

thus in the curious position of opposing the mistreatment of women and yet advocating their participation in an economy in which everyone is mistreated.

For passages like that, and for other reasons as well, Wendell Berry has earned a special place as a sage. Better than any one of his contemporaries, he has identified what is wrong with the way we live and pointed to ways to make it right.

J.O. Tate is a professor of English at Dowling College on Long Island.

Gathering the Desert

by Gregory McNamee

The Wilderness of the Southwest

by Charles Sheldon

Edited by Neil Carmony and
David Brown

Salt Lake City: University of
Utah Press; 256 pp., \$14.95



It is ironic that the modern environmentalist movement was founded by men with whom most modern environmentalists would have nothing to do today: game hunters, many so avid for the chase that they would spend fortunes to collect antlers and skins and skulls from far-off places. Theodore Roosevelt, to name one distinguished early conservationist, was responsible for setting aside vast tracts of land for national parks and

wildlife preserves; he also traveled to the Arctic Circle, to China's Taklimakan Desert, to the Serengeti Plain to add rare specimens to his collection of kills, which already numbered countless species from fields and streams that lay closer to home. Charles Sheldon (1867-1928) garnered a smaller reputation than that of the bully-pulpit President, but he filled the hunter-conservationist role just as well; his efforts substantially enriched the American public domain, and if few moderns have heard of his work, they have their remedy in *The Wilderness of the Southwest*.

A Yale graduate from a once well-to-do family gone broke in the recessions of the 1880's and 90's, Sheldon scrapped his plans for a grand tour of Europe, took to the woods with a shotgun and pointer, and set about exploring North America from Alaska to the high Sierra Madre of Mexico. He began his career, as literary archaeologists Neil Carmony and David Brown tell us in their edition of Sheldon's unpublished field notes, as the junior manager of a Midwestern railroad. By dint of Yankee virtues Sheldon rose quickly through the ranks, and other railroad tycoons began to take note of him. In 1898 Dean Sage, a New York entrepreneur, hired Sheldon to develop a railroad line through northern Mexico so that Middle American freight could be more efficiently shipped to the Pacific—Los Mochis, Sonora, lies 300 miles closer to San Louis than does San Francisco. The business eventually failed, but it has as its legacy the railroad line that snakes through Chihuahua's Barranca de Cobre, carrying thousands of tourists annually through what is known as Mexico's Grand Canyon.

Now jobless, Sheldon turned to Yalie friends for help. One eventually introduced him to C. Hart Merriam, the director of the U.S. Biological Survey, who hired him as an assessor in 1903 and sent him to central Alaska. He was not there long before he began to press for the creation of a national park to protect 20,322-foot Denali from mining claims. His campaign did little to endear him to Alaska's commercial interests, but it helped launch the present state's vast ecotourism industry, a primary source of revenue. After recruiting Roosevelt and the game-hunting Boone and Crockett Club to his side, Sheldon finally prevailed in 1919, but to his lasting disappointment, as Carmony and Brown note, North America's tallest peak and

its associated park were named Mount McKinley.

Alaska did not hold Sheldon for long. Suddenly interested in the biota of the arid Southwest, Merriam dispatched him to Arizona where at the same time that he hunted pronghorn antelope (*Antilocapra americana*) and desert bighorn (*Ovis canadensis*) he became concerned with their continued health as a species. Carmony and Brown have chased down Sheldon's gracefully written notes describing one such hunting trip into the heart of the Grand Canyon, in which the self-taught naturalist offers still-useful observations on the ways of the indigenous Havasupai Indians and on the peerless beauty of their homeland, which had only just come under federal jurisdiction as a national park. Subsequent expeditions took Sheldon into the harsh Pinacate and Lechuguilla regions of western Arizona and Sonora, of which he wrote: "This desert is certainly among the most arid regions of America, but it teems with life. The sands in the washes show the tracks of the small animals." Working there, he continued, was a fine tonic: "I am getting in better condition daily."

When forest ranger Aldo Leopold killed a Mexican gray wolf atop Arizona's Mogollon Rim, he experienced the epiphany that would make him one of America's foremost champions of wilderness: wolves, he concluded, are necessary to a healthy landscape; every creature that does not harm a place belongs there. Charles Sheldon underwent no such transformation, and animal-rights activists may cringe at his account of a prize taken while he explored the remote, imposing Tuseral Mountains of Sonora. He shot and killed a particularly battered desert bighorn. "A veteran old ram, scabby with hair almost gone, front knees bare and calloused, one horn badly broken in the middle from butting, the skin on his face scarred from fighting. His ears were full of ticks and almost stopped up. He was in exceedingly ragged condition and had had hard fighting. It was a romantic spot to kill an old ram." Anyone recounting such an adventure today—or confessing an admiration for barbarians like Hemingway and Turgenev—would earn more wrath than admiration.

Sheldon came to know many such romantic spots, and his explorations of the desert put him in rare company. As with his Havasupai contacts, his dryland trav-

LIBERAL ARTS

TANNING RIGHTS

A former inmate of the Rush County (Indiana) Jail is suing the county for failing to provide him with tanning sessions, reported the *Chicago Tribune* last December. Tim Spurling seeks \$300,000 from the county, because its commissioners refused to purchase an ultraviolet tanning lamp to treat his psoriasis.

els taught him to value the lifeways of the Indian nations he encountered. His journals show him to be a thoughtful recorder of the things he saw from day to day, not only the small details of weather or the shape of a particular ridge but deeper matters pertaining to religious custom and daily life. His pleasant memories of the Seri Indians of Tiburon Island, in the Gulf of California, make for an appreciative desert vignette: "It was very picturesque to see the Indians sitting about the fire under a big ironwood tree. I slept close to them. Coyotes, as usual here and on the island, howl in apparent chorus."

Sheldon knew, as many later conservationists would come to recognize, that in order to preserve animal populations a great deal of open space is needed: unlogged forest highlands, wild rivers, and unbroken tracts of ground. In his later years in Arizona he called for more than four million acres of Western desert to be set aside as a preserve for the desert bighorn. He held his own against local ranchers, who objected to turning more land over to the public domain, and against territorial governor George W.P. Hunt, who thundered in rage over the prospect of having a chunk of his land turned into "damned billy goat pasture." Despite his urgings, Sheldon's idea was never set in motion; with the advent of World War II, most of the land in question was turned over to bombing and gunnery ranges, and today fighter planes and rockets still shoot over the heads of the dwindling bighorn population.

The Wilderness of the Southwest is essential reading for desert rats, especially for those who haunt wild places like the Pinacate—graduate schools to most of the Sonoran Desert's romper room—and the Cabeza Prieta, Edward Abbey's favorite refuge. Neil Carmony and David Brown have done well in making this book available, in bringing so much learned research to the job of setting Sheldon's work in context, and in simply drawing the man to our attention once again. Sheldon's field notes are instructive lessons in how to observe nature and humankind, and his life is an object lesson as well in illustrating that while nature always bats last, someone has to act as umpire.

Gregory McNamee is the author of the forthcoming book *Gila: The Life and Death of an American River* (Crown Publishers).

Brief Mentions

The Patton Mind: The Professional Development of an Extraordinary Leader. By Roger H. Nye
Wayne, NJ: Avery Publishing Group; 224 pp., \$12.95

The perfect gift for the armchair warrior, *The Patton Mind* traces the intellectual development of a "profane man of action" who, Roger Nye notes, "left behind the most complete record of exhaustive professional study of any World War II general—or any general in American history, for that matter." Dyslexic as a child, Patton was the beneficiary of parents who continually read to him from the classics, ancient history, and Romantic poetry. He developed a prodigious memory, which undoubtedly helped nurture his sense of destiny, his belief in reincarnation, and hence his fearlessness. To perish bravely, like a legendary hero, was glorious, marking not the end of life, but an entry into Valhalla before one was reborn to take up the shield and sword once more. *The Patton Mind* is, in essence, a survey of the books that shaped and justified Patton's thinking. Patton disdained intellectuals, but he was a voracious reader of military history, biography, and tactics. The professional soldier had, in Patton's words, to "be so soaked in military lore that he does the military thing automatically." And though he said bluntly that soldiers were "killers," he was a good deal less bloodthirsty than some politicians. For all his aggressive fire, Patton was shot through with a famous religious sense and believed in victory with magnanimity, not retribution, and in targeting enemy soldiers for destruction rather than their cities and civilians.

—H.W. Crocker III

James B. Conant: Harvard to Hiroshima and the Making of the Nuclear Age. By James Hershberg
New York: Alfred A. Knopf; 948 pp., \$35.00

The career of Harvard President James B. Conant (1933-1952), chemistry prodigy and godfather to the A-bomb, refutes H.L. Mencken's opinion that a university president of "real intelligence" was as "improbable as a Bach festival in Mississippi." Among the first of the modern university presidents who prefer to be

knee-deep in much that has little to do with university life, the professor who began his presidency by carving out time to teach undergraduates soon found more important things to do, especially when it came to lecturing government officials on the evils of everything from communism to the H-bomb. Called to Washington in 1941 to help pave the road to Hiroshima, he never quite lost his attraction to the corridors of power.

An Eisenhower Republican before Eisenhower Republicanism existed, Conant was never quite at home in Harry Truman's Washington; a Cold War liberal, he was never at all comfortable in what he feared was becoming Joe McCarthy's America. But he was just as much a politician as the above three, and the bulk of James Hershberg's monumental biography details Conant's political life. Whether the issue was atomic policy or McCarthyism on campus, Conant invariably tried to find a way to claim the moral high ground *and* save his presidential hide *and* enhance his national reputation. Hershberg spends literally hundreds of pages exploring the twists and turns of Conant's mind as he wrestled with the consequences of the Manhattan Project before aligning himself with those who proposed to "ban the [H-] bombers." He accords somewhat less space to Conant's mealy-mouthed efforts to uphold academic freedom while appeasing his conservative board of overseers. One can only shudder at the prospect of the pusillanimously platitudinous President Conant bending before the politically correct McCarthys of today.

—John C. Chalberg

For Immediate Service

CHRONICLES

NEW SUBSCRIBERS

TOLL FREE NUMBER

1-800-877-5459