

Timely and Trusted Book Reviews by Siuslaw News Senior Reporter Mark Brennan

"The American Story edited" By David Rubenstein

The last year has seen a I number of important releases by politicians, historians, educators and physicians most of which can be found at the library and many of these will be reviewed in fu-ture entries of the "Bookmarks" column.

It seems appropriate to restart reviews of the many titles released since the pandemic with a review of an important historical release, "The American Story" which is edited by David M. Rubenstein.

Rubenstein is the cofounder and co-executive chairman of the Carlyle Group, one of the worlds most successful private equity firms. He is chairman of the boards of trustees for the Smithsonian Institution, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the Council on Foreign Relations.

"The American Story, Conversations with Master Historians," bestselling and Pulitzer Prize winning authors share insights and observations on America's past from the time of our nation's founders to the late twentieth century.

Rubenstein conducted the 15 interviews included in this fascinating compilation at the Smithsonian and includes conversations with Jon Meacham, David McCollough, Doris Kearns Goodwin, Taylor Branch, Robert Caro, Bob Woodward and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court John Roberts.

There is a chronological progression to the collection beginning with new insights into the words and deeds of

George Washington and moving through history to the words and thoughts of Chief Justice Roberts.

Assembling this array of historians is unprecedented and the discussions range from new understandings of the roles women played in the development of our democracy to the biography written by Pulitzer Prize winner Ron Chernow, which sparked the production of the Broadway mega-hit "Hamilton." Many of the moments shared by Chernow add an unexpected element to Hamilton's contributions to American democracy.

"In the opening weeks (of the constitutional convention) Hamilton didn't make a single speech. When he finally opened his mouth, he spoke for six hours...for the presidency he wanted to have an elective monarch, essentially. He wanted the President to be elected but then to serve for life, subject to impeachment or recall. It was a terrible idea, but luckily it wasn't taken seri-ously, " Chernow said.

It is these little known or misunderstood events, speeches and actions which readers hear about for the first time which add to our collective understanding of America's past and where she might be headed in the future.

The role of strong, intelligent women in American history is covered by Cokie Roberts in discussions centered around her books, "Founding Mothers, The Women Who Raised Our Nation" and "Ladies of Liberty, The Women Who Shaped Our Nation."

One of the main figures

Roberts discusses is Abagail Adams, and the more than 1,000 letters between her and husband John Adams. These letters provide an important glimpse into the thoughts and ideas the couple shared during the struggle for independence from England.

Rubenstein seems particularly interested in a series between the two which were exchanged during a prolonged period where Adams was living in France and having a very different time dealing with the war and its impact.

"They were such devoted patriot, it's just incredible. That's one of the reasons I admire these women so much. Abagail Adams would sit at night in this tiny house...and there she was with four children and dogs and American soldiers would come and stay because the British were occupying Boston, an she would still sit up at night by candlelight and write these letters so full of patriotism and enthusiasm about the cause. You'd think she'd just want to go to bed," Roberts said.

These writers, some of the best to ever write about American History, also tell little known anecdotes about Charles Lindberg, FDR, Ronald Regan and Lyndon B. Johnson using letters and conversations with the subjects that reveal new and informative aspects of their lives.

Personal and historic insights are scattered throughout this 400-page, enormously entertaining book, offering the reader a unique look at iconic figures in American history.



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