists who had contributed to the hospital's support. Although Fast claims that he resisted pressures from the Party to remove "politically incorrect" and "bourgeois" passages from his work, the novels of this period became increasingly strident and doctrinaire, with one-dimensional proletarian heroes and capitalist villains, interminable harangues, and contrived plots. In *The Naked God* (1957), his recantation of Communism, he admits that he had "sold his soul" to the Party, and even submitted to such humiliations as being ordered "by a petty Party functionary ... in terms of savage vindictiveness ... to change the third act" of a play called *Thirty Pieces of Silver* (1954). In view of the pressures he underwent both from anti-communist forces and his own political colleagues, Fast was probably to be admired more for the sincerity of his convictions than for his profundity or skill as a writer.

His first protest novel, *Freedom Road* (1944), which won the Schomberg Award for Race Relations that year, depicts the Reconstruction period following the Civil War when, in Fast's view, blacks and whites worked together for a few years to build a decent society. Diana Trilling, who had praised some of Fast's earlier efforts, found this work "profoundly untrue because it bears no resemblance to human life under any circumstances. I am quite certain that no group of people--black, white or mixed--could behave with the unmitigated virtue of Mr. Fast's Negroes." The chief merit of the novel, like that of Lillian E. Smith's *Strange Fruit* (1944) or Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), lies in its historical interest rather than in its literary merit: like Smith's novel, *Freedom Road* reflects society's

growing consciousness of the black man's struggle for liberation, and hence it earned the praise of W. E. B. DuBois and others who admired it as a useful democratic tract supporting the cause of equality. Fast continued to write stirring historical fiction about the American Revolution (*Patrick Henry and the Frigate's Keel*, 1945, and *The Proud and the Free*, 1950, for example), but increasingly his novels focused on Marxist themes: *Clarkton* (1947) tells the story of a Massachusetts mill town from a socialist viewpoint; *The American* (1946) is a biographical novel based on the life of John Peter Altgeld, a midwestern politician who pardoned three of the anarchists convicted of the 1886 Haymarket bombings (he was also one of the subjects in John F. Kennedy's *Profiles in Courage*); and finally, *Spartacus* (1951), the most controversial of all his works, which used the great slave revolt of 71 B.C. as a metaphor for the struggles of all oppressed peoples against their inhuman masters. Having written most of *Spartacus* while incarcerated in federal prison for contempt of Congress, Fast founded Blue Heron Press when no one would publish his work. *Spartacus* became his best-seller and was made into a movie in 1960. It was probably this work that earned Fast the Stalin Peace Prize in 1954.

Fast's political convictions also earned him vituperative reviews, of which the following was typical: "Howard Fast ... has degenerated into a mere party hack." Another reviewer charged that "beneath the surface of Mr. Fast's easy melodrama, the red undershirt is as plain as the rising sun." Some were willing to concede that Fast had not lost his gift for storytelling and characterization.

Besides fiction, Fast wrote biographies, usually of the partisan sort-- *The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti*, 1953, and *Tito and His People*, 1948--as well as accounts of his political views and experiences, such as *Peekskill, USA* (1951). In the latter, wrote Fast, "I told how I was thrown into a situation where I was instrumental in saving the lives of many people. That was probably the most important act of my life...." During the Paul Robeson concert at Peekskill, New York, in the summer of 1949, Fast helped to organize resistance against attacks by anti-communist rioters and police. In 1956, Fast became disenchanted with the Communist party and renounced his former affiliations, which nevertheless gained him little credit with liberal critics such as Irving Howe who found his recantation, *The Naked God* (1957), poorly written and disappointing in its analysis.

During the last two decades, Fast has become a moderately successful writer of competent historical fiction and thrillers written under pseudonyms, turning out a book a year ranging in quality from dreadful (*Torquemada*, 1966, being perhaps the most contrived and plodding) to readable and engaging. He has continued to write effective novels about the Revolutionary period: *April Morning* (1961), which can be viewed as an optimistic version of *The Red Badge of Courage*, depicts a teenage boy's rite of passage during the Battle of Lexington; *The Hessian* (1972), which was praised by William Sloane Coffin, describes the agonized struggles of conscience among members of a Quaker family and a disillusioned doctor when a Hessian boy whose regiment was slaughtered by angry townspeople must either be sheltered or face hanging; and *The Crossing* (1971), an account of Washington's crossing the Delaware on Christmas night 1776 to attack the Hessians at Trenton and drive them north past Princeton.

The crises that Fast's protagonists undergo in his latest novels tend to be personal and religious as well as political, thus reflecting Fast's own attempt to find a more compassionate and comprehensive social philosophy than that offered by communism or partisan liberalism. *Moses, Prince of Egypt* (1958) focuses on the future Jewish leader's childhood in the court of Ramses and explores his rebellion against the religious powers-that-be; most striking is the novel's colorful and exotic evocation of its historical setting. *Agrippa's Daughter* (1964) portrays the Jewish princess Berenice who grows from a spoiled court brat into a compassionate leader of her people, thanks to the influence of the Hillel movement. Increasingly, his novels tend to be dismissed by serious critics. In a devastating review of *The Winston Affair* (1959), a novel centering on the court martial of an American soldier accused of killing a British soldier in the Far East during World War II, V. S. Naipaul calls the work "wordy,

contrived, and undistinguished; but sincere."

Turning his hand to science fiction, thrillers, war novels, even updating biblical stories (Fast's 1964 play *The Hill* is based on the gospels and takes place in contemporary Harlem's Mount Morris Park), Fast has not slackened the pace of his writing, despite his fall from critical grace. His most ambitious work to date has been a trilogy-- *The Immigrants* (1977), *Second Generation* (1978), and *The Establishment* (1979)--chronicling the lives of a French-Italian family that settled in San Francisco around the turn of the century. The hero of *The Immigrants* (which was made into a television movie) is a tough, ambitious Italian fisherman named Dan Lavette, who marries a Nob Hill heiress and builds a shipping empire, but finds happiness only in the arms of his sensitive, intelligent Oriental mistress. *Second Generation* depicts his daughter's struggle to come to terms with her own identity in the face of her "dual inheritance"--the immigrant background of her French-Italian father and the wealthy upper-class background of her mother. Throughout the novel contrasts are made between Dan Lavette's second, half-Oriental family and his first. Those of Chinese descent are good, decent, kind, and hard-working. Those of his Nob Hill marriage are snobbish, greedy, prejudiced, and unkind. Although Fast proves that he can still tell a good story, his writing lacks subtlety and often characters are too sharply delineated as either "good" or "bad."

Fast's novels today seem far less daring or rebellious politically than they may at first have appeared. In fact, for all his iconoclastic and radical pretensions, Fast's ultimate claim to fame may be that he is, in his own words, one of the "few writers in today's America who write literate and intelligent work that can be read for pleasure."

FURTHER READINGS ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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- Anthony Boucher, Review of *Alice, New York Times*, 14 July 1963, p. 18.
- Maxwell Geismar, Review of *Moses: Prince of Egypt, New York Times*, 23 March 1958, p. 38.
- Irving Howe, Review of *The Naked God, New Republic*, 137 (16 December 1957): 18.
- Victor Howes, Review of *The Hessian, Christian Science Monitor*, 23 August 1972, p. 11.
- V. S. Naipaul, Review of *The Winston Affair, New Statesman*, 21 May 1960, p. 59.
- Donald Newlove, Review of *The Immigrants, New York Times*, 2 October 1977, p. 22.
- Diana Trilling, Review of *Citizen Tom Paine, Nation*, 156 (8 May 1943): 676.
- Edward Weeks, Review of *Freedom Road, Atlantic*, 174 (September 1944): 127.

About this Essay: Anthony Manousos, Rutgers University.

Source: *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 9: American Novelists, 1910-1945.* A Bruccoli Clark Layman Book. Edited by James J. Martine, Saint Bonaventure University. Gale Research, 1981. pp. 277-281.

Source Database: Dictionary of Literary Biography

Howard (Melvin) Fast

description of other books

1914-2003

Entry Updated : 10/21/2003
Birth Place: New York, NY
Death Place: Old Greenwich, CT

Personal Information: Family: Born November 11, 1914, in New York, NY; died March 12, 2003, in Old Greenwich, CT; son of Barney (an ironworker, cable car gripper, tin factory worker, and dress factory cutter) and Ida (a homemaker; maiden name, Miller) Fast; married Bette Cohen (a painter and sculptor), June 6, 1937 (died November, 1994); married Mimi O'Connor, June 17, 1999; children: (first marriage) Rachel, Jonathan; stepchildren: three. Education: Attended National Academy of Design. Religion: Jewish. Hobbies and other interests: "Home, my family, the theater, the film, and the proper study of ancient history. And the follies of mankind." Memberships: Century Club, Fellowship of Reconciliation.

Career: Worked at several odd jobs and as a page in the New York Public Library prior to 1932; writer, beginning 1932. Foreign correspondent for *Esquire* and *Coronet,* 1945. Taught at Indiana University, 1947; member of World Peace Council, 1950-55; American Labor Party candidate for U.S. Congress, 23rd New York District, 1952; owner, Blue Heron Press, New York, 1952-57; film writer, 1958-67; chief news writer, Voice of America, 1982-84. Has given numerous lectures and made numerous appearances on radio and television programs. *Military service:* Affiliated with U.S. Office of War Information, 1942-44; correspondent with special Signal Corps unit and war correspondent in China-India-Burma theater, 1945.

Awards: Bread Loaf Literary Award, 1937; Schomberg Award for Race Relations, 1944, for *Freedom Road;* Newspaper Guild award, 1947; National Jewish Book Award, Jewish Book Council, 1949, for *My Glorious Brothers;* International Peace Prize from the Soviet Union, 1954; Screenwriters annual award, 1960; annual book award, National Association of Independent Schools, 1962; American Library Association notable book citation, 1972, for *The Hessian;* Emmy Award for outstanding writing in a drama series, American Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, 1975, for episode "The

Ambassador," *Benjamin Franklin;* Literary Lions Award, New York Public Library, 1985; Prix de la Policia (France), for books under name E. V. Cunningham.

Media Adaptations: The film *Rachel and the Stranger,* RKO Radio Pictures, 1948, was based on the novels *Rachel* and *Neighbor Sam; Spartacus* was filmed in 1960 by Universal Pictures, directed by Stanley Kubrick and Anthony Mann, and starred Kirk Douglas, Laurence Olivier, Tony Curtis, Jean Simmons, Charles Laughton, and Peter Ustinov. Other works by Fast have been adapted to film, including *Man in the Middle,* Twentieth-Century Fox, 1964, based on his novel *The Winston Affair; Mirage,* based on a story he wrote under the pseudonym Walter Ericson, Universal, 1965; *Fallen Angel,* based on his novel of the same title; *Sylvia,* Paramount, 1965, based on the novel of the same title; *Penelope,* Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), 1966, based on the novel of the same title written under the pseudonym E. V. Cunningham; and *Jigsaw,* Universal, 1968, based on the screenplay for *Mirage* which was based on Fast's novel *Fallen Angel.* Writings by Fast have also been adapted for television, including *The Face of Fear,* CBS, 1971, based on the novel *Sally* written under the pseudonym E. V. Cunningham; *What's a Nice Girl like You . . .?,* ABC, 1971, based on his novel *Shirley; 21 Hours at Munich,* ABC, 1976, based on a story by Fast, *The Immigrants,* syndicated, 1978, based on his novel of the same title; *Freedom Road,* National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), 1979, based on his novel of the same title; *April Morning,* broadcast as a *Hallmark Hall of Fame* movie, CBS, 1988, based on the novel of the same title; and *The Crossing,* Arts and Entertainment (A&E), 2000, based on his novel of the same name. *The Crossing* was recorded on cassette, narrated by Norman Dietz, Recorded Books, 1988; *The Immigrant's Daughter* was recorded on cassette, narrated by Sandra Burr, Brilliance Corporation, 1991; *Spartacus* was adapted for a miniseries, USA cable network, 2002.

"Sidelights"

A prolific writer, Howard Fast has published novels, plays, screenplays, stories, historical fiction, and biographies in a career that dates from the early days of the Great Depression. Fast's works have been translated into eighty-two languages and have sold millions of copies worldwide. Some observers have ranked him as the most widely read writer of the twentieth century. *Los Angeles Times* contributor Elaine Kendall wrote: "For half a century, Fast's novels, histories, and biographies have appeared at frequent intervals, a moveable feast with a distinct political flavor." *Washington Post* correspondent Joseph McLellan found Fast's work "easy to read and relatively nourishing," adding that the author "demands little of the reader, beyond a willingness to keep turning the pages, and he supplies enough activity and suspense to make this exercise worthwhile."

The grandson of Ukrainian immigrants and son of a British mother, Fast was raised in New York City. His family struggled to make ends meet, so Fast went to work as a teen and found time to indulge his passion--writing--in his spare moments. His first published novel, *Two Valleys,* was released in 1933 when he was only eighteen. Thereafter Fast began writing full time, and within a decade he had earned a considerable reputation as an historical novelist with his realistic tales of American frontier life. *Dictionary of Literary Biography* contributor Anthony Manousos commented, "As a storyteller, Fast

has his greatest appeal: his knack for sketching lifelike characters and creating brisk, action-packed narratives has always insured him a wide readership, despite occasionally slipshod writing."

Fast found himself drawn to the downtrodden peoples in America's history--the Cheyenne Indians and their tragic attempt to regain their homeland (*The Last Frontier*), the starving soldiers at Valley Forge (*Conceived in Liberty: A Novel of Valley Forge*), and African Americans trying to survive the Reconstruction era in the South (*Freedom Road*). In *Publishers Weekly,* John F. Baker called these works "books on which a whole generation of radicals was brought up." A *Christian Science Monitor* contributor likewise noted: "Human nature rather than history is Howard Fast's field. In presenting these harassed human beings without any heroics he makes us all the more respectful of the price paid for American liberty." *Freedom Road* in particular was praised by the nation's black leaders for its depiction of one race's struggle for liberation; the book became a bestseller and won the Schomberg Award for Race Relations in 1944.

During the World War II, Fast worked as a correspondent for several periodicals and for the Office of War Information. After the conflict ended he found himself at odds with the Cold War mentality developing in the United States. At the time Fast was a member of the Communist Party and a contributor of time and money to a number of anti-fascist causes. His writing during the period addressed such issues as the abuse of power, the suppression of labor unions, and communism as the basis for a utopian future. Works such as *Clarkton, My Glorious Brothers,* and *The Proud and the Free* were widely translated behind the Iron Curtain and earned Fast the International Peace Prize in 1954.

Baker noted that Fast's political views "made him for a time in the 1950s a pariah of the publishing world." The author was jailed for three months on a contempt of Congress charge for refusing to testify before the House Committee on Un-American Activities about his political views. Worse, he found himself blacklisted to such an extent that no publishing house would accept his manuscripts. Fast's persecution seemed ironic to some observers, because in the historical and biographical novels he had already published--like *Conceived in Liberty: A Novel of Valley Forge* and *The Unvanquished*--as well as in his work for the Office of War Information, Fast emphasized the importance of freedom and illuminated the heroic acts that had built American society. As a correspondent for the radio program that would become the Voice of America, he was entrusted with the job of assuring millions of foreigners of the country's greatness and benevolence during World War II.

Fast makes the relatively unknown or forgotten history of the United States accessible to millions of Americans in books like *The Last Frontier,* in which he writes a fictional account of the real-life 1878 rebellion by a tribe of northern Cheyenne Indians. According to *Twentieth-Century Western Writers* reviewer David Marion Holman, "Starved and denuded of pride, the small group of 300 men, women, and children illegally leave the reservation to return to their ancestral homeland. After eluding the U.S. cavalry for weeks . . . part of the tribe is eventually captured. As a result of their unwavering determination not to return to the Oklahoma reservation, the imprisoned

Indians suffer from starvation and exposure, and are eventually massacred when they attempt a desperate escape." Because of this tragedy, the Secretary of the Interior eventually grants the rest of the tribe its freedom. Holman concluded, "Throughout the novel, Fast impresses upon the reader the inherent racism of American settlers' treatment of the Indian and points out the irony of double standards of freedom in a democracy."

Fast subsequently learned of Stalin's atrocities and broke his ties with the Communist Party in 1956; but he did not regret the decision he had made in 1944. His experience as the target of political persecution evoked some of his best and most popular works. It also led Fast to establish his own publishing house, the Blue Heron Press. In a discussion of Fast's fiction from 1944 through 1959, *Nation* correspondent Stanley Meisler contended that the "older writings must not be ignored. They document a unique political record, a depressing American waste. They describe a man who distorted his vision of America to fit a vision of communism, and then lost both." Fast published *Spartacus* under the Blue Heron imprint in 1951. A fictional account of a slave revolt in ancient Rome, *Spartacus* became a bestseller after it was made into a feature film in 1960.

Fast went on to publish five books chronicling the fictional Lavette family, beginning with *The Immigrants* in 1977. *The Immigrants* and its sequels represent some of his most popular work. The first book of the series is set mostly in San Francisco, where Dan Lavette, the son of an Italian fisherman, lives through the great earthquake in that city and goes on to build a fortune in the shipping business. The fates of an Irish family and a Chinese family are also entwined with those of the Lavettes. *The Immigrant's Daughter* relates the story of Barbara Lavette--Dan Lavette's daughter--and her political aspirations. Denise Gess in the *New York Times Book Review* called *The Immigrant's Daughter* "satisfying, old-fashioned story-telling" despite finding the novel occasionally "soap-operatic and uneven." Barbara Conaty, reviewing the novel in *Library Journal,* called Fast a "smooth and assured writer." A reviewer for *Publishers Weekly* concurred, commenting that, "smoothly written, fast-paced, alive with plots and subplots, the story reads easily." With the publication of *The Immigrant's Daughter,* the series appeared to reach its conclusion, but in 1997, Fast surprised readers with a sixth installment in the saga, *An Independent Woman.* This book relates the final years of Barbara Lavette's life. Barbara has some things in common with her creator: like him, she is a reporter, a victim of McCarthyism, and a worker for civil rights. The twilight years of her life continue to be dynamic. She battles injustice and cancer, finds romance, and astonishes her family by marrying again. A *Kirkus Reviews* writer called *An Independent Woman* "a muted, somewhat puzzling, addenda to a lively (and successful) series."

Fast published another politically charged novel in 1989, with *The Confession of Joe Cullen.* Focusing on U.S. military involvement in Central America, *The Confession of Joe Cullen* is the story of a C.I.A. pilot who confesses to New York City police that, among other things, he murdered a priest in Honduras, and has been smuggling cocaine into the United States. Arguing that the conspiracy theory that implicates the federal government in drug trafficking and gun running has never been proved, Morton Kondracke in the *New York Times Book Review* had reservations about the "political propaganda" involved in *The Confession of Joe Cullen.* Robert H. Donahugh, however,

highly recommended the novel in *Library Journal,* calling it "unexpected and welcome," and lauding both the "fast-moving" storyline and the philosophical probing into Catholicism. Denise Perry Donavin, in *Booklist,* concurred, finding the politics suiting the characters "without lessening the pace of a powerful tale."

Fast focuses on another controversial subject, the issue of abortion, in his 1993 novel, *The Trial of Abigail Goodman.* As a *Publishers Weekly* critic noted, Fast views America's attitude toward abortion as "parochial," and is sympathetic to his protagonist, a college professor who has an abortion during the third trimester in a southern state with a retroactive law forbidding such acts. Critical reaction to the novel was mixed. Ray Olson in *Booklist* argued that "every anti-abortion character" is stereotyped, and that Fast "undermines . . . any pretensions to evenhandedness," and called the novel "an execrable work." The *Publishers Weekly* critic, on the other hand, found *The Trial of Abigail Goodman* "electrifying" and considered Fast "a master of courtroom pyrotechnics." Many critics, including Susan Dooley in the *Washington Post,* viewed the novel as too polemical, failing to flesh out the characters and the story. Dooley argued that Fast "has not really written a novel; his book is a tract for a cause, and like other similar endeavors, it concentrates more on making converts than creating characters." A reviewer for *Armchair Detective* concluded that the novel would have been much stronger if "there were some real sincerity and some well-expressed arguments from the antagonists." A *Rapport* reviewer commented, "Fast is more than capable of compelling character studies. There's a kernel of a powerful trial novel here, but this prestigious writer chooses not to flesh it out."

Fast returned to the topic of the American Revolution in *Seven Days in June: A Novel of the American Revolution.* A *Publishers Weekly* critic summarized: "Fictionalizing the experiences of British commanders, loyalists to the crown and a motley collection of American revolutionaries, Fast . . . fashions this dramatic look at a week of profound tension that will erupt [into] the battle of Bunker Hill." Some critics saw *Seven Days in June* as inferior to Fast's *April Morning,* also a novel about the American Revolution, which was considered by some to be a minor masterpiece. Charles Michaud in *Library Journal* found that *Seven Days* "is very readable pop history, but as a novel it is not as involving as . . . *April Morning.*" A *Kirkus Reviews* critic faulted the novel for repetitiveness and a disproportionate amount of focus on the sexual exploits of the British commanders, concluding that *Seven Days* "has a slipshod, slapdash feel, cluttered with hurried, lazy characterizations." The critic for *Publishers Weekly,* however, argued that the novel "ekes genuine suspense" and lauded Fast's "accomplished storytelling."

The Bridge Builder's Story tells of Scott Waring and his young bride, Martha, who honeymoon in Europe during the Nazi era and find themselves persecuted by Hitler's thuggish minions. After Martha is killed by the Gestapo, Scott makes his way to New York, where his ensuing sessions with a psychiatrist provide much of the narrative. Albert Wilheim, writing in *Library Journal,* thought that the novel tested "the limits of credibility," but praised Fast's "skillful narration." And Alice Joyce, in *Booklist,* opined that in *The Bridge Builder's Story,* "Fast's remarkable prowess for storytelling" results in a "riveting tale, sure to satisfy readers."

Fast's time as a communist in cold war America provided him with an extraordinary story to share in his autobiographical works, which included *Being Red: A Memoir.* Charles C. Nash of *Library Journal* called *Being Red* "indispensable to the . . . literature on America's terrifying postwar Red Scare." Fast explained to Jean W. Ross in an interview for *CA:* "There is no way to imagine war or to imagine jail or to imagine being a father or a mother. These things can only be understood if you live through them. Maybe that's a price that a writer should pay." Fast told Ken Gross in *People Weekly* that he wrote the book at the request of his son Jonathan, who wanted to share the story with his own children. Rhoda Koenig of *New York* magazine remarked that Fast's story is "a lively and gripping one," and that he "brings alive the days of parochial-school children carrying signs that read 'KILL A COMMIE FOR CHRIST.'"

With a critical eye, Ronald Radosh claimed in *Commentary* that *Being Red* contains information and perspectives that contradict portions of Fast's 1957 memoir, *The Naked God: The Writer and the Communist Party.* In Radosh's opinion, *Being Red* was the author's attempt to "rehabilitate" the Communist Party he had admonished in *The Naked God.* "Now, nearly thirty-five years later, it almost sounds as though Fast wants to end his days winning back the admiration of those unreconstructed Communists," Radosh asserted, even calling them "some of the noblest human beings I have ever known."

In 1999 Fast published *Redemption,* a suspense novel featuring Ike Goldman, a character who seems to be the author's alter ego. Goldman is a retired professor, highly intelligent, and the veteran of numerous political and social struggles. Driving through New York City one night, he sees a woman, Elizabeth, about to jump from a bridge. He talks Elizabeth out of her desperate act and, in the weeks that follow, finds himself falling in love with her. The two are planning to wed, when Elizabeth's ex-husband is found dead in suspicious circumstances, making her a suspect. Goldman does all he can to aid in her defense, but as the evidence against her mounts, his own doubts about her innocence increase. "The story moves along sedately in Fast's most relaxed style ever, with the author . . . plainly enjoying and indulging himself in this smoked salmon of romantic fantasy, adding plot dollops to keep the reader alert. . . . Fast's followers won't be disappointed," advised a contributor to *Kirkus Reviews.* The following year, Fast published *Greenwich,* a tale of eight people invited to a high-society dinner party in Greenwich, Connecticut. The comfortable life they enjoy masks an evil undercurrent; Fast suggests that guilt is widespread, and redemption is vital. Although faulting the book as stylistically "bland," a *Kirkus Reviews* writer nevertheless added: "It doesn't have to be a classic if it comes from the heart."

Fast has also published a number of detective novels under the pseudonym E. V. Cunningham, for which he was awarded with a Prix de la Policia. Many of these novels feature a fictional Japanese-American detective named Masao Masuto, who works with the Beverly Hills Police Department. Fast told *Publishers Weekly,* "Critics can't stand my mainline books, maybe because they sell so well, [but] they love Cunningham. Even the *New Yorker* has reviewed him, and they've never reviewed me." In the *New York Times Book Review,* Newgate Callendar called detective Masuto "a well-conceived character whose further exploits should gain him a wide audience." *Toronto Globe and Mail*

contributor Derrick Murdoch also found Masuto "a welcome addition to the lighter side of crime fiction." "Functional and efficient, Fast's prose is a machine in which plot and ideals mesh, turn and clash," Kendall concluded, adding, "The reader is constantly being instructed, but the manner is so disarming and the hectic activity so absorbing that the didacticism seldom intrudes upon the entertainment."

Fast's voice has interpreted America's past and present and has helped shape its reputation at home and abroad. One of his own favorites among his novels, *April Morning,* has been standard reading in public schools for generations. The film *Spartacus* has become a popular classic, and *Being Red* offers an account of American history that Americans may never want to forget, whether or not they agree with Fast's perspectives. As Victor Howes commented in *Christian Science Monitor,* if Howard Fast "is a chronicler of some of mankind's most glorious moments, he is also a register of some of our more senseless deeds."

Obituary: Born November 11, 1914, in New York, NY; died March 12, 2003, in Old Greenwich, CT. Author. Fast was an award-winning, bestselling novelist best known for his historical fiction, though he also wrote in other genres, such as crime and romance stories, as well as penning screenplays. Born to a poor family in New York City, Fast worked odd jobs to help support his family and began to write as a means of escape from his impoverished childhood. Although he completed high school, his only higher education came when he briefly attended the National Academy of Design. While he worked at a variety of jobs off and on during his lifetime, including as the owner of Blue Heron Press in New York during the 1950s and as chief news writer for the Voice of America from 1982 to 1984, his primary occupation was as an author. Fast sold his first story to *Amazing Stories* magazine when he was only seventeen years old, and he was publishing novels by the early 1930s, including *Two Valleys* (1933) and *Strange Yesterday* (1934). His first big success came with the historical novel *Conceived in Liberty: A Novel of Valley Forge* (1939), which was followed by other bestselling works, such as *The Last Frontier* (1941), *The Unvanquished* (1942), *Citizen Tom Paine* (1943), and *Freedom Road* (1944). Fast's career was interrupted by World War II, when he served with the U.S. Office of War Information, and again in 1950, when he suffered a setback after refusing to assist the House Un-American Activities Committee with its investigation into the Joint AntiFascist Reform Committee. Fast, who had been a member of the American Communist Party until he became disillusioned by the mass murders committed by Joseph Stalin in the USSR, was imprisoned for three months for his lack of cooperation. After his release, he had difficulty getting his next novel, *Spartacus,* published. Finally, he had to resort to selfpublishing. Fortunately, the publishing house Doubleday offered to distribute some copies of the novel, which quickly took off as a bestseller and was adapted as a movie starring Kirk Douglas in 1960. *Spartacus* was followed by many more books by Fast, including *The Winston Affair* (1959), *The Hunter and the Trap* (1967), *The Immigrants* (1977), *The Legacy* (1980), *The Pledge* (1988), *An Independent Woman* (1997), and his last work of fiction, *Greenwich* (2000). Fast also wrote crime novels under the pseudonym E. V. Cunningham (he wrote under various pseudonyms to circumvent his blacklisting) that featured a Nisei detective named Masao Masuto; he wrote plays such as *Citizen Tom Paine* (1986) and *The Novelist* (1991), the

autobiography *Being Red* (1990), and a number of successful screenplays. Fast received many honors for his work, including, most notably, a Newspaper Guild award in 1947, a National Jewish Book Award in 1949, for *My Glorious Brothers,* the International Peace Price from the USSR in 1954, an Emmy Award in 1975 for an episode of the *Benjamin Franklin* television series, and the Prix de la Policia from France for his crime novels.

Full Cast and Crew for Cheyenne Autumn (1964)

Directed by

John Ford

Writing credits

Mari Sandoz — novel Cheyenne Autumn and
Howard Fast — novel The Last Frontier (uncredited)

James R. Webb (screenplay)

Cast (in credits order) verified as complete

Richard Widmark	.... Capt. Thomas Archer
Carroll Baker	.... Deborah Wright
Karl Malden	.... Capt. Wessels
Sal Mineo	.... Red Shirt
Dolores del Rio	.... Spanish Woman
Ricardo Montalban	.... Little Wolf
Gilbert Roland	.... Dull Knife
Arthur Kennedy	.... Doc Holliday
Patrick Wayne	.... 2nd Lt. Scott
Elizabeth Allen	.... Miss Plantagenet
John Carradine	.... Jeff Blair
Victor Jory	.... Tall Tree
Mike Mazurki	.... Sr. First Sergeant
George O'Brien	.... Maj. Braden
Sean McClory	.... Dr. O'Carberry
Judson Pratt	.... Mayor Dog Kelly
Carmen D'Antonio	.... Pawnee woman
Ken Curtis	.... Joe

news articles

Promotional
taglines
trailers
posters
photo gallery

External Links
on tv, schedule links
showtimes
official site
miscellaneous
photographs
sound clip(s)
video clip(s)

James Stewart	.... Wyatt Earp
Edward G. Robinson	.... Secretary of the Interior

rest of cast listed alphabetically

Walter Baldwin	.... Jeremy Wright (Deborah's uncle) (uncredited)
Danny Borzage	.... Trooper (uncredited)
Willis Bouchey	.... Colonel at Victory Cave (uncredited)
Lee Bradley	.... Cheyenne (uncredited)
Harry Carey Jr.	.... Trooper Smith (uncredited)
Dan Carr	.... Trooper (uncredited)
Jeannie Epper	.... Entertainer (uncredited)
Stephanie Epper	.... Entertainer (uncredited)
Shug Fisher	.... Skinny (Texas cattle drover) (uncredited)
James Flavin	.... Ft. Robinson sergeant of the guard (uncredited)
William Forrest	.... Senator (uncredited)
Donna Hall	.... Entertainer (uncredited)
Sam Harris	.... Dodge City townsman (uncredited)
Chuck Hayward	.... Trooper (uncredited)
William Henry	.... Infantry captain (uncredited)
Harry Hickox	.... Bartender (uncredited)
Harry Holcombe	.... Senator (uncredited)
Nancy Hsueh	.... Little Bird (uncredited)
Ben Johnson	.... Trooper Plumtree (uncredited)
Steven Manymules	.... Point man (uncredited)
Ted Mapes	.... Trooper (uncredited)
Mae Marsh	.... Woman (uncredited)
Philo McCullough	.... Man (uncredited)
John McKee	.... Trooper (uncredited)
David Miller	.... Trooper (uncredited)
Louise Montana	.... Woman (uncredited)
Nanomba 'Moonbeam' Morton	.... Running Deer (uncredited)
Many Muleson	.... Medicine Man (uncredited)
James O'Hara	.... Trooper (uncredited)
Denver Pyle	.... Sen. Henry (uncredited)
John Qualen	.... Swenson (uncredited)
Walter Reed	.... Lt. Peterson (Ft. Robinson) (uncredited)
Chuck Roberson	.... Jessie (Texas trail boss) (uncredited)

Bing Russell	.... Braden's Telegraph Operator (uncredited)
Charles Seel	.... Newspaper publisher (uncredited)
Mary Statler	.... Entertainer (uncredited)
Carleton Young	.... Aide to Carl Schurz (uncredited)

Produced by

Bernard Smith .... producer
John Ford .... producer (uncredited)

Original Music by

Alex North

Cinematography by

William H. Clothier (as William Clothier)

Film Editing by

Otho Lovering
David Hawkins (uncredited)

Art Direction by

Richard Day

Set Decoration by

Darrell Silvera (as Darryl Silvera)

Costume Design by

Frank Beetson Jr. (uncredited)
Ann Peck (uncredited)

Makeup Department

Norman Pringle .... makeup artist (uncredited)

Second Unit Director or Assistant Director

Russell Saunders .... assistant director (as Russ Saunders)
Wingate Smith .... assistant director

Sound Department

Francis E. Stahl .... sound

Special Effects by

Ralph Webb .... special effects (uncredited)

Stunts

John Epper .... stunts (uncredited)
Jerry Gatlin .... stunts (uncredited)
Chuck Hayward .... stunts (uncredited)
Cliff Lyons .... stunts (uncredited)
Rudy Robbins .... stunts (uncredited)
Chuck Roberson .... stunts (uncredited)
Dean Smith .... stunts (uncredited)
Jack Williams .... stunts (uncredited)

Other crew

Ray Kellogg .... associate director
David Miller .... indian technical advisor (as David H. Miller)
Alex North .... conductor
Henry Brant .... orchestrator (uncredited)
Gil Grau .... orchestrator (uncredited)

Crew believed to be complete

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Little Wolf, Cheyenne Chief

If any people ever fought for liberty and justice, it was the Cheyennes. If any ever demonstrated their physical an moral courage beyond cavil, it was this race of purely American heroes, among whom Little Wolf was a leader.

I knew the chief personally very well. As a young doctor, I was sent to the Pine Ridge agency in 1890, a government physician to the Sioux and the Northern Cheyennes. While I heard from his own lips of that gallar dash of his people from their southern exile to their northern home, I prefer that Americans should read of it i Doctor George Bird Grinnell's book, "The Fighting Cheyennes." No account could be clearer or simpler; and the too, the author cannot be charged with a bias in favor of his own race.

At the time that I knew him, Little Wolf was a handsome man, with the native dignity and gentleness, musica voice, and pleasant address of so many brave leaders of his people. One day when he was dining with us at ou home on the reservation, I asked him, as I had a habit of doing, for some reminiscences of his early life. He wa rather reluctant to speak, but a friend who was present contributed the following: "Perhaps I can tell you why it that he has been a lucky man all his life. When quite a small boy, the tribe was one winter in want of food, and h good mother had saved a small piece of buffalo meat, which she solemnly brought forth and placed before hi with the remark: 'My son must be patient, for when he grows up he will know even harder times than this .'"H had eaten nothing all day and was pretty hungry, but before he could lay hands on the meat a starving do snatched it and bolted from the teepee. The mother ran after the dog and brought him back for punishment. Sh tied him to a post and was about to whip him when the boy interfered. 'Don't hurt him, mother!' he cried; 'he toc the meat because he was hungrier than I am!'"

acts of Kindness

I was told of another kind act of his under trying circumstances. While still a youth, he was caught out with a part of buffalo hunters in a blinding blizzard. They were compelled to lie down side by side in the snowdrifts, and it wa a day and a night before they could get out. The weather turned very cold, and when the men arose they were i danger of freezing. Little Wolf pressed his fine buffalo robe upon an old man who was shaking with a chill an himself took the other's thin blanket.

As a full-grown young man, he was attracted by a maiden of his tribe, and according to the custom then in vogue the pair disappeared. When they returned to the camp as man and wife, behold! there was great excitement ove the affair. It seemed that a certain chief had given many presents and paid unmistakable court to the maid wit the intention of marrying her, and her parents had accepted the presents, which meant consent so far as the were concerned. But the girl herself had not given consent.

The resentment of the disappointed suitor was great. It was reported in the village that he had openly declared that the young man who defied and insulted him must expect to be punished. As soon as Little Wolf heard of these threats, he told his father and friends that he had done only what it is every man's privilege to do.

"Tell the chief," said he, "to come out with any weapon he pleases, and I will meet him within the circle of lodges. He shall either do this or eat his words. The woman is not his. Her people accepted his gifts against her wishes. Her heart is mine."

The chief apologized, and thus avoided the inevitable duel, which would have been a fight to the death.

The early life of Little Wolf offered many examples of the dashing bravery characteristic of the Cheyennes, and inspired the younger men to win laurels for themselves. He was still a young man, perhaps thirty-five, when the most trying crisis in the history of his people came upon them. As I know and as Doctor Grinnell's book amply corroborates, he was the general who largely guided and defended them in that tragic flight from the Indian Territory to their northern home. I will not discuss the justice of their cause: I prefer to quote Doctor Grinnell, lest it appear that I am in any way exaggerating the facts.

"They had come," he writes, "from the high, dry country of Montana and North Dakota to the hot and humid India Territory. They had come from a country where buffalo and other game were still plentiful to a land where th game had been exterminated. Immediately on their arrival they were attacked by fever and ague, a disease wholl new to them. Food was scanty, and they began to starve. The agent testified before a committee of the Senat that he never received supplies to subsist the Indians for more than nine months in each year. These people were meat-eaters, but the beef furnished them by the government inspectors was no more than skin and bone. Th agent in describing their sufferings said: 'They have lived and that is about all.'"

The Indians endured this for about a year, and then their patience gave out. They left the agency to which the had been sent and started north. Though troops were camped close to them, they attempted no concealment of their purpose. Instead, they openly announced that they intended to return to their own country.

We have heard much in past years of the march of the Nez Perces under Chief Joseph, but little is remembered of the Dull Knife outbreak and the march to the north led by Little Wolf. The story of the journey has not been told but in the traditions of the old army this campaign was notable, and old men who were stationed on the plains forty years ago are apt to tell you, if you ask them, that there never was such another journey since the Greek marched to the sea. . . .

flight nearby Little Wolf

> The fugitives pressed constantly northward undaunted, while orders were flying over the wires, and special trains were carrying men and horses to cut them off at all probable points on the different railway lines they must cross. Of the three hundred Indians, sixty or seventy were fighting men—the rest old men, women, and children. An army officer once told me that thirteen thousand troops were hurrying over the country to capture or kill these few poor people who had left the fever-stricken South, and in the face of every obstacle were steadily marching northward.
>
> The War Department set all its resources in operation against them, yet they kept on. If troops attacked them, they stopped and fought until they had driven off the soldiers, and then started north again. Sometimes they did not even stop, but marched along, fighting as they marched. For the most part they tried — and with success — to avoid conflicts, and had but four real hard fights, in which they lost half a dozen men killed and about as many wounded.

It must not be overlooked that the appeal to justice had first been tried before taking this desperate step. Little Wolf had gone to the agent about the middle of the summer and said to him: "This is not a good country for us and we wish to return to our home in the mountains where we were always well. If you have not the power to give permission, let some of us go to Washington and tell them there how it is, or do you write to Washington and get permission for us to go back."

"Stay one more year," replied the agent, "and then we will see what we can do for you. "No," said Little Wolf "Before another year there will be none left to travel north. We must go now."

Soon after this it was found that three of the Indians had disappeared and the chief was ordered to surrender ten men as hostages for their return. He refused. "Three men," said he, "who are traveling over wild country can hide so that they cannot be found. You would never get back these three, and you would keep my men prisoners always."

The agent then threatened if the ten men were not given up to withhold their rations and starve the entire tribe into submission. He forgot that he was addressing a Cheyenne. These people had not understood that they were prisoners when they agreed to friendly relations with the government and came upon the reservation. Little Wolf stood up and shook hands with all present before making his final deliberate address.

"Listen, my friends, I am a friend of the white people and have been so for a long time. I do not want to see blood spilt about this agency. I am going north to my own country. If you are going to send your soldiers after me, I wish you would let us get a little distance away. Then if you want to fight, I will fight you, and we can make the ground bloody at that place."

The Cheyenne was not bluffing. He said just what he meant, and I presume the agent took the hint, for although the military were there they did not undertake to prevent the Indians= departure. Next morning the teepees were pulled down early and quickly. Toward evening of the second day, the scouts signaled the approach of troops. Little

Wolf called his men together and advised them under no circumstances to fire until fired upon. An Arapahoe scout was sent to them with a message. "If you surrender now, you will get your rations and be well treated." After what they had endured, it was impossible not to hear such a promise with contempt. Said Little Wolf: "We are going back to our own country. We do not want to fight." He was riding still nearer when the soldiers fired, and at this signal the Cheyennes made a charge. They succeeded in holding off the troops for two days, with only five men wounded and none killed, and when the military retreated the Indians continued northward carrying their wounded.

This sort of thing was repeated again and again. Meanwhile Little Wolf held his men under perfect control. There were practically no depredations. They secured some boxes of ammunition left behind by retreating troops, and at one point the young men were eager to follow and destroy an entire command who were apparently at their mercy, but their leader withheld them. They had now reached the buffalo country, and he always kept his main object in sight. He was extraordinarily calm. Doctor Grinnell was told by one of his men years afterward: "Little Wolf did not seem like a human being. He seemed like a bear." It is true that a man of his type in a crisis becomes spiritually transformed and moves as one in a dream.

At the Running Water the band divided, Dull Knife going toward Red Cloud agency. He was near Fort Robinson when he surrendered and met his sad fate. Little Wolf remained all winter in the Sand Hills, where there was plenty of game and no white men. Later he went to Montana and then to Pine Ridge, where he and his people remained in peace until they were removed to Lame Deer, Montana, and there he spent the remainder of his days. There is no clear sky beyond the clouds of racial prejudice, and in that final Court of Honor a noble soul like that of Little Wolf has a place.

Charles A. Eastman

1879 Cheyenne Chief Little Wolf surrenders ^top^

Little Wolf, often called "the greatest of the fighting Cheyenne," surrenders to his friend Lieutenant W. P. Clark. Little Wolf was the chief of the Bowstring Soldiers, an elite Cheyenne military society. From early youth, Little Wolf had demonstrated rare bravery and a brilliant understanding of battle tactics. First in conflicts with other Indians like the Kiowa and then in disputes with the US Army, Little Wolf led or assisted in dozens of important Cheyenne victories. Historians believe Little Wolf was probably involved in the disastrous Fetterman Massacre of 1866, in which the Cheyenne cleverly lured a force of 80 American soldiers out of their Wyoming fort and wiped them out. After Cheyenne attacks had finally forced the US military to abandon Fort Phil Kearney along the Bozeman Trail, Little Wolf is believed to have led the torching of the fort. He was also a leading participant in the greatest of the Plains Indian victories, the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876. As with many of the other Plains Indian warriors, Little Wolf was finally forced to make peace during the army's major offensive following the massacre at Little Bighorn. In 1877, the government sent Little Wolf to a reservation in Indian Territory. Disgusted with the meager supplies and conditions on the reservation, in 1878 Little Wolf determined to leave the reservation and head north for the old Cheyenne territory in Wyoming and Montana. Chief Dull Knife and 300 of his followers went with him. Though Little Wolf and Dull Knife announced that their intentions were peaceful, settlers in the territory they passed through feared attack. The government dispatched cavalry forces that assaulted the Indians, but Little Wolf's skillful defensive maneuvers kept Cheyenne casualties low. When the band neared Fort Robinson, Nebraska, Dull Knife and some of his followers stopped there. Little Wolf and the rest of the Cheyenne continued to march north to Montana. In the spring of 1879, while still traveling north, Little Wolf and his followers were overtaken by a cavalry force under the leadership of Captain W.P. Clark, an old friend of Little Wolf's. The confrontation might easily have turned violent, but with his force of warriors diminished and his people tired, Little Wolf was reluctant to fight the more powerful American army. Clark's civilized and gracious treatment of Little Wolf helped convince the chief that further resistance was pointless, and he agreed to surrender. After returning to the reservation, Little Wolf briefly served as a scout for General Nelson A. Miles. However, during this time he disgraced himself among his people by killing one of his tribesmen. The formerly celebrated Cheyenne warrior lived out the rest of his life on the reservation but had no official influence among his own people.

1822 Ashley-Henry Fur Traders **on the Missouri River**
1834 The Oglala Sioux become more centrally organized
1855 September 3, Colonel William Harney
uses 1300 soldiers to massacre an entire Brulé village in retribution for the killing of 30 soldiers who killed the Brulé chief over a cow.
1862 August 18, Beginning of the Sioux Uprising in Minnesota
1862 December 26, The mass execution of 38 mostly innocent Sioux men
for supposed crimes during the Sioux Uprising. *The trials of almost every adult male were conducted under the premise of guilty until proven innocent.*
1864 November 29, Massacre at Sand Creek
The Colorado Territory declares war on the Cheyenne. Colonel Chivington, a Methodist Minister turned military man, leads 700 soldiers to Sand Creek with the senseless purpose of killing peaceful Indians encamped there under US Government protection.

His band kill all 200 innocent men, women, and children. They parade through Denver with severed limbs, scalps, and body parts as battle souvenirs. Kitt Carson himself an Indian fighter denouced Chivington's actions as "that of a coward or a dog." The Cheyenne and Arapaho respond with wide spread massacre of settlers and soldiers across the frontier.

1865 July, General Patrick Conner organizes 3 columns of soldiers
to begin an invasion of the Powder River Basin. They had one order: "Attack and kill every male Indian over twelve years of age."
1865 July 24 - 26, Battle of Platte Bridge
The Cheyennes and Lakota besiege the most northerly outpost of the U.S. army and succeed in killing all members of a platoon of cavalrymen.
1865 End of August , Battle of Tongue River
Connor's column destroys an Arapaho village, including all the winter's food supply, tents and clothes. They kill over 50 of the Arapaho villagers.
1866 December 21, Fetterman Massacre
Crazy Horse and Lakota warriors draw soldiers out of Fort Phil Kearney and ambush them. This was known as the Fetterman Massacre because the soldiers were led by Captain Fetterman, who boasted that he could defeat the entire Sioux Nation with a single company of cavalrymen.
1873 Custer and the Seventh Cavalry come to the northern plains
to guard the surveyers for the Northern Pacific Railroad. He has a chance encounter with Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse.
1876 The U.S. government issues an ultimatum that all Sioux
who are not on the Great Sioux Reservation by January 31 will be considered *hostile.* Most Sioux do not even hear of the ultimatum unti after the deadline
1876 March 17, General George Crook's advance column attacks a Sioux/Cheyenne
camp on the Powder River. The people were driven from their lodges and many were killed.
1876 Spring, Sitting Bull **organizes the greatest gathering of Indians on the northern plains.**
The Battle of the Little Bighorn takes place where General George Armstrong Custer and 210 men under his command are killed.
1877 September 6, Crazy Horse is killed at the hands of soldiers at Fort Robinson.
1883 Sitting Bull **is allowed to go to the Standing Rock Reservation after surrender and two years prison.**
1889 The Sioux sign an agreement with the U.S. government breaking up the great Sioux Reservation.

HOME

HELEN HUNT JACKSON
A Century of Dishonor
(excerpts) 1881

The winter of 1877 and summer of 1878 were terrible seasons for the Cheyennes. Their fall hunt had proved unsuccessful. Indians from other reservations had hunted the ground over before them, and driven the buffalo off, and the Cheyennes made their way home again in straggling parties, destitute and hungry. Their agent reports that the result of this hunt has clearly proved that "in the future the Indian must rely on tilling the ground as the principal means of support; and if this conviction can be firmly established, the greatest obstacle to advancement in agriculture will be overcome. With the buffalo gone, and their pony herds being constantly decimated by the inroads of horse-thieves, they must soon adopt, in all its varieties, the way of the white man."

Background

The ration allowed to these Indians is reported as being "reduced and insufficient," and the small sums they have been able to earn by selling buffalo hides are said to have been "of material assistance" to them in "supplementing" this ration. But in this year there have been sold only $657 worth of skins by the Cheyennes and Arapahoes together. In 1876 they sold $17,600 worth. Here is a falling off enough to cause very great suffering in a little community of five thousand people. But this was only the beginning of their troubles. The summer proved one of unusual heat. Extreme heat, chills and fever, and "a reduced and insufficient ration," all combined, resulted in an amount of sickness heart-rending to read of "It is no exaggerated estimate," says the agent, "to place the number of sick people on the reservation at two thousand. Many deaths occurred which might have been obviated had there been a proper supply of anti-malarial remedies at hand. Hundreds applying for treatment have been refused medicine. "

The Northern Cheyennes grew more and more restless and unhappy. "In council and elsewhere they profess an intense desire to be sent North, where they say they will settle down as the others have done, " says the report; adding, with an obtuseness which is inexplicable, that "no difference has been made in the treatment of the Indians, " but that the "compliance" of these Northern Cheyennes has been "of an entirely different nature from that of the other Indians," and that it may be "necessary in the future to compel what so far we have been unable to effect by kindness and appeal to their better natures. "

If it is "an appeal to men's better natures" to remove them by force from a healthful Northern climate, which they love and thrive in, to a malarial Southern one, where they are struck down by chills and fever-refuse them medicine which can combat chills and fever, and finally starve them there indeed, might be said to have been most forcible appeals made to the "better natures" of these Northern Cheyennes. What might have bee predicted followed.

Early in the autumn, after this terrible summer, a band of some three hundred of these Northern Cheyennes took the desperate step of running off and attempting to make their way back to Dakota. They were pursued, fought desperately, but were finally overpowered, and surrendered. They surrendered, however, only on the condition that they should be taken to Dakota. They were unanimous in declaring that they would rather die than go back to the Indian Territory. This was nothing more, in fact, than saying that they would rather die by bullets than of chills and fever and starvation.

These Indians were taken to Fort Robinson, Nebraska. Here they were confined as prisoners of war, and hel subject to the orders of the Department of the Interior. The department was informed of the Indians' determination never to be taken back alive to Indian Territory. The army officers in charge reiterated these

statements, and implored the department to permit them to remain at the North; but it was of no avail. Orders came-explicit, repeated, finally stern-insisting on the return of these Indians to their agency. The commanding officer at Fort Robinson has been censured severely for the course he pursued in his effort to carry out those orders. It is difficult to see what else he could have done, except to have resigned his post. He could not take three hundred Indians by sheer brute force and carry them hundreds of miles, especially when they were so desperate that they had broken up the iron stoves in their quarters, and wrought and twisted them into weapons with which to resist. He thought perhaps he could starve them into submission. He stopped the issue of food; he also stopped the issue of fuel to them.

It was midwinter; the mercury froze in that month at Fort Robinson. At the end of two days he asked the Indians to let their women and children come out that he might feed them. Not a woman would come out. On the night of the fourth day--or, according to some accounts, the sixth--these starving, freezing Indians broke prison, overpowered the guards, and fled, carrying their women and children with them. They held the pursuing troops at bay for several days; finally made a last stand in a deep ravine, and were shot down-men, women, and children together. Out of the whole band there mere left alive some fifty women and children and seven men, who, having been confined in another part of the fort, had not had the good fortune to share in this outbreak and meet their death in the ravine. These, with their wives and children, were sent to Fort Leavenworth to be put in prison; the men to be tried for murders committed in their skirmishes in Kansas on their way to the north. Red Cloud, a Sioux chief, came to Fort Robinson immediately after this massacre and entreated to be allowed to take the Cheyenne widows and orphans into his tribe to be cared for. The Government, therefore, kindly permitted twenty-two Cheyenne widows and thirty-two Cheyenne children-many of them orphans-to be received into the band of the Ogallalla Sioux.

An attempt was made by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, in his Report for 1879, to show by tables and figures that these Indians were not starving at the time of their flight from Indian Territory. The attempt only rebounded to his own disgrace; it being proved, by the testimony given by a former clerk of the Indian Bureau before the Senate committee appointed to investigate the case of the Northern Cheyennes, that the commissioner had been guilty of absolute dishonesty in his estimates, and that the quantity of beef actually issued to the Cheyenne Agency was hundreds of pounds less than he had reported it, and that the Indians were actually, as they had claimed,"starving."

The testimony given before this committee by some of the Cheyenne prisoners themselves is heart-rending. One must have a callous heart who can read it unmoved.

When asked by Senator Jon T. Morgan, "Did you ever really suffer from hunger?" one of the chiefs replied, "We were always hungry; we never had enough. When they that were sick once in awhile felt as though they could eat something, we had nothing to give them."

"Did you not go out on the plains sometimes and hunt buffalo, with the consent of the agent?"

"We went out on a buffalo-hunt, and nearly starved while out; we could not find any buffalo hardly; we could hardly get back with our ponies; we had to kill a good many of our ponies to eat, to save ourselves from starving."

"How many children got sick and died?"

"Between the fall of 1877 and 1878 we lost fifty children. A great many of our finest young men died, as well as many women."

"Old Crow," a chief who served faithfully as Indian scout and ally under General Georgel Crook for years, said: "I did not feel like doing anything for awhile, because I had no heart. I did not want to be in this country. was all the time wanting to get back to the better country where I was born, and where my children are buriec

and where my mother and sister yet live. So I have laid in my lodge most of the time with nothing to think about but that, and the affair up north at Fort Robinson, and my relatives and friends who were killed there. But now I feel as though, if I had a wagon and a horse or two, and some land, I would try to work. If I had something, so that I could do something, I might not think so much about these other things. As it is now, I feel as though I would just as soon be asleep with the rest."

The wife of one of the chiefs confined at Fort Leavenworth testified before the committee as follows: "The main thing I complained of was that we didn't get enough to eat; my children nearly starved to death; then sickness came, and there was nothing good for them to eat; for a long time the most they had to eat was corn-meal and salt. Three or four children died every day for awhile, and that frightened us."

When asked if there were anything she would like to say to the committee, the poor woman replied: "I wish you would do what you can to get my husband released. I am very poor here, and do not know what is to become of me. If he were released he would come down here, and we would live together quietly, and do no harm to anybody, and make no trouble. But I should never get over my desire to get back north; I should always want to get back where my children were born, and died, and were buried. That country is better than this in every respect. There is plenty of good, cool water there-pure water-while here the water is not good. It is not hot there, nor so sickly. Are you going where my husband is? Can you tell when he is likely to be released?" . . .

It is stated also that there was not sufficient clothing to furnish each Indian with a warm suit of clothing, "as promised by the treaty," and that, "by reference to official correspondence, the fact is established that the Cheyennes and Arapahoes are judged as having no legal rights to any lands, having forfeited their treaty reservation by a failure to settle thereon," and their "present reservation not having been, as yet, confirmed b Congress. Inasmuch as the Indians fully understood, and were assured that this reservation was given to them in lieu of their treaty reservation, and have commenced farming in the belief that there was no uncertainty about the matter it is but common justice that definite action be had at an early day, securing to them what is their right."

It would seem that there could be found nowhere in the melancholy record of the experiences of our Indians a more glaring instance of confused multiplication of injustices than this. The Cheyennes were pursued and slain for venturing to leave this very reservation, which, it appears, is not their reservation at all, and they hav no legal right to it. Are there any words to fitly characterize such treatment as this from a great, powerful, rich nation, to a handful of helpless people?

Plains Indian Timeline

1867 1868 1869 1870 1872 1873 1874 1875 1876 1877 1878

1867 - The Treaty of Medicine Lodge between the U.S. and the Cheyenne and Arapaho forces the two tribes to move to a reservation in Indian Territory, on land that was ceded by Indian tribes to the U.S. after the end of the Civil War.

1868 - Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 between the U.S. and the Indians creates the Great Sioux Reservation and reaffirms Sioux hunting rights. Renowned military leader General Armstrong Custer leads an attack on unarmed Cheyenne at the Washita River, killing mostly woman and children.

Northern Pacific Locomotive, 1900-1910 (Denver Public Library, Western History Collection)

1869 - The Transcontinental Railroad cuts across Native American lands.

1870 - In January, in the Massacre of the Marias, U.S. Soldiers slaughter 173 Blackfeet men, women and children on the Marias River in Montana, retaliation for the death of a white man and the wounding of his son. Later that year, due to disagreements about the implementation of the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty, Red Cloud and Spotted Tail negotiate with President Ulysses S. Grant in Washington, D.C. It is reaffirmed that the Sioux (and other tribes) could live in the Powder River country, as well as hunt in it.

1872-1875 - The Lakota, with their Cheyenne and Arapaho allies, drive the Crow out of eastern Montana because of intertribal competition for the shrinking hunting grounds for buffalo.

1872 - In August, two U.S. railroad survey teams, each accompanied by about 500 troops, head into eastern Montana and are attacked by bands led by Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse, with few casualties, but severe consequences. General William Sherman testified before Congress in March: "This railroad is a national enterprise, and we are forced to protect the men during its survey and construction, through, probably, the most warlike nation of Indians on this continent, who will fight for every foot of the line."

Chief Sitting Bull (F. A. Rinehart, Denver Public Library, Western History Collection)

1873 - In August, the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail agencies move to the White River in northwest Nebraska next to Fort Robinson, living mostly on government rations. That same summer, an Oglala hunting party encounters some white buffalo hunters, who kill Whistler, a famous and friendly chief, and two other Oglalas. The Lakota and Pawnee escalate their ongoing war over the dwindling number of buffalo when Lakotas attack a Pawnee camp, killing 50 men, women and children and stealing their buffalo meat and skins. The Lakota also fight with the Crow tribe over hunting grounds in Montana. In addition, a skirmish erupts between Hunkpapa, Oglala, Miniconjous, Sans Arcs, and Cheyennes, led overall by Sitting Bull, and a railroad survey team led by General Custer, with a large military escort. Miners looking for gold in the Black Hills are frequently attacked by Indians.

1874 - Custer leads a large expedition, including 1,000 troops, into the Black Hills to explore and set up military posts. The expedition, which also includes geologists, finds gold and publicizes their discovery, leading to a massive influx of prospectors to the area. In September, the U.S. military are ordered to stop miners from trespassing on the Sioux Reservation.

1875 - There are 15,000 miners in the Black Hills at the beginning of the year. In spring, Red Cloud, Spotted Tail and other chiefs are summoned to Washington to meet with President Grant and discuss the Black Hills. The Indians argue among themselves about how to deal with the situation and nothing is resolved. The U.S. Senate Commission visits the Nebraska Agencies to offer $6 million for purchase of the Black Hills, but the Indians refuse. By November, President Grant abandons any attempts to keep the miners out of the Black Hills, ultimately reversing the U.S. position by protecting the miners and settlers. On December, 6, 1875, the U.S. Commissioner on Indian Affairs orders the Lakota onto the reservation by a Jan. 31, 1876, deadline, threatening to treat them as "hostiles" and have them arrested. Some Sioux, scattered during the harsh winter, don't receive the order.

Battle of the Little Big Horn, as enacted in Buffalo Bill's Wild West

1876 - On February 1, the Secretary of the Interior relinquishes jurisdiction over all so-called "hostile" Sioux - meaning those off the reservation lands - to the War Department. The Army is ordered in for the 1876 War that ensues, which includes the famous Battle of the Little Big Horn. In October, the Treaty of 1876 between the U.S. and the Sioux Nation of Indians, the Northern Arapaho and Cheyenne Indians is signed, despite protests of the majority of the tribes, and enacted into law by Congress in February the following year.

1877 - The Wolf Mountain Battle occurs in January. Crazy Horse is killed at Fort Robinson in September, after volunteering to come to the fort to discuss ongoing conflicts. That same month, Red Cloud and Spotted Tail travel to Washington to meet with President Rutherford B. Hayes, receiving his promise that they could choose their own permanent settlement site within the reservation, which now excluded the Black Hills.

1878 - The Pine Ridge and Rosebud agencies (later made into reservations) are created in June.

More...

(left) Three Lakota boys on their arrival at the Carlisle Indian School.
(right) The same three Lakota boys after deculturization at the Carlisle Indian School (Courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution, National Anthropological Archives)

1879 - The Carlisle Indian School is founded in Pennsylvania, in an aggressive U.S. government campaign to "civilize" Indian children. Children from reservations across the West are sent to the school in order to assimilate into white culture. This assimilation includes cutting their hair, burning their clothing and forcing them to wear European American dress. They are forbidden to speak their Native language, and punishment for infractions is severe. The school is a breeding ground for disease, and many children die there.

1881 - Chief Sitting Bull and 186 of his followers return from Canada and surrender at Fort Buford. The chief is imprisoned for two years instead of being pardoned, as promised.

1887 - The Dawes Act divides tribal land into individual allotted tracts, destroying tribal relations in an attempt to promote assimilation into white culture. Those tracts not allotted to individual Native families could be leased to whites, further reducing the size of Sioux lands. From 1887 to 1920, Indian reservation lands shrink to one half their pre-allotment size.

1888 - Red Cloud invites the Jesuits to the reservation to establish a school for Lakota children in order to avoid sending children off the reservation.

Spotted Elk's band of Lakota, later massacred at Wounded Knee (Library of Congress)

1890 - Sitting Bull is killed in his home while being arrested for allowing his people to participate in the Ghost Dance. On December 29, the Wounded Knee massacre occurs when Miniconjou Indians under Spotted Elk (aka Big Foot), returning from the Ghost Dance via Pine Ridge, are searched and disarmed by U.S. soldiers. After a single shot kills a U.S. officer, the soldiers go on a rampage and kill the chief and over 300 Indian men, women and children, many running for their lives.

1894 - The U.S. Army imprisons "hostile" Hopi leaders in military facilities on Alcatraz Island.

1898 - The Curtis Act re-affirms allotment of tribal lands on Indian reservations and ends tribal sovereignty in the territories.

1906 - The Act for the Preservation of American Antiquities makes excavation, theft or destruction of historic or prehistoric ruins or objects of antiquity on federal lands a criminal offense. Dead Indians and Indian artifacts are defined as "archeological resources," thus considered federal property.

1907 - Oklahoma becomes the 46th state, opening the former Indian Territory to further white settlement.

1910 - Plains tribes, revive the traditional Sun Dance, the communal religious ceremony conducted by many of the Plains Indians who hunted buffalo in the 18th and 19th centuries.

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Cheyenne Genius

A brief History of This High Plains Tribe

By Margot Liberty, PhD

Every native culture known to us today -- perhaps 2000 in all -- is said to have possessed a certain genius at its climax; a series of themes or a Gestalt which marks it as special and unique. In the United States and Europe, the work of anthropology in its ethnological specialization was to record these cultures before they were destroyed. In America, this work became centered within the Bureau of American Ethnology at the Smithsonian Institution.

It was my fate to encounter the contemporary Northern Cheyenne tribe when I was finishing college in the early 1950s. There was a nighttime car crash in Birney, Montana and I helped sustain the wounded until an ambulance came. I later taught at the Bureau of Indian Affairs Day School in Birney for four years. Birney held the most traditional of five reservation communities, called "the headquarters of heathenism" by the Catholic and Mennonite missionaries. I found myself possessed by the need to record what I could of their particular "genius" while the opportunity prevailed.

This article is the first in a series to present the "Cheyenne Genius" that I have encountered to-date. Much of the following information comes from the work of others; some from my own work with various members of the Cheyenne tribe. Meshing the printed sources from the past with present day experiences and sources is a delicate undertaking. The "expert ethnologist" is a real pain to most people in traditional cultures and I do try very hard to avoid this role. Literate native experts or authorities, however, are very rare.

Many areas of knowledge remain unknown, in the keeping of tribal elders, although much is becoming more available as people confront the choice between sharing it and losing it forever. Present people think they can still get everything from the oral tradition, which, of course, they cannot. But the oral traditions keep chugging along and changing with the times, as oral traditions always do. My brother Bob who is with the State Department and has served in Indonesia and South Africa, says that every nation revises its history every fifty years... A few of the leading tribal "intellectuals" (as is the case with Stands in Timber) see the need for relying on a written record. So do I. I have been present at several occasions when a scholarly work was read, as at the Medicine Hat opening in 1959. As I also believe in the importance of written documentation, I have continuously worked to help the Cheyenne record their history and life.

Clark Wissler, Curator Emeritus of the American Museum of Natural History, knew his Plains peoples. He was an authority on the Blackfeet and authored the book, Indians of the United States (1940). In 1939, he called the Cheyenne and their Arapaho allies, "The elite of the horse Indians, especially in regard to ceremonies." He would still find them so today.

Through ceremony and ritual, the continuity of blessings is ensured; originally brought to the people by the legendary Sweet Medicine in the Black Hills before the white man came. For example, in a ceremony extraordinarily close to a ritual first reported a century ago, Sun Dancers still send up prayers for world renewal each summer. The Sacred Medicine Hat in Montana continues under the protection of a traditionally chosen Keeper in a special tribal teepee, and the Sacred Arrows in Oklahoma are still renewed by hereditary priests.

Some might question the value of this continuity. The little rural communities of Busby, Lame Deer, Birney, and Ashland have maintained their identities against all odds since 1884. Poverty and alcoholism stalk these communities; mighty economic and social problems certainly prevail. But there is no doubt that Cheyenne cultural identity and pride remain powerful, rooted in American history for its courage and tenacity.

The Cheyenne moved from Minnesota past the Black Hills into the High Plains. They were never a large tribe to begin with, but split into northern and southern divisions after the Year the Stars Fell, in 1833. Then ensued a period of fierce intertribal warfare against Crow, Shoshoni and Kiowa enemies for rich new gamelands made irresistible by the recent acquisition of horses. Peace was made with the Kiowas in 1840, and the main thrust of warfare was soon turned against invading Whites. The Cheyenne appear as major participants in Western US military history over a twenty five year period, beginning with the "Mormon cow incident" near Fort Laramie in 1854 (in which they were more observers than participants) and ending with the famous Cheyenne outbreak from Oklahoma, 1878-1879.

More than fifty engagements with troops and civilians took place. The more important fights included the 1856 Upper Platte Bridge Fight near Casper, Wyoming; 1856-57; raids along the Kansas frontier; the 1857 Sumner fight on the Solomon River, Kansas; 1863-65 raids and depredations along the Arkansas and Platte; the 1864 outbreak and subsequent November 29 Chivington Massacre of peaceful Cheyenne at Sand Creek, Colorado; consequent raids along the Platte in a general frontier war of 1865; the August-September 1865 Conner campaign into the Powder River country of Wyoming; the 1865 attack upon troops by Northern Cheyenne under High Wolf at Old Platte Bridge, Wyoming; the December 1866 destruction of Fetterman's command at Fort Phil Kearney, Wyoming; the 1867 destruction of a Cheyenne and Sioux village near Fort Larned, Kansas; renewed raiding in 1868 followed by the Beecher Island battle on Aricaree Fork, eastern Colorado, where the Cheyenne Chief Roman Nose was killed; the November 1868 attack by Custer upon Black Kettle's village on the Washita River, Oklahoma; Carr's crushing 1869 defeat of the Dog Soldiers at Summit Springs, Colorado; the Southern outbreak of 1874-75, including a fight at Adobe Walls, Texas; and continued pursuit of the Southern Cheyenne resulting in the final surrender of March 6, 1875. Participation in many of these battles is reported in a book written by Stands In Timber and myself, Cheyenne Memories (1967; new edition 1995).

Northern Cheyenne resistance continued for several more years. Four major battles with US troops took place in 1876. The March 17 attack by Joseph Reynolds upon the Crazy Horse village on Little Powder River, Montana, ended in defeat of the surprise attack force. The Indians won the next two fights -- on June 17 with George Crook at Rosebud Creek, and with George Custer at the Little Bighorn, June 25 and 26. But on November 25, Federal troops led by Crook overran the main Northern Cheyenne camp at Crazy Woman Creek, Wyoming, dealing it such severe destruction that only one more major fight followed, that of Battle Butte allied with the Crazy Horse Oglallas in January 1877. The fights after the Oklahoma outbreak, if tallied separately, would include several more as the Cheyenne battled their way northward heading home.

Surrender of the Northern Cheyenne soon followed, and various groups and subdivisions scattered widely. The Two Moons' band surrendered at Fort Keogh, Montana. The Little Wolf-Dull Knife band surrendered at Fort Robinson, Nebraska; both in April 1877. The Fort Robinson group was transferred a month later to the Cheyenne-Arapaho Agency in Oklahoma where they broke out and fled north (in part along the Texas cattle trail) on September 8, 1878. In mid- October the fugitives divided. One hundred twenty-six people under Little Wolf surrendered in the spring and were allowed to join the Two Moons' band at Fort Keogh; but 149 others under Dull Knife were held at Fort Robinson and ordered to return south, leading to a second outbreak on January 9, 1879. More than half were killed. The remnants of this band eventually reached Fort Keogh. A third band under Little Chief (which had gone to Oklahoma in 1878 and then to Pine Ridge in 1881) also landed at Fort Keogh. By October 1891, all Northern Cheyenne were reunited on the Tongue River in Montana, which had become the eastern boundary of their reservation in 1884.

The reservation period began about 1875 in the south and 1880 in the north. During the interim years between 1875-1884, much transitional division and movement occurred. The Northern Cheyenne reservation was officially designated in 1884. Very little has been published concerning the Northern Cheyenne during the reservation period and even less has been recorded on their southern kinsmen. In these years, the Cheyenne attempted to make the transition from government rations to farming taught to them by government personnel. Later, after a period of federally sponsored wage work during World War II, they became heavily dependent upon welfare.

Land was allotted to individual Southern Cheyenne and subsequently nearly all of it lost through sale to whites after 1892. The Northern Cheyenne did not receive individual allotments until 1925, and most of this land base has been retained in individual or tribal ownership. By 1900, both Northern and Southern Cheyenne had begun attending off-reservation boarding schools. There they came into contact with members of many other tribes with whom they could exchange ideas freely for the first time in newly acquired English--previous intertribal communication having been possible only through the Plains sign language. Shared forms of music and social dancing as well as handgames (shared traditional gambling games) and giveaways began to evolve into the modern complex of powwows and other cultural events now widely shared among Native American groups. Reservation history extended into an intricate series of political and economic changes from the issue of rations to cattle raising, dry farming, New Deal wage work, and the myriad enterprises which engage both on- and off-reservation Cheyenne today.

What of the Cheyenne ceremony and ritual through these changing times? By 1900, the new pan-tribal Native American Church coexisted with the Sun Dance, Sacred Hat and Sacred Arrows, as well as various old forms of native healing. There was also brief involvement in the Ghost Dance of 1890. Christianity was introduced by Catholic and then Mennonite missionaries. The Sun Dance continued despite repeated attempts at its suppression. It is likely to have actually halted during perhaps only ten of the fifty years of official government suppression, having been practiced in secluded places or gone underground.

Many changes have affected this famous tribe, which fought so hard for its Montana homeland. To see this country along the Tongue

River south of the Yellowstone makes one understand the epic 1878 outbreak from Oklahoma back to the pine-topped Montana hills. This land was coveted by Crazy Horse for his own people, forced to choose only one part of their former world to call their own.

A tribal college named after the chief Dull Knife now graces the reservation. Remains of Cheyenne killed in the Fort Robinson outbreak have been returned from the Smithsonian for reburial in the Two Moons cemetery at Busby. Artifacts taken to historical museums have been "repatriated" to members of the tribe. Winds of change have swept the reservation with the rise of the American Indian Movement in the 1970s, especially the Trail of Broken Treaties in 1974 and the subsequent occupation of Wounded Knee. Administration of primary and secondary schools has returned to the tribe, along with greatly increased powers over its own political destiny. There are many new state and federal government programs and offices--so many that the Lame Deer telephone book now lists a confusing array of federal, state, and tribal offices and program centers. All of these reflect a totally new existence, which, nonetheless, has retained many of the qualities and characteristics of the traditional Cheyenne way of life.

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Cheyenne - means "Little Cree" - derives from Sioux word

Cheyenne Language Web Site

last updated Jan. 22, 2004
What's new

Chief Dull Knife:

Dull Knife encouraged Cheyennes, the Tsitsistas, to pursue education.

Today the community college on the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation, Chief Dull Knife College, honors his memory.

The Cheyenne Language

Cheyenne is spoken in southeastern Montana on the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation, and in central Oklahoma. It is a member of the large Algonquian language family of North America which includes other languages such as Blackfoot, Arapaho, Cree, Ojibwa, Algonquin, Potawatomi, Kickapoo, Menomini, Fox, Massachusett, Delaware, Shawnee, Micmac, and Naskapi.

The Cheyenne alphabet and pronunciation guide

There are only 14 letters in the Cheyenne alphabet but they can combine together to create some very long words, composed of many smaller meaning parts. Following are some words illustrating the Cheyenne alphabet and a prounciation guide for the Cheyenne letters. Many other words are found in a new, large Cheyenne Dictionary on CD, the Cheyenne Sounds booklet, our online dictionary, word lists, and other pages at this site.

LETTER	CHEYENNE	ENGLISH	PRONUNCIATION OF THE CHEYENNE LETTER
a	mahpe	water	a as in English "father"
e	ehane	our father	e as in English "pit" ("i" not "e" sound)
h	hese	fly	h as in English "happy"
k	kosa	goat	k as in English "skip" (unaspirated)
'	he'eo'o	women	- as in English "Uh-oh!"
m	me'ko	head	m as in English "man"
n	nahkohe	bear	n as in English "never"
o	okohke	crow	o as in English "note"
p	poeso	cat	p as in English "spoon" (unaspirated)
s	semo	boat	s as in English "say"
š	še'še	duck	š (sh) as in English "shirt"
t	tosa'e	Where?	t as in English "stop" (unaspirated)
v	vee'e	tepee	v as in English "vein"
x	xao'o	skunk	x as in German "Achtung!"

The š symbol has the same sound as the two English letters "sh". The apostrophe (') stands for the glottal stop, a very frequent "sound" in Cheyenne. It is the quick stopping "sound" between the two syllables of the English exclamation, "Uh-oh!" Cheyenne "x" has the same sound as German "x". It is a voiceless velar fricative, raspier than English "h". When Cheyenne "v" comes before an "a" or "o" vowel, it will often sound like English "w". It is still the same sound un

(phoneme), however, whether it is pronounced as "v" or "w". The Cheyenne "stop" sounds, "p", "t", and "k" are unaspirated. That is, they do not have a puff of air after them as these letters do when they begin English words, such as "pen," "toy", and "kite." Instead, they sound like the letters "p", "t", and "k" when they follow the letter "s," as in the English words "spill," "still," and "skill."

There are three Cheyenne vowels (a, e, o). They can be marked for high pitch (á, é, ó) or be voiceless (whispered), as in â, ô, ê. The preferred symbol to indicate voiceless vowels is a dot over the vowels; this symbol is available in Cheyenne fonts for personal use. This paragraph can be seen with dots over vowels if you click here.

Cheyenne words are made up of smaller meaning parts

Here is one of the longest Cheyenne words which we have heard:

36 letters

náohkêsáa'oné'seómepêhévetsêhésto'anéhe, meaning 'I truly do not pronounce Cheyenne well.' This word has the following meaning parts (technically known as morphemes):

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ná- 'I'
ohke- 'regularly'
sáa- 'not' (this also requires the -he at the end of the word)
oné'seóme- 'truly'
pêhéve- 'good, well'
tsêhést- 'Cheyenne'
-o'ane 'pronounce'
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This

Western Writers of America Spur Award Nominee.

In Dull Knife's Wake: The True Story of the Northern Cheyenne Exodus of 1878 nominated for the 2004 prestigious Western Writers of America Spur Award.

(PRWEB) February 21, 2004--You have seen part of the story in Cheyenne Autumn. Now, historian Vernon Maddux tells the rest of the story in In Dull Knife's Wake : The True Story of the Northern Cheyenne Breakout of 1878, of the breakout of the Northern Cheyenne from Darlington Reservation in Indian Territory, and their bloody but futile attempt to return to their northern homeland in the fall of 1878. You'll forget you know the inevitable end of the story and you'll feel both sides of the conflict as Mr. Maddux recounts the last Indian raids in Kansas and the final massacre of the Cheyenne. The story has only recently ended. In 2002, the government found in their archives a bone fragment that had come from Black Horse, one of the Cheyenne warriors, when army doctors operated on his shattered ankle. In 2002 the bone was presented to his great grandson, United States Senator from Colorado, Ben Nighthorse Campbell.

The story begins in September 1878, when Dull Knife, against the orders of the federal government, led his followers from Indian Territory. Over the next several weeks, the Cheyenne swept along the eastern edge of the Great Plains like a razor-sharp scythe. Following along in their wake was the 4th regiment of the U.S. Cavalry. The men of the 4th marked and recorded the bodies of nearly a hundred men and boys White, Black, and Native American. The dead lay by themselves in the grass on a wide prairie, on isolated roads, or on hilltops. Some were found slumped over their tools and farm implement. One died in the doorway of a crude dugout. They all had to die. In the Cheyenne eyes it

was justified, cowboys perished for their weapons and horses; soldiers perished because they were a threat; and the settlers perished because there were in the way. But many died for no good reason except that they were victims of a century of frustration.

The story ends in the Northern Plains of Nebraska. After fighting all the way north, the army captured the Northern Cheyenne and locked them inside an army barracks at Fort Robinson. Another escape was planned and implemented. The final chapter of the history of the fighting Cheyenne was written in frozen blood across the prairie west and north of Fort Robinson. The army destroyed almost all of Dull Knife's band in a buffalo wallow near Warbonnet Creek in extreme northwestern Nebraska.

In Dull knife's Wake is a well-told, well-balanced account of the last resistance of the Northern Cheyenne. The author presents a complete and accurate account. In so doing, he doesn't argue that the methods employed by the average warrior to obtain critical goods for their escape were not justified. The goal is merely to guide the reader along the trail and to show the humanity on both sides.
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through to a successful conclusion is the typical and extremely probable family of MacDills of San Francisco.

Of the large and representative cast of characters, ranging from sophisticated San Franciscans to Mexicans and an astonishing variety of Indians, only two are not bursting with life, originality and forcefulness; but Bill Conover runs away with the book. Morgan MacDill, his wealthy cousin, villain of the piece and in love with Julia de Remy—heroine by courtesy—but more in love with power, is a stick of a man compared with him, and, though his machinations as brain of the Golden West Navigation Company come near to ruining Bill and the Colorado gold miners, his discomfiture is felt to be merely a question of time. Similarly, Julia, highly finished product of city civilization, is a pale simulacrum set alongside the passionate and uninhibited Mexican girl Quita, who, disguised as a boy, joins Bill's gold-seeking party on its way through the desert. Julia may have been Bill's inspiration, but it is Quita, hard, earthy and fascinating toast of La Paz, who would be neon-lighted with him were this a screen play, not a novel.

It is a book of opposites. Clean, stripped realism, as in the desert crossing. Colorado coloring like the boldest of impressionist paintings. Vast scenic effects obtained by pregnant words used with sparse economy. It has the whole of the Southwest in it. A spacious, grand story of unique country and an incomparable era. With a gem of a map.

J. S. SOUTHRON.

Free Doom

THE LAST FRONTIER. By Howard Fast. 307 pp. New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce. $2.50.

FREEDOM, explained Carl Schurz, Secretary of the Interior, to General William Tecumseh Sherman, is "the right of any man to choose death to slavery. * * * If everything else was taken away, he still had his free doom left." The occasion for these words was the report of the flight of a village of three hundred Cheyenne Indians from the Indian Reservation in Oklahoma. The time was September, 1878.

Howard Fast, at 26 a highly accomplished and mature novelist, has taken this fragment of American history, placed it under a powerful microscope and described his findings in his new book, "The Last Frontier." Fast tells his dramatic story with highly controlled passion. It is a tale that calls for denunciation and indignation but he does not mar it by exaggeration. He is bitter about the cruelty and stupidity of the white man in the treatment of the Indian; that bitterness remains to the end as the final dregs, but above that, crystal-clear and warming, is his feeling of compassion and admiration for a feat of unrivaled courage and dignity.

John Myles, Quaker, was agent for the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians at Darlington, Okla. He knew that the Cheyenne Indians brought south from their tribal lands in Wyoming Territory were unhappy on the reservation; the heat, the sickness, the lack of food were fast killing them off. In his way, Myles, who was weak and ineffectual, was sorry for them but there was nothing he could do. Washington wasn't sending sufficient food and it was he who had to choose which among his wards were to be fed. He thought it was better that those professing Christianity be favored and the Northern Cheyennes were known to be stubborn about conversion. The report of the escape of three of them brought the brutal force of the white man's power against the three hundred who envied the runaways.

It is possible that Fast is justified in assuming that if Carl Schurz had lived up to his theory that "Nothing that is wrong in principle can be right in practice," this harrowing and, at the same time, epic incident in Indian affairs would have been avoided. Fast is openly bitter against the man who, having known the lash of unreasoning authority, failed to remember it at a crucial time in the lives of a hounded minority.

Goaded by a cruel ultimatum issued by Myles and backed by the Army, the village of Cheyennes, consisting of less than a hundred braves, the rest being women and children, started their flight north. The leaders of the group were Little Wolf and Dull Knife. Against this poorly clad, poorly fed, poorly equipped caravan were sent the forces of the American Army. Chief among the latter was a Captain Murray, according to an explanatory note by Fast, the only fictional character among the main actors in his novel. Fast does a masterly piece of creative work in the portrayal of an army officer who goes to pieces in a losing fight against an enemy he considers inferior both as human material and military power.

Surrounded by an ever-increasing force of armed soldiers and civilian posses called out along the line from Army posts and cities by telegraphic message, the straggling, sick Indians persistently and miraculously make headway north for a thousand miles. When cornered by troops they fight with the reckless desperation of men who in their own minds have already died and then they go on, skimming like ghosts through the meshes of the trap set for them.

In Nebraska, after crossing Kansas, the Indians divide, one half going with Dull Knife toward Wyoming Territory, the other with Little Wolf, heading north to Montana lands. Fast follows the first group, brilliantly describing the heart-breaking details of their last stand against the rule of the White Man. Caught and trapped, coming out of the desert in the face of a blizzard, the shattered remnants

of the starving, half-naked fugitives were given a choice between extinction and return to Oklahoma as prisoners. They chose extinction, and the manner of their death is shameful and harrowing. Only when the nation was aroused to indignation by the massacre at Fort Robinson, where the Indians had been interned and starved, did Schurz pen the words which insured freedom to the second half of the wanderers.

Fast's writing, austerely polished and austerely poetic, is admirably suited to this epic tale of a desperate effort for dignified survival. He is less concerned with his characters as individuals than he is with the things they stand for, on the one side, unimaginative authority for law and regulations, on the other a burning need for freedom, for return to homelands. Struthers Burt in "Powder River" wrote, "In all American history there is nothing finer than the loping march of the Cheyennes up from the Indian Territory and their subsequent incredible frozen flight." Fast has gotten to the core of this incident and made it into a rich American novel.

ROSE FELD.

A Living Village

THAT WAS ALDERBURY. By R. L. Duffus. 327 pp. New York: The Macmillan Company. $2.50.

OFFICIALLY, in the view of its publishers, "That Was Alderbury" is a novel. And doubtless this classification was necessary for the convenience of the book trade. Almost any book can be called a novel which will not fit neatly elsewhere into the catalogue. The author himself, however, has some candid reservations

mostly good or bad Mr. Duffus as a novelist is not seeking to say. He is merely setting down on paper Alderbury as it lives in his memory. And his memory seems remarkably vivid and accurate, less colored than most memories are by what its owner wishes to believe. He looks back without resentment, certainly, and without anything that can fairly be called sentimentality. Alderbury remains to him a good place to grow up in. Nobody was very rich there, and few were very poor. Blaine Caswell, whose fa-

question whether
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about the glamour
or the evils of drin

Life was not par
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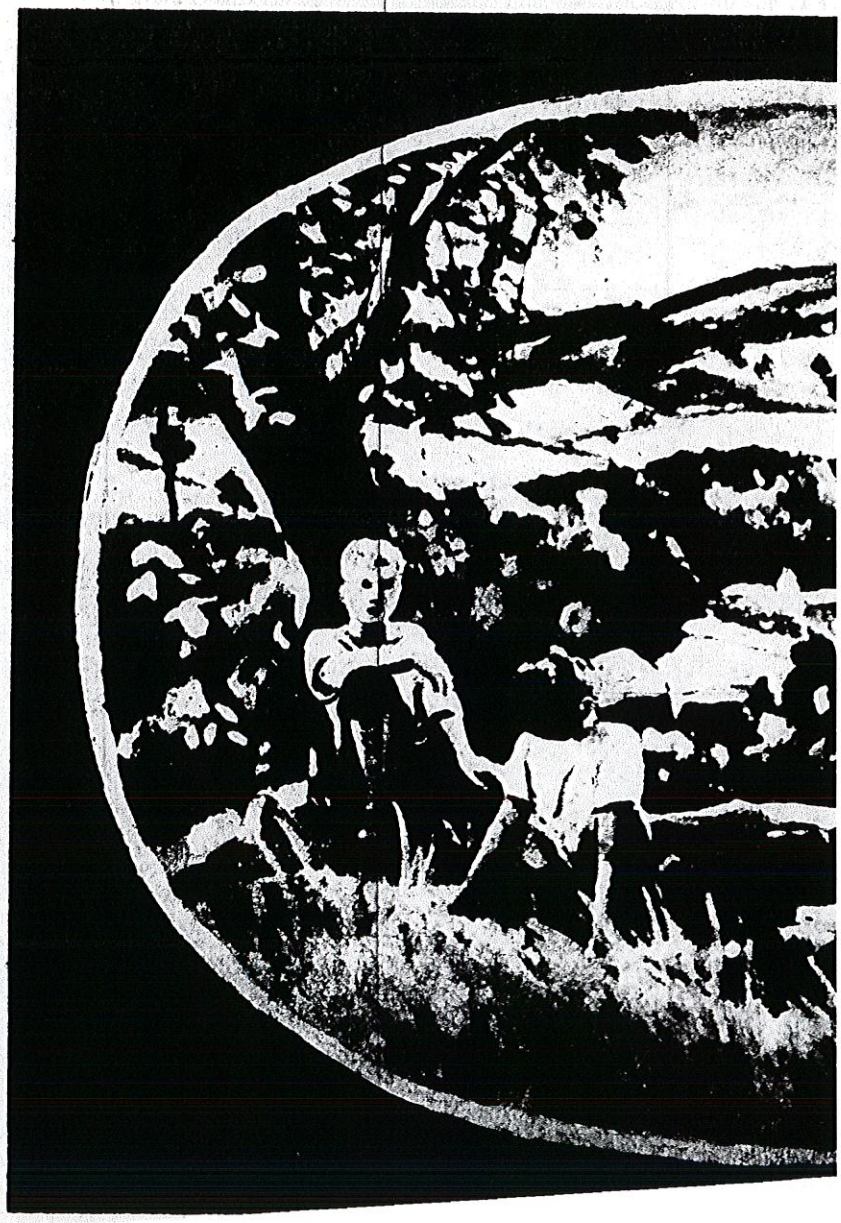


"It is a moving and too little-known story, which is admirably told for young people mature enough to grasp the intricacies of Revolutionary economics. The author makes them very clear, and dramatic too."
+ New Yorker 17:91 My 24 '41 50w
Wis Lib Bul 37:160 O '41

FAST, HOWARD MELVIN. The last frontier. 307p $2.50 Duell (W) 41-13229

In 1878 a group of some three hundred Cheyenne Indians, worn out with unfair conditions at the reservation in Oklahoma, departed after due warning, and started for their old home in the Powder river country. This is the story of that pitiful hegira, and of the attempts of the United States army to capture them. A hundred and fifty of them were killed, but about that number also reached their destination.

Booklist 38:12 S '41

"Mr. Fast's novel is, in sheer workmanship alone, something for the critical reader to admire. . . In the end, however, his novel will stand or fall upon its value as a dramatic, finely presented story. It is all of that: a model, which may easily become a classic example, of what to put in and what to leave out in the writing of a historical novel." J. H. Jackson
+ Books p3 Jl 27 '41 1000w

"This all but incredible story is in substance unquestionably true; and it is unfortunate that the author does not distinguish more clearly between facts supported by evidence and details supplied by his imagination. In general, his lack of clarity may be indicated as his characteristic defect; it is discernible also in the topographical map which he provides, presentable enough in appearance, but not properly coordinated with the text. Compared with most of our popular fiction, however, this book well deserves a reading." Joseph McSorley
— + Cath World 154:246 N '41 360w

"Highly recommended." H. S. Taylor
+ Library J 66:615 Jl '41 90w

"Fast's writing, austerely polished and austerely poetic, is admirably suited to this epic tale of a desperate effort for dignified survival. . . Struthers Burt in 'Powder River' wrote, 'In all American history there is nothing finer than the loping march of the Cheyennes up from the Indian Territory and their subsequent incredible frozen flight.' Fast has gotten to the core of this incident and made it into a rich American novel." Rose Feld
+ N Y Times p6 Jl 27 '41 900w
New Yorker 17:53 Jl 26 '41 90w
Pratt p12 D '41

"By its unusual angle of presentation as well as the unusual quality of Mr. Fast's writing, [the story] becomes something new, a book to be hailed with joy and read for pure pleasure and excitement. . . The faults are slight, nor need one stress the democratic moral of this book in urging that it be read. The point is that it is a finely written, moving, exciting story, and something quite new in the literature of our frontier." Oliver La Farge
+ Sat R of Lit 24:5 Jl 26 '41 1100w

"Mr. Fast has produced a really good novel, deserving the thoughtful consideration of every student of the history of the American Indian." A. W. Hoopes
+ Social Studies 32:328 N '41 550w

"A remarkably fine piece of work. In this brilliant, fast-moving historical novel, the desperate last stand of the original American is poignantly recreated." E. G. Eastman
+ Springf'd Republican p7e Ag 24 '41 600w

"It is a great story, even if the book is something short of great. Mr. Fast is not sentimental, and the agonized sympathy with which one puts the novel down is the result of what happens in its pages, not of any tears Mr. Fast sheds himself or asks us to shed. Here is a solid and memorable addition to the vast literature about the American Indian." Robert Littell
+ Yale R n s 31:x autumn '41 440w

FAUBEL, ARTHUR LOUIS. Cork and the American cork industry. rev ed 151p il $1.50 Cork inst. of Am, 25 W. 43d st, N.Y.
679 Cork 41-51801

"The Secretary of the Cork Institute of America, formerly Associate Professor of Economics, New York University, presents a general exposition of cork and the cork industry. The book is based on teaching experience and association with the industry since 1933. It is not exhaustive, nor intended for the scientist, engineer, or technician, but prepared for the student and the general reader." (N Y New Tech Bks) First published in 1938, in a small edition, the book is now revised and enlarged. Index.

Booklist 38:98 N 15 '41
N Y New Tech Bks 26:39 Jl '41

FAULKNER, EDWIN JEROME. Accident-and-health insurance. 366p $4 McGraw
368.41 Insurance, Accident. Insurance, Health 41-296

"An exhaustive treatment of the purpose, functions and methods of this highly important form of insurance protection. Telling what disability insurance is, what it does, how it operates, and why, the book covers comprehensively the various ways of indemnifying financial loss due to disability, and describes the principles and practices of all phases of accident-and-health insurance underwriting." (Management R) Index.

Reviewed by Alfred Manes
Am Econ R 31:192 Mr '41 320w
Booklist 37:264 F 15 '41
Management R 30:36 Ja '41 70w

"Accident and Health Insurance is primarily a functional book dealing with the principles, practices, and trends in accident and health insurance. It is both informative and critical. . . There are many points of fact and interpretation with which this reviewer would argue, but on the whole the book should be invaluable for those concerned with the business and economic aspects of this field." Joseph Hirsh
+ — Social Forces 20:284 D '41 140w

FAULKNER, HAROLD UNDERWOOD; KEPNER, TYLER, and BARTLETT, HALL. The American way of life; a history; maps by Emil Herlin. 738p il $3.50; text ed $2.20 Harper
973 U.S.—History. Democracy (W) 41-51595

High school textbook presenting social conditions, current problems and policies, and their historical backgrounds, which combine to make up the American way of living. Contains suggestions for further reading, including historical novels on the subjects. Copiously illustrated. Index.

Booklist 37:318 Mr 15 '41

"The book will be welcomed by every American high-school student as he approaches this subject in his ascent of the educational ladder. The organization of material in meaningful fashion and the wide range of illustrations will very materially aid classroom instruction." D. A. Weaver
+ School & Society 54:223 S 20 '41 550w

"The textbook here considered is not intended for pupils preparing for college but is intended rather to give a new approach to American history. This aim it fulfils in a striking and engaging manner. Since the book has in large measure achieved its declared purpose, one must not labor minor deficiencies. To the makers of textbooks the gods do not grant perfection." D. R. Mathews
+ School R 49:473 Je '41 1250w

"It is not American history as it is generally taught or as most people know it. . . The attempt to be meaningful through vocabulary adjustment seems to promise success. Unit II,

People Weekly, Jan 28, 1991 v35 n3 p75(4)

Howard Fast; a former Communist and lifelong dissident ends up rich and beloved in capitalist America. *Ken Gross.*

Howard Fast is rich. Not filthy rich, like the plutocrats he has denounced in such left-leaning novels as Freedom Road and Spartacus. He just has a portfolio of a million or two. "Government bonds," he says defiantly. "Not a penny in unearned wealth. Just the sweat of my own labor and some Treasury notes."

It is no small paradox, considering that this is a stone-stubborn leftist who went to jail rather than surrender names to the House Un-American Activities Committee, then went broke publishing his own books when he was blacklisted. Afterward he reconstructed his career by outwriting the right. (Worldwide sales of more than 50 novels are estimated to exceed 80 million copies, and he has also written 20 nonfiction books and 10 plays.) He used the pen name E.V. Cunningham for a mystery series and his own name for a string of best-selling historical novels.

Fast's latest book, Being Red, A Memoir, is an unapologetic chronicle of this odyssey, inspired, he says, by his son, Jonathan, 42, also a writer. "I wanted something to show my children," says Jonathan, a liberal Democrat, who has one daughter, Molly, 12, from his marriage to writer Erica Jong, and two sons, Ben, 7, and Daniel, 3, with his present wife, Barbara, an attorney.

Still, when he read the book, Jonathan was shocked to learn that his father's political beliefs had not radically changed -- that he still expects a workers' paradise to evolve in the U.S., putting an end to hunger and injustice. "I realized that in his heart of hearts, my father was still a Red," says Jonathan. "I had no idea."

This Red, however, lives in a splendid colonial house in a Connecticut suburb on the shore of Long Island Sound. He considers it a form of exile from the gritty life of an urban activist. Today's climate of crime and his own age, 76, have made living in New York City impractical. "Ideally I would prefer to spend my life on the third floor of a tenement in a run-down neighborhood surrounded by left-wing lunatics," says Fast, a member of the Communist Party from 1944 to 1957. What's worse, he has been wooed in recent years by the right. William F. Buckley Jr., the conservative's intellectual Delta Force, "wants to be my friend," Fast reports. "He had me and [wife] Bette to dinner and he was charming. Charming!"

They argued capitalism versus communism, without venom. "I always thought that socialism here would be peculiarly American, with some reasonable, postindustrial evolution between working-class needs and market forces," Fast says. "It won't be bloody like the Russian Revolution. I told Bill Buckley, `You know, my side is going to beat your side because we're open to the future and your side is holding on to the past.' "

Fast's own past lies in the streets of New York City, where his father, Barney, a staunch union man, helped forge the wrought-iron filigree of gates and fences that stitched together brownstone neighborhoods. When his mother, Ida Miller, died in 1923, the adhesive force went out of the family's life. Drifting from job to job, his father sent his youngest son, Julius, then 4, away to live with relatives, while Jerome, 9, and Howard, 8, became street urchins, delivering newspapers, begging outside the Polo Grounds (the Harlem home of the old New York Giants baseball team) and stealing food to survive.

When he was 12, Fast watched a 13-year-old black youth lynched by a white gang during a neighborhood Halloween rumble in Manhattan, and it sealed forever his social conscience. He was already working as a runner in a library and devouring Jack London, Dickens and Hawthorne. He wrote about the lynching for Story magazine; the issue was banned in Boston, which in turn guaranteed the tale's literary status. With no education except the library, Fast began writing novels and published his first, Two Valleys, at 19.

On a blind date in 1936, he met Bette Cohen, a painter, who would later become a sculptor and his loyal and long-suffering wife. "He is a man of strong and virtuous opinions," says Bette, a woman of infectious calm who acts as a soothing ointment on her scrappy husband. She joined Fast on picket lines and campaigned with him when he ran unsuccessfully for Congress on the American Labor Party ticket in 1952. She also tolerated his infidelities. "We have a marriage that endures in spite of everything because we love each other and because we agree about almost everything," she says. "Not that he's easy to get along with. But, listen, I took my marriage seriously. I understand about his affairs. Creative guys are like that."

When the U.S. entered World War II, Fast -- not yet 30 -- was recruited by Elmer Davis to help launch the Voice of America. Just as his seventh and eighth novels, The Unvanquished and Citizen Tom Paine, were being published, Fast was writing 15-minute broadcasts for occupied Europe. But suddenly, in 1944, he was pressured to resign because he associated with left-wing sympathizers such as playwright Arthur Miller. Russia was our ally at the time, but already there were those who forecast the cold war, and the bleak, outcast years began for Howard Fast. "It was embarrassing how quickly we were dropped by friends," he says.

Already branded a "pink," Fast considered it a matter of pride not to denounce the Communist Party. Besides, the CP was on the right side of all the causes he held dear: the union movement, civil rights and the fight against fascism. So the same year he left VOA, he became a party member. "I seemed to run out of reasons not to join," he says. In addition to the usual rallies and marches, Fast attended a communist-sponsored peace conference in Paris in 1949 and wrote columns for the Daily Worker. Yet he often bridled at the party's ideological rigidity -- its unswerving loyalty to Joseph Stalin and its dogmatic approach to his writing.

In 1950, after refusing to provide HUAC with a list of contributors to Spanish War Relief, Fast became one of the first of several artists and writers to be imprisoned. He served three months in jail. "But I decided to do useful work in jail and made the best of things," he says. "I got to know people from the other side of the fence, and they were not all villains -- not even the wardens and the guards." Still, he developed crippling headaches that to this day require him to keep a tank of oxygen in his bedroom.

When he got out of jail, Fast was blacklisted by mainstream publishers, who would suddenly receive a visit from an emissary of FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover each time they considered a Howard Fast manuscript. To survive, Fast wrote under a pseudonym and started his own small press. He also

continued his political activities and was constantly being observed and harassed by federal agents.

The result was an odd and frightening childhood for Jonathan and his elder sister, Rachel, a psychoanalyst who is now halfway through her own 1,000-page novel. Rachel recalls the trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were executed for spying. "We were in a room somewhere -- maybe just waiting for a verdict -- and I saw the [Rosenberg] children, and I started to cry," she says.

But there are warm memories too. "I remember sitting on Paul Robeson's knee while he sang `My Curly-Headed Baby,' " says Rachel. "I loved him beyond description -- he glowed." And Fast, Rachel says, was a doting father. "We would come in when he was working, and he would stop and play with us," she says.

"It was an exciting childhood," recalls Jonathan. "I remember a generalized fear, and I remember feeling like a terrible outsider. But that was long ago."

During the early '50s, the CP backed a production of Fast's play The Hammer but insisted on the unlikely casting of a young James Earl Jones as the child of a Jewish family. It was an ideological test of faith that a black could play a Jew, but the artistic contortion became one of the last straws for Fast, who had begun to criticize the Soviet regime. ("Stalin slaughtered millions in his collectivization scheme," he says, "thus ensuring that the Russians would not be able to feed themselves.") Fast quit the party, and the story made the front page of the New York Times. "In the party, I found ambition, rigidity, narrowness and hatred," he writes of those unquiet times. "I also found love and dedication and high courage and integrity -- and some of the noblest human beings I have ever known." He would never betray a former comrade. "A man who will traduce those who stood with him in battle is not worth much," he writes.

In 1974, lured by money and ease, the family moved to California for six years. Fast became financially secure writing TV scripts, including The Ambassador, an Emmy-winning production about Ben Franklin, and a TV movie about the 1972 Olympic massacre. Fast also became a pacifist and a student of Zen meditation. Dismayed by events in the Middle East, he says, "I can't see getting your child killed in the gulf. I couldn't bear that -- losing my son."

As he strolls along the clipped Connecticut lanes after lunch, passing the guarded estates of merchant princes, there is no place to find that romantic left turn back to his social-activist roots. The tenements of New York City have become crack houses, the left has withdrawn into a spoor state, publishers bid on his books, Hollywood beckons. And worst of all, he says between clenched teeth, only half joking, "I am beloved." And rich.

CAPTION: "The Communist Party never asked me to do anything dishonorable," says Fast, sitting on a wall outside his Connecticut home.

CAPTION: Fast, at an upstate New York farm at age 3, was on the streets fending for himself by 11. "I had no childhood," he says.

CAPTION: Flanked by his wife and daughter, Fast (right) accepted the 1953 International Peace Prize from singer Paul Robeson.

CAPTION: "I am a patriot," says Fast, who in 1953 testified before the Senate about the Voice of America.

CAPTION: In 1979, clockwise from left, Bette, Howard, Rachel, Molly, Jonathan and Erica Jong gathered for a portrait.

CAPTION: "You can find great emotional force in her work," says Howard (in Bette's Connecticut studio) of his wife's sculpture.

Mag.Coll.: 58E1568

Article A9353526

Booklist, May 15, 2003 v99 i18 p1639(1)

A tribute to Howard Fast. (Spotlight On Historical Fiction). (American Historical Novelist)(Obituary) *Brad Hooper.*

Howard Fast, dean of contemporary American historical novelists, died two months ago at age 88. He was born in New York City the year World War I broke out in Europe, and his first novel, Two Valleys, was published in 1933--and as the math indicates, he was still only in his teens at the time of that consequential event. From there, Fast went on to produce an amazingly vast oeuvre, including books, plays, poems, film scripts, essays, and short stories; but he will be remembered for his historical novels. Many of them were best-sellers, and a literary talent for vivid and accurate re-creations of historical times backed his commercial success in that genre. Fast was blacklisted in the 1950s and even served three months in prison, all stemming from his membership in the Communist Party and his refusal to cooperate with the House Un-American Activities Committee. The bottom line is that when it comes to reading Howard Fast, we continue to understand and appreciate that, simply, he could tell a darn good story. What follows is a selection of his best historical novels; the year cited in the imprint is the year of original publication.

* April Morning. 1961. Bantam, paper, $6.99 (0-553-27322-1).

The April morning referred to in the title is April 19, 1775, when the American Revolution began at the Battles of Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts. The story is told by the 15-year-old son of a farmer, who sees his father shot down and signs the muster roll himself.

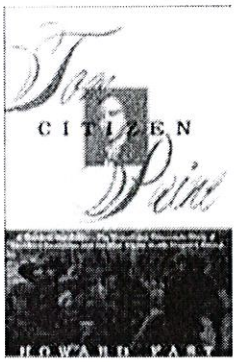
* Citizen Tom Paine. 1943. Grove, paper, $13.50. (0-8021-3064-X).

Fast reconstructs the life of the great Revolutionary inspirational figure, brought back to vivid life in the author's rich and historically accurate prose. The story opens with his coming to America at the age of 37. Fast writes dramatically and sympathetically of Paine's development as a revolutionary, but the man's failings are dealt with as well.

* The Hessian. 1972. M. E. Sharpe, paper, $19.95 (1-56324601-5).

The dynamic Revolutionary War period was a favorite of Fast, and here it once again provides a perfect setting, this time for a story that examines the prejudice exhibited by the Puritan majority of colonists in a New England community against those considered foreign by reason of religion or politics. The spare tale opens with the discovery that a local simple-minded youth was hanged by a small group of the hated Hessian mercenaries who believed him to be a spy.

* The Immigrants. 1977. Harvest, paper, $12 (0-15600-507-7).



Here Fast holds a slice of the great American success story up to the light, and the result is an arresting novel of one man's boom and bust. Daniel Lavette was born the son of destitute immigrant parents, and Fast follows his rise to business tycoon and his tall in the 1929 stock market crash.

* Last Frontier. 1941. M. E. Sharpe, paper, $15.95 (1-56324-593-0).

In this novel, which John Ford made into the movie Cheyenne Autumn (1964), Fast follows the struggle of the Cheyenne Indians, who, in the 1870s, against huge odds, attempted to leave the Indian Territory in Oklahoma and return to their homes in Wyoming and Montana.

* Moses, Prince of Egypt. 1958. Pocket, paper, $14 (0-671-03911-3).

A masterly fictionalization of Moses' early life, told with the vividness and plausibility of a firsthand account. Impetuous and torn between his royal training and his instincts, Moses leads a turbulent life, both inwardly and outwardly.

* Spartacus. 1951. M. E. Sharpe, paper, $15.95 (1-56324-599-X).

This novel (turned into the famous 1960 movie starring Kirk Douglas and Laurence Olivier) was originally published by Fast himself, because publishers turned him down due to his blacklisting. It is a fictionalized account of a slave revolt in ancient Rome, of which Spartacus, born a slave and trained as a gladiator, was the leader.

Article A102750288