



The Most Interesting People in Politics and History, Volume 3: 250 Anecdotes

David Bruce

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This book contains 250 anecdotes, including these:

- 1) J. Edgar Hoover built his career on Americans' fear of Communism. On January 2, 1920, he was responsible for the arrest of 10,000 Americans suspected of being Communists, most of whom were found to be innocent and were released. These police-state tactics were widely condemned. In fact, few Americans have been Communists. By 1971, the members of the Communist Party in America numbered only 2,800 — but many of them were really FBI agents. In 1963, Hoover told the assistant secretary of the State Department, "If it were not for me, there would not even be a Communist Party, because I've financed the Communist Party in order to know what they're doing." FBI agent William Sullivan's duties included closely monitoring the Communist Party. He once suggested that Hoover release the membership numbers of the Communist Party in order to show Americans that the FBI was winning the war against subversion. Hoover refused to do so, asking, "How do you think I'm going to get my appropriations out of Congress if you keep downplaying the Communist Party?" After Hoover died, Mr. Sullivan said that the "Communist threat" was actually "a lie perpetrated on the American people."
- 2) In high school, Martin Luther King, Jr. demonstrated remarkable public speaking skills. Once, he and one of his teachers traveled on a segregated bus to another town so Martin could give a speech. They sat in the back — as required by law. The law also required blacks to stand up and offer their seats to whites when the bus got full. However, when the bus got full, Martin declined to stand up. The bus driver threatened to have him arrested, but Martin held his ground until his teacher asked him to stand up and give up his seat to a white person. Martin and his teacher stood up during the 90-mile trip. Later, as part of his nonviolent resistance to unjust laws, Martin Luther King, Jr. was arrested many times and taken to jail. When his children were small, they would ask their mother, "Why is Daddy in jail?" Coretta Scott King would answer, "Daddy is helping people."
- 3) War can be horrible. After the first Battle of Bull Run, doctors saved as many wounded soldiers as they could, performing amputations as needed. Working with the doctors were Sisters of Charity nuns, who served as nurses. The nurses worked hard, and late at night they went to bed, although Sister Blanche remarked that sleeping would be difficult because of "the odor of death about this place." In the morning, the odor was worse, and it was coming from the room next to where the nuns had slept. Sister Blanche courageously entered the room and found three amputated legs lying on the floor. They were buried, but in a coffin with a dead soldier. One of the Sisters of Charity wrote in her journal, "Yesterday a man was buried with three legs."

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