

Inquiring Minds: Finding hope in troubled Times

Issue #38 April-July 2016 "It's often in the darkest skies that we see the brightest stars." Richard Evans

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THE BOYS IN THE BOAT

Set in The Great Depression at the onset of Hitler's rise to power, this is the true story about how the crew team at the University of Washington went to the 1936 World Olympics.



Like so many heroes of that era (*Seabiscuit*, Louis Zamparini, from *Broken*, Bobby Jones from *The Grand Slam*, and boxer Joe Louis) these are stories which inform and inspire. They show how individuals overcame and were strengthened by their own struggles and those of the times.

What set apart the University of Washington's crew was the perfect combination of coaching, talent, and motivation. The heart and muscle needed to row as a team came notably from the working class families of the Pacific Northwest. The energy in a six minute boat race has been compared to playing two back-to-back basketball games, which took a lot of teamwork and true grit.



Joe Rantz

The book focuses on the life of Joe Rantz and the struggles he went through just to afford going to college from pulling stumps to hanging over a cliff with a jackhammer as a worker on the Grand Coulee Dam.

Meanwhile, it shows Hitler and propaganda director Joseph Goebbels working with film star/director Leni

Riefenstahl filming the making of the 320 acre stadium for the 1936 World Olympics, to prove to the world the might of the German Super Race. Of course, Jesse Owens, Joe Louis, and the crew team from Washington would challenge that notion.

THE BELIEVING BRAIN SHEDS UNDERSTANDING

The Believing Brain by Michael Shermer has helped me understand some of the science behind how and why we believe what we do and are unable see how others think otherwise. Below are what notable scientists say about this book and its author:



"...Shermer has long been one of our most committed champions of scientific thinking in the face of popular delusion. In *The Believing Brain*, he has written a wonderfully lucid, accessible, and wide-ranging account of the boundary between justified and unjustified belief..." --Sam Harris, author of NYT bestsellers *The Moral Landscape*, *Letter to a Christian Nation*, and *The End of Faith*

"*The Believing Brain* is a tour de force integrating neuroscience and the social sciences to explain how irrational beliefs are formed and reinforced, while leaving confident our ideas are valid. This is a must read for everyone who wonders why religious and political beliefs are so rigid and polarized or why the other side is always wrong, but somehow doesn't see it." --Leonard Mlodinow, author of *The Drunkard's Walk* and *The Grand Design* (with Steven Hawking)

Lastly, from by Bill Nye, the Science Guy, executive director of the Planetary Society

"We might think that we learn how the world works, because we take the time to observe and understand it. Shermer says that's just not so. We just believe things, and then make our world fit our perceptions. Believe me: you don't have to take my word for it. Just try clearing some space in your own *Believing Brain*."

Very convincing to me was that author is respectful in discussing various belief systems, having been caught up in several himself. He also gives examples of stubborn belief in a

theory can hurt scientific progress. And even a true skeptic has to be, at times, skeptical of his own skepticism.

NEW AWARENESS SAVES HAMILTON ON \$10 BILL

Ron Chernow's book *Hamilton* inspired Lin-Manuel Miranda to write the musical *Hamilton*; and both inspired Secretary of Treasury Jack Lew to keep Hamilton on the ten dollar bill. (Both the ten and twenty denominations were up for counterfeiting and redesign upgrades.) Now it looks like Andrew Jackson on the twenty will get bumped in favor of Harriet Tubman. A good choice all the way around. Hamilton's legacy lives on! Bravo to all for keeping his memory and legacy alive.

A LESSON FROM LITTLE LO

Given all of the books above, most of life's lessons come from own own real experiences. Several months ago our six-year-old grand daughter Lois noticed that I was a bit curt with Patricia over something. Ten minutes later Lois was outside watching me work on a project, and asked, "Papa, why were you upset with Mimi?"

Her pure and innocent question hit me between the eyes. I told her I



Lois graduates Kindergarten

didn't mean to upset Mimi, thanked her for bringing it to my attention, and told her I would go into the house and apologize to her Mimi, my wife. I'm sure you've had similar experiences of how a child or grandchild has made you a better person, not wanting to disappoint that expectation. How can one argue with pure innocence of a child or anyone so dependent on us?

Your thoughts are welcome. --Joe

