

JUST PUBLISHED

**GERARD KOEPEL '79**  
*Bond of Union: Building the Erie Canal and the American Empire*  
(DaCapo, 2009)



This well-researched book tells the complete story of the creation of the Erie Canal, from its conception in 1807 to its completion in 1825, as it became the first great link between the American seaboard and the vast continental interior. Koepfel’s historical narrative involves a number of memorable individuals who were determined to see their visionary project succeed. He delves into such subjects as the long competition between New York and Virginia to reach the western territory first; the story behind Benjamin Wright, who became known as the father of American civil engineering; and the battle between the rival settlements of Buffalo and Black Rock to be named the canal’s western terminus.

**CAROLYN J. SHARP '85**  
*Irony and Meaning in the Hebrew Bible*  
(Indiana University Press, 2009)



In her fascinating new study, Sharp, associate professor of Hebrew Scriptures at Yale Divinity School, suggests that many stories in the Hebrew Scriptures may be ironically intended. By interweaving literary theory and exegesis, she examines the power of the unspoken in a wide variety of texts from the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Writings. Her book considers such themes as foreign rulers and the fear of God, the prostitute as icon of the ironic gaze, indeterminacy and dramatic irony in prophetic performance, and irony in ancient Israel’s wisdom traditions. Sharp pays special attention to how irony can challenge the dominant ways in which the Bible is read today, especially when it touches on questions of conflict, gender, and the Other.

**LEMONY SNICKET, AKA DANIEL HANDLER '92, AND BRETT HELQUIST (ART)**  
*The Lump of Coal*  
(HarperCollins, 2008)



In this strangely funny holiday tale, a lump of coal acts very much like a human being as it thinks, talks, and struts about. This unusual character has aspirations to become an artist, despite the odds. Does the lump of coal succeed in its quest? Lemony Snicket fans will just have to read this wicked little book to find out.

**SEAN MCCANN, PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH**  
*A Pinnacle of Feeling: American Literature and Presidential Government*  
(Princeton University Press, 2008)



McCann’s original new study explores how 20th-century fiction deals with the modern presidency and with ideas about the relationship between state power and democracy that underwrote the rise of presidential authority. As he considers prevailing critical interpretations of various literary works, he offers startling new insights regarding several major American authors, including Richard Wright, Gertrude Stein, Henry Roth, Zora Neale Hurston, Saul Bellow, Ralph Ellison, Norman Mailer, Don DeLillo, and Philip Roth. McCann considers how these writers represented or satirized presidents, and also echoed political thinkers who defined the president as the agent of the sovereign will of the American people. He also discusses how these works contributed to the reinvention and the elevation of the role of the presidency in American culture.

**ROBERT J. MRAZEK**  
*A Dawn Like Thunder*  
(Little, Brown and Company, 2008)



Mrazek tells the stirring, little-known story of 35 men in the almost forgotten U.S. Navy Torpedo Squadron Eight that helped change the course of history at the epic World War II battles of Midway and Guadalcanal. These men displayed acts of courage, loyalty, and sacrifice, and went on to become the most highly decorated American naval air squadron of the war. William (Bill) Robinson Evans Jr. '40, nicknamed “The Squire,” was one of the heroes in the squadron and was killed by a Japanese fighter pilot in 1942. Mrazek notes that Evans kept a personal journal and shares some of his thoughts about entering the Navy. Evans was inspired to join the military after reading *Wind, Sand and Stars* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. Mrazek comments that Evans’ “attachment to the sky was almost mystical, a spiritual thing. The rest of the squadron soon learned that while he may have had the soul of a poet, he could fly as well as any man in the squadron.” (See 1940 Class Notes for more information.) — David Low

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NEW FROM WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY PRESS

Peter Gizzi and Kevin Killian, editors, *My Vocabulary Did This to Me: The Collected Poetry of Jack Spicer*, 2008  
In a recent *New York Times* review of this landmark poetry collection, Dwight Gardner wrote that Jack Spicer (1925–1965) “was one of America’s great, complicated, noisy and unjustly forgotten poets of heartbreak and abject loneliness.” This enigmatic West Coast writer’s influence spanned the national literary scene of the 1950s and ’60s, though in many ways his innovative writing was different than that of his contemporaries in the New York School and the East Coast Beat movement. His work as a writer and a teacher was influential in the Berkeley Renaissance and the San Francisco literary scene. This outstanding collection brings together the poet’s essential works, and includes poems that have become increasingly hard to find; many of them are published here for the first time.

Dan W. DeLuca, annotated by Dione Longley '82, *The Old Leather Man: Historical Accounts of a Connecticut and New York Legend*, 2008  
Around 1883, a wanderer known as the Leather Man, dressed in a 60-pound suit made from leather scraps, began to walk a 365-mile loop between the Connecticut and Hudson rivers that he would complete every 34 days, for almost six years. His journey traversed at least 41 towns in Connecticut and New York, as he slept in caves and accepted food and drink from townspeople along the way. DeLuca has constructed the unique story of this mysterious figure by collecting newspaper articles, photographs, and other documents. The book includes 20 photographs of the man and maps of his travel routes.

NONFICTION AND POETRY

- Alida Jay Boye '76, *The Hidden Treasures of Timbuktu: Rediscovering Africa's Literary Culture* (Thames and Hudson, 2008)
- Christine Baker, MALS '05, *Why She Plays: The World of Women's Basketball* (Bison Books, 2008)
- Joshua F. Moore '94, *What's in a Picture?: Uncovering the Hidden Stories in Vintage Maine Photographs* (Down East Books, 2008)
- Joel M. Ostrow '87, Georgiy A. Satarov, Irina M. Khakamada, and Garry Kasparov, *The Consolidation of Dictatorship in Russia: An Inside View of the Demise of Democracy* (Praeger, 2008)
- B. J. Robinson '81, *He/She/Eye* (Snake Nation Press, 2008)

# BETWEEN THE LINES

## A Forgotten Espionage Tale from the Cold War

For his new book, *The Lost Spy: An American Spy in Stalin's Secret Service* (W. W. Norton, 2008), **Andrew Meier '85** spent almost eight years uncovering the story of an American radical who became a Russian spy.

**T**he *Lost Spy* began by accident. In the summer of 2000, I'd traveled up to the northernmost reaches of Russia—I was working then as a Moscow correspondent for *Time*—to the city of Norilsk. Hundreds of miles north of the Arctic Circle, Norilsk was built in the 1930s as a main island in Stalin's Gulag archipelago, a place where tens of thousands of prisoners were sent to raise precious metals from beneath the permafrost.

I spent a month in Norilsk, interviewing the survivors, men and women in their 80s and 90s who'd made it through Stalin's camps—and stayed on in one of the world's most uninhabitable places. For some reason, I kept asking them one question: Had any Americans been in the camps? For weeks, the question elicited only shakes of the head or shrugs. But finally one woman's eyes lit up. "Yes, there was someone here," she said. "'The American Professor,' they called him." That was all that she could tell me about the man. The rest of the story took about eight years in all to sort out.

Isaiah "Cy" Oggins was one of the first Americans to serve in Stalin's secret service. Born in Connecticut in 1898, he graduated from Columbia University in 1920, and was on his way to an academic career before he joined the Communist Party in 1924. That same year Cy married, and with his wife Nerma, before long entered the Soviet espionage underground. Recruited only a few years after the Bolshevik Revolution, Cy would rise fast and become one of the Soviets' most prized agents abroad.

In time, I managed to fit together the pieces. Cy had served the cause faithfully for nearly two decades, until his arrest in Moscow in the winter of 1939. Not only had he known Whittaker Chambers, the famed accuser of Alger Hiss, Cy had lived on the front lines of the 20th century: New York during the rise of the American radical left and the Palmer Raids, Berlin at the height of Weimar, Paris on the eve of World

War II, Spain during the Civil War, Manchuria under the Last Emperor, and Russia under Stalin.

The research for this book was not reporting; it was more akin to archaeology. Nearly all the central characters were long gone, and the witnesses dead. There were no diaries or courtroom confessions. Men like Cy, moreover, lived their lives in the shadows, trading surnames, passports, and addresses often. But they possessed, and were possessed by, a singular devotion. And soon enough, I discovered a paradox: that even more than half a century after Cy's death, that devotion would illuminate him in the darkness.

In Moscow, I pried documents from the Soviet secret police files. In Washington and New York, thanks to a succession of Freedom of Information requests, I received a tall stack of FBI documents. At the National Archives, I scoured the State Department files—and learned that Cy's case was a subject of concern for every Secretary of State from Cordell Hull to Dean Acheson. Overseas, the files of Swiss Intelligence yielded a fat dossier on Cy's boss in China, while archives in Tokyo, Beijing, Berlin, and Paris produced still more clues.

Over the years, I chased a thousand leads, and almost always, just when I was about to quit, the gods of history would surprise me. In Paris, I found Jacques Rossi, a Gulag survivor who had served alongside Oggins in the Norilsk camps. At Stanford, I found the original manuscript of Sidney Hook's memoirs, and learned that Hook, the New York philosopher of Cy's generation, had not only been a friend of Cy's, he'd written an entire chapter—"My Encounter with Espionage"—in his memoir detailing Cy's time in Berlin. But the biggest discovery had come early on. In upstate New York, I'd found Cy's son. Robin, 70 years old when we first spoke, was nearing retirement after four decades of teaching medieval history at Binghamton. Generous with his time, letters, and forgotten trove of old photographs, Robin became the perfect source.

Cy was a radical Everyman, typifying in so many ways the disaffected New York intellectuals of the 1920s. But his death was far from typical. In the summer of 1947, he was murdered in Moscow, poisoned in a secret police laboratory on Stalin's direct orders. Cy's murder, I would learn, was one of the few political assassinations of foreigners that the Soviets ever admitted.

*The Lost Spy*, not surprisingly, has become something of a political lightning rod. In Cy's life and death some see the tragedy of an American radical, while others see the indictment of a totalitarian regime. Where liberals may claim Cy as a martyr, neo-cons have denounced him as a traitor. My job was easier. I only had to try to reassemble the pieces, to help resurrect a man lost to the margins of history.

*Andrew Meier is also the author of Black Earth: A Journey Through Russia After the Fall. He lives in New York City. UPFRONT*

