

All the Things Hillary Clinton's Book Doesn't Say About Iraq

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Having co-authored a 2007 biography of Hillary Clinton, I know that Iraq is not one of her favorite subjects. But with the bloodshed and sectarian division now crippling Iraq, I wondered what her new memoir, "[Hard Choices](#)," had to say about a country that's long been a political minefield for her.

The answer is not a lot. There is no chapter on its own for Iraq, like there is for Gaza, or Burma or Haiti. The discussion of Iraq is scattered throughout the 632-page book, and it is mostly about old battles. Clinton does not delve into the challenges she faced as secretary of state in 2011 as her department inherited responsibility for Iraq's security assistance when American troops withdrew.

Instead, the book has made headlines for her admission, for the first time in 12 years, that she made a "mistake" when voting to authorize the Iraq war when she was still a senator in 2002.

A closer look at what Clinton wrote in 2014 and didn't write about that vote, about her views on the Iraq troop surge and about the country's ongoing sectarian strife is revealing. Clinton continues to misstate parts of her record on Iraq, while failing to address some of the tough choices she took as America's chief diplomat.

Here's a refresher on the details, drawn from interviews and government records and reports on Iraq. Clinton's office and the book's publicist did not respond to requests for comment.

“I Was Totally Briefed” for the Iraq War Vote2026

Clinton explains her war vote this way:

“My lack of confidence in the Bush Administration went back to the fall of 2002, when it was boasting of ironclad intelligence about Saddam Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction. After weighing the evidence and seeking as many opinions as I could inside and outside the government, Democrats and Republicans alike, I voted to authorize military action in Iraq, if the diplomatic efforts, meaning the U.N. weapons inspections, failed.” She also wrote that she “made the best decision I could with the information I had.”

In our 2007 book about Clinton, co-author Don Van Natta Jr. and I showed that she had never read what arguably was the most authoritative information available: the National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq. After book excerpts appeared, Clinton was asked in the first presidential debate with Barack Obama whether she regretted not reading the estimate. “I feel like I was totally briefed,” she said.

But Didn’t Read The Best Report2026

The estimate concluded that Iraq was rebuilding its capacity for nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. But there were dissents within the report that turned out to be accurate. Clinton’s colleague, Florida Sen. Bob Graham, then the intelligence committee chairman, had read the report. At a lunch three days before the war vote, he forcefully urged Clinton and fellow Democrats to also read it. Graham opposed the resolution for war.

Clinton doesn’t specify her pre-vote sources of information. But one person she didn’t consult was Carl Ford, Jr. At the time, Ford was in charge of the State Department’s

intelligence bureau, which correctly reasoned in the intelligence estimate that Iraq was not rebuilding its nuclear capabilities.

Ford, now retired, told me in an interview Monday that Clinton never consulted him. He secretly briefed a few Congressional committees involved with national security, but Clinton was not then a member of them.

A Vote for Diplomacy (Not Counting a Vote Against Diplomacy)2026

Clinton argues in the book that she really was voting for diplomacy, not war. That repeats a stance she made when she cast her vote, and it's one she continued to make in the following years. But the resolution she backed gave President George W. Bush wide latitude to go to war. Its title was unambiguous: "Authorization for use of military force against Iraq resolution."

One of Clinton's Democratic colleagues offered an amendment favoring more diplomacy. The amendment's author, Sen. Carl Levin of Michigan, said his proposal would require Bush to return to Congress if U.N. diplomacy failed, and ask for another war resolution. Clinton voted against it.

Opponents argued that the Levin amendment limited presidential authority, and it failed. But three of the senators who backed the amendment also voted for the war authorization. If Clinton had voted for the Levin amendment as well, her claims of wanting more diplomacy would be far more persuasive.

While Lining Up With Bush on al-Qaida's (erroneous) Pre-War

Role 2026

On the Senate floor the day of the war vote, Clinton went further than any other Democratic senator²⁰¹⁴ and aligned herself with President Bush²⁰¹⁴ by accusing Saddam Hussein of giving “aid, comfort and sanctuary to terrorists, including al-Qaida.” That position was unsupported by the National Intelligence Estimate, and it turned out to be not true.

After the invasion, al-Qaida did gain a foothold in the country. Today, some of the worst violence in Iraq is driven by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), an outgrowth of the original al-Qaida group. ISIS has grown in strength with a goal of forming a new Islamic state in Iraqi and Syrian territory.

And Opposing the (Successful) Iraq Troop Surge 2026

Along with many others, Clinton opposed the surge of troops in Iraq. The surge was widely credited with reducing violence and restoring stability in a country where the governing majority was Shia and the minority was Sunni. The reverse had been true under Saddam Hussein.

In her book, Clinton says her decision to oppose the troop surge stemmed from her residual distrust of President Bush dating back to the war resolution.

“Five years later,” she writes, “President Bush asked us to trust him again, this time about his proposed surge, and I wasn’t buying it.” The problem, as she saw it, was that throwing more troops at the problem wouldn’t work without a “robust diplomatic strategy” that went to the underlying challenges, including “the sectarian conflicts that were tearing the country apart.”

Clinton writes that the surge proved successful because its architect, Gen. David Petraeus, followed a more comprehensive strategy, as she had urged when he appeared before the Senate in January 2007.

But That Was Just Presidential Politics2026

But her book doesn't address the surprising admission that then-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates says she made at an October 2009 White House meeting to discuss a proposed troop surge in Afghanistan.

"In strongly supporting a surge in Afghanistan," Gates wrote in "Duty," his memoir, "Hillary told the president that her opposition to the surge in Iraq had been political because she was facing him in the Iowa primary."

Gates found the exchange "remarkable," and quotes Clinton as going on to say, "The Iraq surge worked."

As Her Department Takes Over Security Assistance in Iraq2026

The administration's point person on Iraq has been Vice President Joe Biden. Still, Clinton had significant responsibility for the relationship as secretary of state. Not only was she the country's top diplomat, but responsibility for security assistance in Iraq was transferred to the State Department from the Pentagon after American troops were withdrawn at the end of 2011. Iraqi legislators barred even a limited presence, something that hampered military training.

There is nothing about this in her book. One former State Department official, who worked on Iraq under Clinton, said the omission was consistent with the experience of staffers:

Clinton didn't devote a lot of political capital or time to the subject.

As the announcement of the troop withdrawal played out, Clinton did appear on two talk shows to assuage concerns about the future security situation in Iraq. She told both questioners there would be a "very robust diplomatic presence" and continued security training, now under the auspices of her department.

Plans For Training and Diplomatic Outposts Fall Back

A program to school Iraqi police to fight terrorism and crime, run by the State Department, came under strong criticism by auditors and was drastically scaled back during Clinton's tenure, [according to federal reports](#). The Baghdad Police Academy Annex was closed by 2012, and the American group that coordinated security with Iraq, then under State Department control, was faulted in a 2013 audit by the Pentagon and State Department for a lack of "clearly defined responsibilities" that put at risk "bilateral security operations with Iraq."

The promised diplomatic presence was scaled back, too. Iraq experts in the State Department proposed to keep open American facilities in places like Kirkuk, but the plan fell by the wayside, according to the former official. The plan's purpose was to keep in contact with the increasingly disenfranchised minority under the country's Shia-dominated leaders, led by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. Shortly after the departure of American troops, the country's top Sunni official had to flee to avoid being arrested.

"The worry was that the Sunnis would feel abandoned," the former official recalled.

In 2012, the new ambassador to Iraq, Robert Beecroft, was

asked about Maliki's autocratic tendencies at his confirmation hearing. He said that working through disputes in Iraq was a "slow, protracted process" but the U.S. was working hard to "encourage" consensus and "we'll continue to do that as best we can."

"The encouraging thing," he told the senators, "is that Iraq has not fallen apart."

While Violence and Sectarian Conflict Get Worse

The sectarian conflict, which Clinton worried about in 2007, has grown worse since Maliki's re-election in 2010, [according a recent article in the Washington Post](#).

By October 2012, a few months before Clinton left the cabinet, a government audit found that the security situation in Iraq was deteriorating. Violence had reached its highest levels in two years, according to the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction. And Sunni terrorist groups like ISIS had "[regained strength](#)."

Two years later, the group has assumed control over large chunks of the country.

And Iraq's Leader is To Blame

As for Maliki, Clinton's one reference to him in the book is part of a description of how Americans have helped his government rebuild Iraq's oil industry. But as she has been promoting her book around the country, the former secretary has chosen a more undiplomatic description.

He "has failed," she told Fox News, and she no longer thinks he "is the person to lead Iraq."

Editor's note: Chapters about Iraq from Jeff Gerth's 2007

biography of Hillary Clinton, "Her Way", co-authored with Don Van Natta Jr. were excerpted in The New York Times under the title, "[Hillary's War](#)."

The JOB Messiahs – 2nd edition interview

Questions and Answers:

Wim de Vriend: – The 2nd edition of "The JOB-Messiahs."

While having a look at the second edition of Wim de Vriend's wave-making book, I noticed that the newest edition had grown to over 500 pages.

QUESTION: What made you publish a new, even bigger edition?

WIM: The main reason was that I was running out of books to sell, always a happy event for an author. That's because authors want to be read. So I started preparing the manuscript for a second printing by correcting a minor flaw here, a minor typo some place else; in a book that covers so much ground there are always some.

But I had also received comments about more significant problems, not what I would call errors but omissions. Richard Knablin was very helpful that way. He thought the book should have included an Index, and he was right. In fact, I know the Coos Historical Museum put somebody to work creating an Index for the copy of the first edition that I had given them for their collection. I don't mean to denigrate that man's effort, but a look at his work convinced me that the author is the one most qualified to create an Index. He knows the material like

nobody else does, and he knows what's important. So I set to work; it took me three weeks, but it was worth it. It's about fifteen pages of small print, but now everybody in town who wants to know what "The JOB Messiahs" says about them can find out in a hurry. 'Course, I don't know if that will be a comfort. Open the closet, and a lot of skeletons come tumbling out.

QUESTION: Why make it so easy on them? Wouldn't it be better to make them read the book to find out?

WIM: That's how I rationalized publishing the first edition without an Index. Let them find out for themselves, I thought, and I didn't want to spend any more time. But I ignored the average reader's need to refresh his memory of who did what and when, and where this problem or that issue occurred before. Lionel Youst, a local historian himself, thought the book was "an important and significant contribution to our history." Well, if that's the case, an Index will make it even more important, now and in the future, because it will be more accessible.

QUESTION: You've convinced me; an Index is an excellent idea. But doesn't that leave owners of the first edition a bit handicapped?

WIM: Actually, no. If any of them would like an Index for the edition they already have, I'll be happy to email it to them. And my email address is on the book's title page.

QUESTION: What else is in the second edition that made it fatter?

WIM: Instead of twenty chapters, it has twenty-one. Richard Knablin was disappointed that I had not covered the story of the Nucor Steel mill, back in 1997-1999. To be honest, after already putting in so much work I had decided to gloss over Nucor because it followed the same pattern as all the other grand but failed industrial development schemes for Coos Bay. And of course it did, but yet a book that claims to cover about thirty-five years of such failures should have included it. First I was just going to add a few pages about Nucor, but that didn't do justice to the story, so I ended up creating an

entirely new chapter, Chapter 18. It's called "Nucor Spots the Streetwalker."

QUESTION: I thought Nucor was a steel company.

WIM: It was, and it is, but some of the people who had been at the very well-attended public meetings promoting the Nucor mill were disgusted with all the fawning over this company, and they thought it made Coos Bay look like a streetwalker, ready to sell her assets to the highest bidder. I'm not entirely sure I agree with that, but it was a striking image.

QUESTION: So how did you see it?

WIM: To me it seemed that Nucor was playing the part of the streetwalker, and the people of Coos Bay were the horny Johns cruising the gut, cash in their hot little hands. That's because Nucor had absolutely no shame in trolling – trollopping might be a better word – for the highest bidder. In the summer of 1997 the Oregon Legislature had approved a subsidy program for Nucor that by some estimates would have cost the taxpayers \$127 million, for a mill that would employ about 230 people. It was by far the biggest corporate giveaway in the history of the state, and some of the politicians in Salem called it obscene. But they justified it with that perennial magic word: JOBS. Jobs for Coos Bay. And guess what: the ink was not yet dry on the bill when Nucor approached the Washington Legislature, asking if they couldn't do better than Oregon in the Corporate Welfare Department. As it turned out, the politicians in Olympia turned them down, which seemed to surprise Nucor. You see, up till then they had built most of their plants in the South, and when it comes to corporate welfare, nobody can beat the Southern states.

QUESTION: Can you remind us how the Nucor story ended?

WIM: Officially the company was interested in Coos Bay for about two years, but unofficially I think their interest, if it ever existed, was very brief, and it's obvious from the things they did and didn't do that they started looking for a way out, possibly quite early on. They simply were not very serious, and this has been seen before and after Nucor. The smelter promoter of 1986, the Daishowa pulp mill scheme of

1989, the Maersk container terminal of 2007 – what they had in common with Nucor was that Coos Bay was merely one of several alternative sites, and by no means the most promising one. In fact, I'm convinced that it's the credulousness of the people of Coos Bay, and their insular self-deception, that enable these scams. Some big company comes to town, promising JOBS. Everybody gets excited and starts throwing money at them. In the meantime the company secretly knows where it would like to build, and it's not in Coos Bay. But using Coos Bay as an alternative is very useful, because they always play one town against another.

I'm sorry, I stand corrected; usually they play at least three different towns. But Coos Bay never ends up being the bride. Coos Bay always ends up the forlorn bridesmaid left at the altar, with no bouquet to console her.

QUESTION: How can you be so sure this is true?

WIM: Look at the reality of our location. For 160 years Coos Bay has been busy convincing itself that it's a potential global industrial center, and a potential world Port. It's all nonsense. Shipping has become more and more concentrated in bigger ports, with the smaller ones falling by the wayside. Look at what's happened to Eureka, Newport, Astoria, and many more once-active ports. We're too far off the beaten path, we don't have good inland connections, and our harbor only existed to ship out local products, first coal and then lumber. No local products, no port. And economically, the idea of importing things through Coos Bay has always been ludicrous. And yet you still have irresponsible dunderheads like that Frank Williams and Ingvar Doessing running around, proclaiming that if we only build those multi-million-dollar docks, the shippers will come. That kind of thinking only works in movies about mythical baseball fields.

QUESTION: You mentioned JOBS. People need jobs. Everybody talks about creating jobs. So what can be done?

WIM: Start by junking the idea that jobs can be "created." Jobs are a by-product of business enterprises, but no businessman in his right mind starts a business in order to

create jobs. Nevertheless, if he's successful he will create jobs, just like a booming, productive economy will create better and cheaper products, in short, a better life for everybody. But to get such an economy you have to be open for business. That doesn't mean you go out and throw money at promoters like Nucor or Daishowa or Maersk, and you fund an endless number of economic-development agencies that do nothing but waste money. But here, in Coos County, we are in an excellent position to be open for business. Yet we're ignoring Coos County's potential, and amputating it, and suppressing it, every step of the way.

QUESTION: That's a big claim to make.

WIM: But it fits. All you have to do is look around while you drive through Coos Bay/North Bend. Rotting docks, rusty railroad tracks, tumbledown buildings, and vacant, weed-overgrown industrial sites. Why isn't this waterfront being re-developed, as has been done successfully in so many places around the world? Because the entire waterfront is being choked by a noose. I'm talking about the old railroad track to Coquille that runs along it, the one that hasn't been used for five years. But, we are told, we have to have it "to survive as a port," and if anybody wants to develop the waterfront they will first have to shell out \$350,000 for an official railroad crossing. It's preposterous.

QUESTION: But the Port of Coos Bay says the railroad is needed to haul lumber for Georgia-Pacific, and plywood for the Roseburg mill in Coquille. And how does re-developing the waterfront create jobs?

WIM: First things first. Way before the railroad quit running in 2007 those two mills, especially Roseburg, were saying that without trains to haul their products they'd shut down. But miraculously they're still here, even in this very bad economy. It's not the only case where you have to be skeptical of what the lumbermen tell you.

But more important, re-developing the waterfront would send signals to all those millions of people driving through town that we're serious about welcoming both people and businesses.

People are the key; it's people who start businesses. Which businesses create the most jobs? Start-ups and small businesses. Old, established industries don't create many jobs; in fact, many are net job-losers. Now, coming back to the people, the people who may start new businesses, Coos County has huge assets that could work to its advantage. It's very scenic, it has a pleasant climate, it has the best public services on the coast. If the place looked better you would see a large influx of new people, both retired people and younger folks who first saw the place as tourists and then decided to settle here. The retired folks will create jobs with the money they spend, and the younger folks with the businesses they start. And some of those businesses will grow, creating even more jobs.


QUESTION: But people object that jobs catering to tourists don't pay enough.

WIM: Actually, a waitress job pays a lot better than a job at a call center. But people who talk like that have blinders on. The final purpose of making the town attractive is not to create waitresses' jobs. It will set a process in motion where more people settle permanently, and those people will create jobs, as I just said. We don't know, of course, what kinds of jobs those will be and that seems to bother the people who are always denigrating tourist jobs. But they want the kind of certainty that cannot be found in this world. We cannot control our future. If anything has been proved in my book, that's it. But what we CAN do is to remove our self-created obstacles to sensible, sustainable development. That kind of development won't cost fortunes for corporate welfare and tax breaks and urban renewal and endless numbers of economic developers and bureaucrats. Did you know that by the year 2000 we had eighteen economic development agencies in Coos Bay?

QUESTION: Is that in your book?

WIM: In the second edition, yes. I decided to re-work chapter 17, which is about "creating jobs," by listing all those agencies. That chapter also has a more complete history of all the industrial closures in the area during the 1990s.

QUESTION: Where is your book being sold?

WIM: At Books-by-the-Bay in North Bend, at the Blue Heron  in Coos Bay, and at The Sentinel's office in Coquille. At \$35, it's the bargain of the century. Imagine, all that work, over twenty years – if I end up making a nickel for every hour I put into it, I'll be doing very well. But the real success of the book will consist of local change, change for the good, change that will get us out of that old, unproductive rut we've been stuck in for 35 years.

To my surprise, the other day at the restaurant a man from Olympia, Washington, bought my book. He was quite taken with it, and agreed that this same garbage has been going on where he lives. That same day I sold one to a student from New Mexico who is studying "economic development." She told me that the methods to "create jobs" in my book are now considered outmoded and ineffective by the scholars. So I'm in good company; it just seems that Coos Bay is like a very ineffective coffee pot. It takes forever for fresh ideas to percolate.


QUESTION: What do you think will happen to the Port of Coos Bay's development schemes of recent years, the LNG plant, the Maersk container terminal, and now the coal-export notion?

WIM: I cover the first two in chapter 19 of my second edition. What's most amazing to me is the third one, the coal-export idea – we have been through all that before, in 1980. Back then a promoter came to town with the notion of exporting coal from Utah, to be brought in by train and mixed with local coal trucked in from Eden Ridge, near Powers. In due course it was proved that none of it would ever work, because of transportation costs. We do have a lot of coal in the U.S., but our major western coal beds are located a thousand miles or more from shipping ports. That means expensive train transportation, which means coal that will cost an overseas buyer too much. You can find all that in chapter 7 of my book. In the end, the whole coal export mania of 1980 was a scam, and the coal promoter's real agenda seems to have been stock speculation, something that was also likely true of the 1986

smelter promoter. There's been some softening of domestic coal prices lately, and a supposedly tremendous demand for coal in China, but there are many factors liable to shrink that demand, with time and market forces deflating the coal idea as they have done to so many industrial-development schemes before. In any case, Coos Bay's disadvantages vis-à-vis Columbia River ports have not gone away. Somebody would have to pay for a major overhaul of the Eugene-Coos Bay railroad line; no way is that suitable for mile-long coal trains, and much of it may need to be double-tracked, as may be true of the line from Portland to Eugene as well. So how can we be competitive for shipping coal? I know, miracles do happen, but not very often.

“EVERYBODY’S WAR”

QUESTION: In your latest book called Everybody's War, everything seems to appear through a lens that's colored "WAR". I see a chapter called Lilli Kirschbaum's War – another one called Al Kampen's War – A Drinking War – Chester Kauffman's War, and so on . . .

WIM: Right; and there are a lot more besides. The book has forty chapters, most of them with a war theme. And the chapters that don't deal with war either deal with differences in national attitudes, or they set the stage for the war chapters. For instance, a couple of my chapters deal with the German economy during the Nazi era, which is important because Hitler never would have come to power if he had not presented himself as a Strong Man who would set the depressed German economy right. Those chapters also explore how well that  worked, because despite all the propaganda that was being repeated on this side of the Atlantic, it didn't. The Nazis ran a totalitarian war-economy, and the only reason the German

consumer did OK was because of the products supplied by the countries Hitler's armies had conquered; and of course those countries were acting under duress. You see, in that respect Hitler was no different from any of the conquerors the world had seen before him. They all thought the way to make economic progress was to steal other people's stuff. In the end that doesn't work, and the German people proved it when after the war they put all their energies into the creation of the German economic miracle. And that really did work: the universal human drive to create a better life for oneself, coupled with German energy and discipline, did the trick, not micro-management from Berlin.

But despite those lessons from history, that yearning for a Strong Man to bring us prosperity is still alive and well, especially here in little ole' Coos county.

At the center of the book, though, are individuals, real people. That's why it's called "Everybody's War". It's about real people touched – and often harmed – by war. But human life is resilient, and most of them got over it, albeit with indelible memories and often with permanent physical injuries. But they managed.

QUESTION: You talk about lessons we must learn from history. Are there others in the book?

WIM: Oh yes, there are quite a few but I would say another important one was the idea that people who speak different languages can't live together in one nation. That was the big reason, a trumped-up reason, why Hitler went to war against Poland, which set off World War II, and the idea was absorbed by the allies as well, which led to some horrible decisions on their part.

QUESTION: How's that?

WIM: The allied leaders including Roosevelt and Churchill had become convinced that people who spoke a different language ought to be separated by national borders from people of a different tongue. And that was the very same justification for Hitler's wars. So then, towards the end of the war, the allies agreed to Stalin's demands that all the borders in central

Europe be changed to create linguistically homogeneous nations, and that all the German speakers who lived all over that part of the world be expelled and forced to flee for their lives to what was left of Germany by that time. It's documented that decision cost at least a million civilian lives. And it was unnecessary. It IS possible for people of different languages to get along. It's been proven in Switzerland, in the Austro-Hungarian empire, in the European Union, and also in the United States.

QUESTION: Can you summarize the chapter "Lilli Kirschbaum's War"?

WIM: Lilli Kirschbaum was the maiden name of Lilli Clausen, who with her husband Max started Clausen's oyster farm on Haynes Inlet. Lilli was born in 1936, into a German farm family living in a German village in a part of eastern Europe known as Volhynia. Back then it was part of Poland but three years later it was invaded and taken over by Stalin, the Soviet dictator. After many hardships Lilli's family ended up in West Germany as part of that enormous movement of ethnic Germans who were driven out of the east-European countries where they had resided for centuries. It was ethnic cleansing on a massive scale, approved by the allied powers.

QUESTION: What was Al Kampen's war?

WIM: In the spring of 1944 Al Kampen was a 19-year old farm boy living in Friesland, in the northern Netherlands. An American B-24 bomber, damaged during a bombing mission over Germany, crash-landed on their farm, and he helped the crew escape the Germans. One of the crewmen gave Al his .45 pistol. Years later Al was living in California, running a restaurant, when a man came in who identified himself as the crewman who had given him his pistol.

QUESTION: What was Chester Kauffman's War?

WIM: Chester Kauffman flew B-17 bombers from southern Italy during the war. What those airmen had to endure is amazing, and appalling by today's standards. But they did it; he was a great guy, Chester.

QUESTION: Is he gone?

WIM: Yes, I interviewed him at length in 2011, and he died in February this year, 89 years old. It's very important, you know, to record as many of those vets' stories as we can, before they are all gone.

QUESTION: Tell me about this one chapter: "Woofter's War"?

WIM: Woofter was my dog, and he was a feisty one. Fought a lot of battles, until he was defeated during his final, most intrepid assault. That small chapter was an obituary for Woofter, who went M.I.A., vanished without a trace, and he deserved an obituary.

You see, part of my approach is to write from my own perspective, in my own present tense, which is that of a German restaurant owner in Coos Bay, a pretty ordinary guy who has a house and a family and a dog, and who just happens to have a passion for history. QUESTION: I see that your subtitle reads: "People who rebuilt their lives, and enemies who became friends, in the long shadow of World War II." Why do you find history so fascinating?

WIM: Because I'm totally convinced that if we want this world to improve, nothing is more important than for people to know history. History shows us what works and what doesn't, in a process of trial and error that may destroy a lot of beautiful theories – but it's irrefutable. Nevertheless, people and politicians and philosophers keep re-inventing the same square wheel that brings us nowhere except to grief. That's why wiser men than I have sadly observed that history proves that we learn very little from history. 'Course, that's assuming we actually study history, which some people say is not happening either. And looking at the results, they may be right.

Now, it's true that the past never looks EXACTLY like the present; that's impossible. But evidently to most people the past looks different enough so they feel no need to learn from it. Big, big mistake, to think that we're so advanced that human history can teach us nothing.

QUESTION: Can you give an example?

WIM: Well, it's the very same problem that drove me to write my book about the history of "economic development" in Coos

county, "The JOB Messiahs". Because nobody seemed to know we had been down the same road so many times before, we kept on doing the same stupid things over and over, and again and again. It's still happening, and it's depressing, really, how little has changed. But I'm getting off-topic.

QUESTION: Yes. I was going to ask if you were in World War II.

WIM: Not as a combatant, no. I was just a little boy during the war years in Europe. But I did have a few memories of those days, and of course my family talked about it for years afterwards. Not my dad so much, although during the occupation he had done some things that would have made the Germans very mad. He mostly kept that to himself, but my mother and my grandparents, they kept telling stories, mostly, I think, to explain how scary everything had been. And those early memories, theirs and mine, became the basis for my book about that war. They set the stage.

QUESTION: So what do you consider the biggest stories in the book?

WIM: In terms of length – well, length as such may not reflect the quality of a story, but I credit myself with not giving any story a lot more space than it deserves. Of course, the reader will be the final judge of that. Anyway, the longest stories are those of Al Kampen, of Chester Kauffman, Lilli Kirschbaum-Clausen, and Heide Funke-Cummings. Those are all war stories, lengthy but very interesting, reflecting personal experiences that the subjects of those stories related to me. And I purposely included stories from all sides of the war. The Al Kampen and the Chester Kauffman stories are about the American bombing campaign on Germany; the other two are of the forced exodus of the scattered German people to what was left of Germany at the end of the war. Talk about ethnic cleansing; that was the biggest case of ethnic cleansing ever seen, and it occurred with the full approval of the allied leaders. It's estimated that some 12 million people took part in that mass-migration, mostly during the terrible winter of 1944/45, and about ten percent of them died in the process, because of cold, starvation, and abuse.

Both Lilli Kirschbaum and Heide Funke live here, in Coos Bay. Lilli's married name is Clausen, and she and Max Clausen built the oyster farm on Haynes inlet. But the way Lilli told the story of her life, with her and her family ending up destitute in defeated Germany, you can tell she wanted most of all to regain the prosperity they had lost, and build up a solid business, which she and Max did.

So now you can see why I included pictures of people on the cover. All relate to stories in the book. One shows a Jewish little girl who was being hidden by our neighbors; one is of Chester Kauffman before his B-17; and another shows a poor Berlin woman happy with the CARE package that the Americans provided to those starving people.

QUESTION: Will you continue to write about World War II?

WIM: Well, it seems likely. We're at a critical time, you know. A lot of those people are getting on in years, and their stories are too good to depart with them. So I spent a great deal of time recording them, and writing them to play out against the events of those years. Chester Kauffman is already gone; a majority of the World War II vets are already gone. But of course, we should be concerned about anybody who was seriously impacted by that war, whether veterans or civilians, on all sides.

Besides his latest work, Everybody's War, local author Wim de Vriend has published three earlier books: Betsy Boerhave's Diary, the translated journal of a 19th century Dutch housewife; Odd Customers, fun, frolic and flippancy in a German restaurant on the left coast; and The JOB Messiahs – how government destroys our prosperity and our freedoms to 'create jobs'. Many of his contributions on this website are based on materials from The JOB Messiahs, which is written in an easy, entertaining style and contains hundreds of historical pictures, many by the author himself. Although twenty years of work went into The JOB Messiahs, its price is a mere \$35. It is available for sale at the office of The Sentinel in Coquille, at Farr's Hardware in Coos Bay, at the

Blue Heron restaurant in Coos Bay, and at Books-by-the-Bay in North Bend. Odd Customers is available for \$19 at the Blue Heron restaurant in Coos Bay, as is Everybody's War, for \$25.

A Deplorably Old-Fashioned Murder

Mood: Tired.

Music: Dani California – Red Hot Chili Peppers

Yes, I've ruined my posting schedule and broken all my promises. I, uh, don't have a very good excuse, beyond the fact that I was out of tea. Anyway, onto our review.

The third book in the Hilary Tamar series by Sarah Caudwell is called [The Sirens Sang of Murder](#). It's set mostly in the Channel Islands – more specifically, Sark. It features murders in relation to the Daffodil Settlement.

I'll be completely honest with you, I read this book about a week ago, and now have little memory of it – that has nothing to do with the writing, it's just that quite a bit has happened since then. I do recall that it was amusing, as her writing generally is, and that it was well worth the read.

I've finished the last book in the series, so my next review will be on that, hopefully tomorrow.

– S.

P.S., the title of this post comes from the closing lines of the book.

It was a lovely goat.

Mood: Tired.

Music: First Time – Lifehouse.

Quote the title comes from:

'Oh no, don't say that,' he said, 'it was a lovely goat. I won't hear a word against it.'

The second book in the Hilary Tamar series is considerably shorter than the first, however it seemed to me that it dragged a bit. Still, it was an enjoyable book.

I think, perhaps, I got a bit too distracted trying to figure out Hilary's gender, though. Reading the book, I'd come across a passage that would make me go "Aha! She's a girl!", then I'd think about it, and realize that it didn't confirm it at all. All I have come to realize is this:

1. Hilary is old, but that was made obvious in the first book.
2. Everything that makes me think Hilary is a woman, can be turned around to make her seem a man. Her. Him. It. Bloody hell!

Okay. Maybe I'm making too big a deal of this. I'm just really curious. I'm getting a friend of mine to read the series, and I'll see what he thinks.

Onto the review. As I said, the book dragged a bit, but was still enjoyable. In only has one murder, but several close ones, and quite a bit of sailing and references to Homer.

Again, the urge to get out a notebook was around, but I didn't follow it.

It's taken me two days to write this review. On these grounds, I'm going to post it now, even though it's woefully short and horrid. The next one should be better, as the book is noticeably longer, and will hopefully leave a more lasting impression.

– S.

P.S., [The Shortest Way to Hades](#) is the title of the book. I completely forgot to mention that.

I jolly well do have a soul.

Mood: Hungry.

Music: None (shocking, I know).

The full quote this title comes from goes as follows:

'I jolly well do have a soul,' said Cantrip.

'Well, don't tell Julia,' said Selena, 'It'll only upset her.'

[Thus Was Adonis Murdered](#)

(the book this review is about) is written by Sarah Caudwell, it was published in 1981, and is told from the view of Hilary Tamar, a Professor of Medieval Law.

I didn't notice it while reading the book, and indeed it might never have come to my attention if it hadn't been mentioned in Sarah Caudwell's wiki page (I do some amount of background research for these reviews – wiki is a useful place to stop

off for general facts), but we're never actually told if Tamar is a woman or man. I assumed Tamar was female – partly from the name, partly from little bits in the novel, such as Tamar's study of her fellow characters. However, I may be wrong... thoughts? Opinions? Should I start a poll on Tamar's gender? Let me know.

Back to the book. It's part comedy, part murder mystery, part study of English tax law. While reading it, I was half tempted to get out a notebook and start writing down things I needed to look up – not all to do with tax law, mind you, but also some French terms and references to Greek mythology that I didn't quite understand. By no means did my lack of understanding for some of these things take away enjoyment of the novel – Caudwell does a nice job of balancing things, so one isn't completely lost. Still, I wouldn't suggest skimming the thing.

The thing that sets this book apart from other murder mysteries was the dialogue. Without it, it was your usual plot of who killed the corpse, and the usual plan of checking off suspects. However, the dialogue, the interaction between characters, takes it to its own level. I'll give you another quote from the book – it isn't likely to spoil anything, just give you a taste.

'I don't believe Shakespeare told Julia to try fainting,' said Cantrip. 'He's dead.'

'She is referring,' said Selena, 'to his early poem "Venus and Adonis". Julia read it at an impressionable age and has since regarded it as a sort of seduction manual.'

'It is a most indelicate work,' said Ragwort. 'Not at all suitable reading for a young girl.'

'It's hardly Julia's fault,' said Selena. 'They told her at school that Shakespeare was educational.'

'As I recall,' I said, 'the methods employed by the goddess in her pursuit of Adonis, though forceful, achieved only limited success. Doesn't Julia find that discouraging?'

'No,' said Selena. 'No. On this point alone, she believes that Shakespeare has been less than candid. She is persuaded, you see, that the poem is based on personal experience. The historical evidence shows that he yielded.'

I laughed out loud when I read that part. Humor such as that shows up quite often in the book, which delights me, especially the quote this title comes from – jokes like that come up between my friends and I constantly, and to see it reflected in the novel made it seem more companion than book.

So, my rating for this book is a solid ten. Though the ending, that is to say, the way the murder is explained, seems somewhat clichéd, it's still well worth reading.

I have the other three books that Caudwell wrote in this series – I'll read and review them soon. Right this moment, however, I need food.

– S.

[polldaddy poll=4459169]

Quoth the raven, 'Nevermore.'

Mood: Restless.

Music: Kashmir – Bond

Yes, I've been terrible! Mondays and tuesdays aren't good for me, as I'm horribly busy. I hope you lot weren't too disappointed.

Oh, and yes, it's past 2:30 in the morning. Why am I up? I

keep odd hours.

I didn't forget completely about you guys, though. I've been trying to decide what to write my next review on – the problem is, I haven't really read anything too recently, and haven't found time to settle down and watch my Hitchcock movies. When in doubt, though, turn to what one knows best – or a line one can't get from one's head. Have you ever read Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Raven'? I hadn't till tonight, though I'd heard the quote "Quoth the raven, 'Nevermore.'" more times than I'd like to count.

So, in honor of finally understanding this bloody poem, I read it. To give you a taste of it, here's the paragraph where Poe introduces the raven:

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,

*In there stepped a stately raven of the saintly days of yore.
Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;*

But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door

–

*Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door –
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.*

Read it slowly. It's not something you can skim, or at least, not something I can.

The poem describes an interaction between an unnamed man (assumably, Poe) in mourning, talking to a raven that's flown into his room. The raven will speak only one word – "nevermore" – and no other. Eventually, the man attempts to banish it, after he asks if he will ever hold his Lenore (a girl I'm assuming died) again, in a place called Aidenn (Heaven, I think), and the raven replies his single word, but the raven will not move, and the man gives up.

Maybe it's the flow of the words, the time on my clock, or the music, but I *loved* this poem. Granted, it's a bit dark, but it inspires an image, and not all writing can do that. Besides, it made me want to find a raven and whisper 'nevermore' to it, just to see what it would do. In my lovely mental scene, it would turn beady eyes to me, and nod it's head... then, for some reason, it puts on a party hat and dances – but I think that's sleepiness talking. Also, don't ask me what it looks like while it's dancing, it's difficult to describe... kind of like a cross between a collection of black straws fitted together and someone throwing feathers in the air.

I'm rather sleepy now, and I've started to make up a song with the word 'nevermore', so I think I'm going to go to bed. I hope you enjoyed the review, loves. I'll give you a better one tomorrow, promise.

*'Nevermore' cried he, the light of the moon in his eye,
'Nevermore we sleep,' said he, 'for insanity creeps too close
to thee'
To that I shook my head and pointed to the raven's clock, for
the hour was indeed late,
'Nevermore' he begged, wild with sleeplessness, with no ear
for my soothing words,
So I hit him over the head with a handy stick, and dragged
him to his bed,
Evermore we slept peacefully.**

– S.

*For those who didn't catch it, I wrote this bit. It's not from Poe's poem.

Here we are, at the beginning.

Mood: Happily rain-soaked.

Music: Space – Bond.

I have in my possession a signed copy of Brian Froud's *World of Faerie*. I remember the day I got this book clearly, I was at Faerieworlds, a festival up in Eugene. The day was hot and sunny, the air heavy with music. Brian and Wendy Froud had set up their stall near the stage the musicians were at.


They were selling a variety of things, and I very nearly got a poster of Briar Rose instead of the book, however, once I noticed it I was drawn in – I flipped it open, and it caught me then and there, when it opened to the painting of the Magician. The painting (shown here) had a girl in a fancy dress shirt with wild brown hair and all around her were playing cards, faeries, and goblins. She had such an intense gaze, I wanted to ask her what she knew.

Oh, and she was wearing an amazing coat.

The book was purchased on the spot, signed, and then carted around for the rest of day while I enjoyed the rest of the festival. It wasn't until later, back at my brother's house, that I got a chance to read it.

Brian Froud has a style of writing that makes one think they are on a great journey, and with the added touch of his artwork, it certainly felt like one. From simple sketches of small faeries and goblins clothed in a mismatched array of fabric and feathers, to detailed paintings of beautiful women, each piece of art told a story, and I was eager to understand them all.

The book starts by saying it might have several titles, possible ones like *'The Book of Mysteries and Love'* or *'Brain Froud's Book on How to Paint and Draw Faeries'* – the stated reason for the variety of titles is that the book is, naturally, a book about faeries.

Beyond the introduction, we're led through a world beyond  the ordinary. In one image, a giant sits atop a small house, his expression surprisingly haughty, considering his patched clothing, in another, a small boy – we're told he's supposed to represent both us and Froud – stands at the base of a rock, looking up at some creature with a giant nose. The next few pages follow the boy through a variety of paintings, giving voice to some journey he's experiencing.

We discover quickly that Froud has a love for stories like *Alice in Wonderland* and *Peter Pan*. He devotes a page to writings of Wonderland, and shows several paintings obviously inspired by the place – in one, a woman sits partly unclothed, staring off into space, while beside her stands a small white king, his arms wrapped around himself.

Have you seen *Labyrinth*? It was a 1986 film in which Froud had a hand. The reason I mention it is because, in my flipping through of the book (the better to describe each painting), I've reached the Magician's page. Froud tells us the Magician is Alice grown up, but I am inclined to think she draws from a variety of characters – she holds a crystal of the same sort David Bowie's character The Goblin King in the *Labyrinth* had, the kind he offered to the heroine in an attempt to distract her from saving her brother.

On the next page, we see the Magician again, this time in a less complicated landscape, she's holding a sword, looking off to the side of the painting with a cool determined gaze. Above her flies an owl – one that looks suspiciously like The Goblin King's other form.

Uh... well, on the grounds that this post is getting rather

long, I'll try to wrap things up. Froud also touches on Peter Pan, faerie women, and unicorn women. He leads us through nearly 200 pages of stunning images.

So, yes, I would recommend this book. I found it thought provoking, in the manner only art has to offer.

What about you?

– S.

P.S., the title of this post comes from one of the first lines in the book.

[Amazon.com Widgets](#)

Before I speak, I have something important to say.

Mood: Content.

Music: Breathe In [Jason Bentley Remix] – Frou Frou

I'll start this post by saying I spent a horrid amount of time looking for a title, so thanks be given to Groucho Marx for ending my suffering.

You may call me Spice. I'm an unpublished writer of fantasy, wishful photographer, and a drinker of tea at midnight. I've been asked by the Great One (i.e., Mary Geddry) to write for her blog. Now, my interests aren't political, so if you're hoping for that, I must apologize. However, if you're looking for posts about books, movies, (occasionally) music, and the environment, we'll get along just fine.

The schedule I'm hoping for is two or three posts a day, but I'm a terrible procrastinator, so who knows how that'll turn out. Cross your fingers, I suppose, or just bug me incessantly until something is finished. In fact, I encourage such behavior – bring out the whips and speed dials!

I suppose some comment on my tastes in books and the such is needed, to prepare you. For books, I gravitate towards fantasy and science fiction, although I've been known to explore other genres. I'm open to suggestions on what to read, but be warned that I stay away, for the most part, from sad things with unhappy endings.

With movies, I carry no real preference, except that I abhor romantic comedies. You *can* expect a flurry of reviews on Alfred Hitchcock films soon, as I got twenty of his early films at the store the other day.

I have high hopes for us, dear readers. Please, don't hesitate to contact me, or leave suggestions. With good luck, this will be the beginnings of a wonderful relationship. Now, I need tea.

– S.