



nothing so comforting about the promise that it will never rain on them. California now has quakes and had withering wildfires. The air had a load of smoke and air pollution. In the mountains where it snows at all the snowpack is getting thinner and thinner. The snowfall blankets the ground earlier and melts off sooner each year.

California for years has battled for programs to help curb global climate change. It is not just the right thing to do. California is extremely vulnerable to deadly results of global climate change. Like every other state their efforts to curb climate change and way too little way too late. It is going from the most desirable land to live in the country to some of the least attractive. At least I did not decide to settle in my favorite state. [-mrl]

### **Circumnavigating the Earth** (letter of comment by John Purcell):

In response to [various comments on circumnavigating the earth](#) in the 01/25/19 issue of the MT VOID, John Purcell writes:

I had to laugh at all the comments about Jules Verne being geographically challenged, especially the way your readers figured out what it would take to circumnavigate the Earth in 40 minutes, which I guess we could call the Puck Challenge. Only in a science fiction fanzine. My word, but we are such geeks--and damned proud of it, too! [-jp]

### **This Week's Reading** (book comments by Evelyn C. Leeper):

THE BULLY PULPIT: THEODORE ROOSEVELT, WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT, AND THE GOLDEN AGE OF JOURNALISM by Doris Kearns Goodwin (ISBN 978-1-4165- 4786-0) is about, well, Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft and the Golden Age of Journalism. (Duh!) For those who know the period from around 1900 to 1912 only as "McKinley gets shot, Teddy Roosevelt becomes President, then Taft is elected and Teddy goes exploring, then Teddy comes back, is unhappy with Taft, forms a third party, and thus hands the election to the Democrat, Woodrow Wilson," Goodwin provides a lot more context.

For example, in 1904 Roosevelt and Taft were the best of friends. In 1908, when Roosevelt declined to run and Taft was elected, this had cooled a bit--Roosevelt had vowed after winning re-election in 1904 that he would not run in 1908, and he was regretting that promise. However, unlike many of today's politicians, he felt obliged to keep it. By the time 1912 rolled around, Roosevelt and Taft were bitter enemies. This seems to be mostly Roosevelt's doing: he felt that Taft was not pushing policies Roosevelt supported hard enough; basically Taft was not progressive enough for Roosevelt. On Taft's side, Taft felt that \*he\* was President, and he resented Roosevelt speaking as though he (TR) still ran the show.

My admiration for Roosevelt was somewhat diminished by Goodwin's descriptions, though I had reservations even before reading this book. For example, Roosevelt's positive glee for war has always been troublesome. As Goodwin writes, "Even before assuming his post in the Navy Department, Roosevelt had insisted that he 'would rather welcome a foreign war.' ... While McKinley, who had 'seen the dead piled up at Antietam, prayed for peace, Roosevelt, who had never seen combat, absurdly romanticized war." [page 222]

This is perhaps not unlike Robert A. Heinlein and Joe Haldeman. Heinlein spent World War II behind a desk and wrote STARSHIP TROOPERS, considered by many a glorification of the military in general and the infantry in particular. Haldeman spent his time in the military "in country" in Vietnam, and wrote THE FOREVER WAR, which is less than totally positive towards the military (at least the "upper management" of the military) and war. Heinlein's war is a necessary war to save humanity; Haldeman's war is a useless war based on a misunderstanding.

Roosevelt has some opinions we might want to consider, though. "It would result in 'a dreadful calamity,' Roosevelt told a conservative friend, to see the nation 'divided into two parties, one containing the bulk of the property owners and conservative people, the other the bulk of the wageworkers and the less prosperous people generally; each party insisting upon demanding much that was wrong, and each party sullen and angered by real and fancied grievances.'" [pages 444-445]

Also, "Neither this people nor any other free people will permanently tolerate the use of the vast power conferred by vast wealth, and especially by wealth in its corporate form, without lodging somewhere in the government the still higher power of seeing that this power, in addition to being used in the interest of the individual or individuals possessing it, is also used for and not against the interests of the people as a whole." [page 447]

In an interesting parallel to the present, Taft played a lot of golf, but often as part of a weight-loss regimen; in those days, golfers \*walked\* the course rather than rode around in a gold cart. Even so, reporters eager for any story during Taft's times away from Washington portrayed him as doing little besides playing golf, which was perceived as "a rich man's game."

This period also marked the rise of what was called then "muckraking" journalism, and is now called "investigative journalism." This was led by McClure's, with the most prominent journalists being Ida M. Tarbell, Lincoln Steffens, and Stannard Baker, as well as the novelist Upton Sinclair.

By the way, the term "bully pulpit" should be parsed as a fantastic platform for advocating one's positions, "bully" meaning "great" or "splendid" and being one of Roosevelt's favorite words, often used as an exclamation by itself. It does not (or did not) mean a platform from which to harangue and intimidate one's opponents.

The book itself is thorough, but intimidating. However, its 912 pages include about 150 pages of footnotes, so the average reader does not have quite the challenge it first appears. Still, it's a lot of reading, and not for the "casual" reader. [-ecl]

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Mark Leeper  
mleeper@optonline.net

Quote of the Week:

The secret to creativity is knowing how to hide your sources.

--Albert Einstein

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