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Book Review: Malcolm Lawrence, *Something Will Come Along: Witty Memoirs of a Foreign Service Officer*

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The experienced genealogist will be pleased to find many previously unpublished filiations. The text volume is devoted to the entire ancestry, and describes many facets in a wide context. This has resulted in a genealogical study of outstanding quality. On the other hand, the work also includes many hints and facts of interest to the beginner, especially by giving background information showing up complex interrelations:

- Available sources
- Glossary
- Maternal lines
- Ancestors' implex

For the reader interested in heraldry, the chapter „St. Gallische Glasmalerei des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts“ (Glass painting in St. Gallen during the 16th and 17th centuries) offers an insight into glass painting in northeastern Switzerland with unprecedented detail. Unlike all previous publications of this type, the book is not limited to ancestors of a single individual, but covers all the author's descendants, i.e. also the ancestry of his son and his grandchildren. To conclude, Alther's work should not be missing in any genealogical library!

Mario von Moos, St. Gallen

Translated from the German by Wolf Seelentag; slightly adapted to American usage by Leo Schelbert

Book Review

Malcolm Lawrence, *Something Will Come Along: Witty Memoirs of a Foreign Service Officer*. Raleigh, North Carolina: Ivy House, 2003. 203 pp. ISBN: 1-57197-377-X.

Upon opening this little volume and reading its first lines, the reader is instantly overwhelmed by a sensation of delicious delight. No dull dry account of a bureaucratic life behind a dusty desk is this, but rather the fascinating memoirs of a man, Mr. Malcolm Lawrence of Chevy Chase, Maryland, who in his lifetime career in American diplomacy and government has made a major impact upon and has exercised a positive influence upon European and American as well as Swiss and American relations.

The book begins in true Dickensian fashion, recording the date and circumstances of the author's birth—August 5th, 1925 in Washington, D.C.—“the descendant of Spanish and English ancestors” yet who considers

himself to be “one hundred percent American”. The author is also a true son of our nation’s capital, a third-generation Washingtonian.

The opening pages of the book read like several episodes straight out of *The Little Rascals*, recalling the escapades, antics and pranks of the children of Washington’s inner city during the thirties, reminding us that even in this austere and splendid capital the population is very human.

Mr. Lawrence then takes the reader on an extremely interesting journey through the War Years and his experiences as a pilot flying over England and Germany, through his years as an undergraduate and graduate student at George Washington University enrolled in the Masters Program in Government and Economic Policy, up to this appointment on July 21st, 1956 as a foreign service officer working for the United States Department of State.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven chronicle Mr. Lawrence’s diplomatic career in England from 1958 until 1964, living first in the London suburb of Dorking and then in the metropolitan London neighborhood of Hampstead Garden Suburb and working as an Economic Defense Office at the American Embassy in Mayfair. Mr. Lawrence performed his duties in Europe with relish and with great tact and *savoir-faire* and delighted many a guest at luncheons, dinner parties and receptions with his incomparable witticisms. When a neighbor publicly expressed pity for his hard lifestyle during a backyard cookout while on home leave in Maryland, Mr. Lawrence adroitly responded that it was indeed hard to have to attend receptions and garden parties at Buckingham Palace, chat with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, and dine on fabulous cuisine on the Continent. The book is laced with such wry humor.

These English chapters also remind one of episodes from *The Brady Bunch* or the Lucille Ball/Henry Fonda film, *Yours, Mine and Ours*, for while working as a diplomat abroad, Mr. Lawrence also performed the astounding feat of raising extremely well nine mannerly children. Just as in the movie Lucille Ball and Henry Fonda had to organize their eighteen offspring into crews in order to prepare breakfast and get the children off to school on time, so did the morning routine in the Lawrence London household require great logistical planning.

Chapters eight, nine and ten take the reader on to Mr. Lawrence’s second overseas appointment in Bern, Switzerland, where he served in the extremely influential position of Commercial Attaché to the American Ambassador to Switzerland, a position whose function consisted of coordinating all aspects of United States commercial policy for Switzerland as a whole. This portion of the book is especially remarkable in that it highlights Mr. Lawrence’s many diplomatic achievements in Switzerland, most notably the extraordinary success of his fundraising campaign to rebuild the English Speaking School of Bern, attended by some of his own children, which opened its doors on October 12th, 1966. This project

involved soliciting financial support from all over Switzerland and contacting thirteen influential Swiss leaders, including the Mayor of Bern, and is famous in diplomatic circles for improving the entente between the United States and Switzerland; altogether, around \$50,000 was raised.

The significance of this project is best expressed in the author's own words, "The development of the English Speaking School of Bern is an excellent example of international cooperation in the field of education." The project should serve as a model of the art of diplomacy for our many readers in foreign diplomatic service in countries around the globe. The attentive reading of the pages describing this project would teach any diplomat how to excel in the art of "teacup" diplomacy, that is, the art of using one's charm, tact, wit and intelligence in order to persuade one's peers and government officials in the host country to collaborate in business, economic and academic ventures of mutual, and indeed global, benefit.

Chapter Eleven and Appendix 1 recount the cultural shock experienced by the Lawrence family upon returning to the United States in 1968 after ten years abroad. The Lawrence children had received the superb and demanding education typifying the English and Swiss school systems, and the family returned to Chevy Chase, Maryland in 1968 to discover American schools in a state of sorry decline. Gone were the discipline, the reverence for teachers, the Church and the State, and the challenging testing which had characterized the American schools of Mr. Lawrence's and his wife's youth in the thirties, forties fifties and early sixties, that rigorous American school system which had so impressed the Swiss scientist Leo Lesquereux upon his tour of America in 1850. In their stead, the Lawrence family, to their horror, found some Maryland schools infested with drugs, juvenile delinquency and permissive teachers who failed in their duties to properly test and discipline the pupils under their care. To combat the tragic direction of American education, Mr. Lawrence and his wife organized nationwide parental groups around the country and even on Capitol Hill. This "action" story to reform American education is told in Mr. Lawrence's two volume book entitled *Tilting at Societal Ills*, published in November, 1998. Every serious teacher, principal, professor and college president should own a copy of this important book.

It should by now be clear to all our readers that this is a book small in terms of size but quite large in terms of importance and influence. Indeed, the volume is distinguished by its well balanced synthesis of humor, wit and professional seriousness.

Plan to read the volume in a single sitting. It is definitely a cliff hanger, in the literal sense of the word (you will see what I mean when you read the book), and a tear jerker, and once you start it, you will not want to put it down. It makes excellent reading by the fireside on a cold wintry night. It also makes a perfect Christmas present for that friend or relative "who has everything."

Not only can you purchase the book through Books in Print at your local bookstore, you can also order it directly from the author. Make out a check to Malcolm Lawrence for \$22.00 and include \$2.00 for postage and mail it to the following address:

Malcolm Lawrence
3807 Taylor Street
Chevy Chase, Maryland 20815

In addition, Mr. Lawrence is eager to address audiences in the Washington, D.C. area and is even willing to travel farther afield for talks, provided he is given a suitable honorarium. His talks would be of interest to groups interested in educational reform and groups interested in international diplomacy. Numerous testimonials attest to the fact that his talks are as funny and informative as his written memoirs. To arrange such a presentation for a group in your area, you may call Mr. Lawrence at: 301-652-4962.

And yet this review is not complete. I have saved the best for last. After taking the reader on a roller coaster ride of laughter and meditation through the wonderful word of international diplomacy, Mr. Lawrence concludes on an extremely serious note: he enumerates extensively the numerous defects in American education and suggests valid reforms.

The reading of these final chapters amazed me. The declining standards in American high school education were then not restricted to rural Tennessee, as my colleagues and I here at Hiwassee College had erroneously believed; lack of intellectual discipline and inadequate testing were then not just a Tennessee high school problem but had become a nationwide high school problem. According to Mr. Lawrence's report, rude, unmannerly and unprepared students were ubiquitous.

Finally, the reading of the last chapters in the Lawrence book inspired me to write the following proposal for an optimal global educational plan, one which would inevitably lead to universal human, economic and social perfection. With a doctorate in French literature from Harvard University and with extensive training in pedagogy at Harvard, I feel that I am qualified to present such a plan to governments around the world. I was determined to write this proposal after I saw recently on Spanish television the many Mexican children crying at the funerals of their parents who had been senselessly murdered by narcotics gangs in Mexico. If all the children of Mexico were trained according to the methodology I hereby propose, crime would vanish in that country and all Mexicans would turn their attention to academics, the practice of their respective professions and community improvements. I beg all readers to share this important pedagogical information with any principal, teacher, school board, or head of state who will listen. This information is definitely not intended for bookshelves but

rather for immediate active use by school boards, university curriculum committees, legislatures and parliaments.

In addition, please allow me to qualify the following remarks with the preface that both I and Mr. Lawrence are deeply aware that there are many superb teachers and professors in all countries who already practice optimal pedagogical principles. This advice is obviously not intended for such model teachers and schools. Nonetheless, review is always useful and we can all always learn something new, which is after all the main purpose of any journal.

The elementary school systems in most countries are actually quite respectable and require no changes. Teachers at this level are properly and extensively trained to teach learning skills to young children, which is clearly a unique situation.

At the secondary high school level, however, according to Mr. Lawrence's and his colleagues' research, prevail many pedagogical deficiencies and problems which should be immediately rectified, the most serious problem being the prevalent and inexcusable lack of sufficient and appropriate testing.

Every course from ninth grade onward should test students at least once every two weeks with a closed book hourly test. In all high school courses there should also always be mandatory comprehensive closed book final exams. The reader would be amazed to discover how frequently high school students are allowed to take open book tests and how many students are currently exempted from testing and placed in "slow rows" if they whine and complain that they have a learning disorder. In Tennessee high schools, for example, if a student has perfect attendance or if he has all A's on the smaller weekly tests, he or she is exempt from the final comprehensive exam. This intolerable and totally unethical practice should be abolished by all governments around the globe. In addition, some high school teachers currently give only multiple choice tests, which do not really require the student to think at maximum level. While there is a time and place for multiple choice sections on tests, any academic course should always also include on tests fill in the blank exercises, question/answer exercises, problem solving exercises, and most important of all essay questions. The essay compels the student to synthesize everything he has learned in the course and teaches the student a great deal. In sum, frequent hourly closed book tests containing a variety of exercises, and mandatory comprehensive final examinations in all high school courses, should be universalized.

Clearly learning disorders do exist and are very real problems; however the solution is certainly not to put such a disabled student in a "slow row." The only way to correct such a disorder is to employ a tutor to tutor the child one-on-one. Private tutoring will usually correct the learning disorder; it is impossible to correct such a disorder in a group setting in a classroom. Therefore all schools in all countries should always maintain an office for

individualized private tutoring. This is a pedagogical must and should be the highest priority of any government considering serious educational reform. A convenient time for such tutoring would be the free “study hall” hour which high school students usually have on their schedules.

As an example of the supreme effectiveness of private tutoring, consider the Office of Student Support Services at my place of employment, Hiwassee College in Madisonville, Tennessee. Our fleet of tutors in this office consistently bring “F” level students up to “A” level work in all our courses. I am so proud of the Hiwassee College tutorial system and would urge schools everywhere to emulate it. It works as follows: As soon as a Hiwassee College professor notes a learning problem, he makes an appointment for the student with the appropriate tutor. That tutor continues to consult regularly with the professor concerning the student’s progress throughout the semester, requiring emails concerning grades, etc. By the end of the term and by the time of the final exam, the student has usually mastered the course with the tutor’s assistance. At Hiwassee College there is constant communication between tutors and professors. School administrators should be aware that there is extensive federal financial funding for these tutorial support programs—Upward Bound, Title III and Title IV Trio funding, as well as many tutorial grants from the United States Department of Education.

Another absolutely essential service which can be offered by a school’s tutorial office is retesting. Many college professors do the retesting themselves. For example the Math Department and the Foreign Language Department at Hiwassee College allow students to retest any test or quiz, and our students almost always perform far better on the retest than on the original test. Our students are very proud of their noticeably improved scores on their retests, and this test improvement clearly raises the students’ self-esteem and improves classroom morale in our math and foreign language classes. Sociologically and psychologically, retesting inspires the student to focus on his or her professional goals and inspires the student to want to improve society. At my alma mater, Harvard University, students in multi-section foreign language classes are allowed to take a retest each Monday morning at 8 AM, the various section leaders taking turns proctoring the department made retests.

Since high school teachers usually have heavy loads and are in class all day, it is impossible for them to retest students during such a “retest period”. Yet this retesting service could and should be offered by the school’s tutorial service office. Students could go in during their study hall and take the retest in the tutorial office proctored by the tutor, and the retest would then be later graded by the teacher. This would be a convenient method for all high schools to offer retesting. In sum, however it is done, retesting is a pedagogical must for any teacher who truly desires to see the student progress and excel in his work.

The aforementioned problems which curse our high schools are thankfully rare in American colleges and universities. Detailed and lengthy course syllabi must always be turned in by professors to watchful deans who properly exam them with a hawk eye to insure that there is frequent testing and comprehensive final exams. In other words, deans are the great safeguard of American college and university education. In addition, colleges and universities usually do provide tutorial services to their students. More and more colleges are also requiring incoming freshmen to take courses in study skills and writing skills, and all colleges really should require such study skills orientation courses.

In my opinion, the most unfortunately missing piece in the global education picture is the absolutely vital course in logic and ethics. Few high schools require such courses for graduation, and while church related private colleges do require at least one course in religion, even most colleges and universities give students the option of taking a course in philosophy, religion or some area of social studies.

The course in logic and ethics should never be an option. It is a pedagogical and ethical must for all high schools and universities in all countries. Logic and ethics should be a part of every high school and every university general education curriculum everywhere. People outside academe do not seem to understand that the study of formal logic and ethics is an essential prerequisite for all forms of higher intellectual and professional inquiry. At the high school level, such courses could reasonably be taught in the eleventh grade, with the course in introduction to formal logic being taught in the fall semester of the eleventh grade and the course in ethics being taught in the spring term of the eleventh grade. At the university level, such courses in formal logic and ethics would obviously become part of the general education curriculum. Pedagogically, such course work in logic and ethics provides an indispensable cerebral foundation for higher academic inquiry. Ethically, such course work has a multitude of benefits: it trains the brain to think logically and rationally at all times, which would generate universal harmony and peace and high levels of professional competence everywhere. In sum, just as English and mathematics are currently required in all American university general education programs, so should these new courses in formal logic and ethics become a cornerstone of all university general education curricula in all countries.

The questions arises, who would write the textbooks for such a two semester sequence in logic and ethics? I would invite governments and the United Nations to appeal to the following departments of religion and philosophy to write such introductory level textbooks in logic and ethics: Harvard University, Oxford University, the University of Tübingen, the University of Basel and Davidson College in North Carolina. All these

departments are world renowned for impeccable teaching and scholarship. Their faculties would all be qualified to produce such textbooks.

At this point it should be definitely clear to all our readers why I earlier described Mr. Lawrence's book as small in size but quite large in importance and influence. As you can see, the reading of this very special book has already inspired me to write this proposal for an optimal global pedagogical plan, one which, if taken seriously by all governments, would produce unprecedented levels of global social perfection. Clearly, this book and this book review should become the Bible for conscientious educators, diplomats and heads of states everywhere. Please urge your colleagues, neighbors and school boards to read Mr. Lawrence's book and this review with care.

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