

A Very Public Life: Volume 1: Far From Home. PAUL MARTIN. Ottawa: Deneau, 1983. 482 p. ISBN 0-8887-9092-9.

This first volume of Paul Martin's memoirs combines many of the necessary ingredients of a successful memoir. As an archivist who has had an involvement with the Martin Papers (having supervised others who worked on them), I can recommend the memoirs to those interested in Canadian political history and biography. First, and of primary importance, the subject is very much alive and most lucid. Martin visits the Public Archives regularly to consult his extensive collection of papers in the Manuscript Division. Secondly, he was ably served by a professional historian fully familiar with the period; William Young left few stones unturned in searching for the major manuscript collections and public records touching on Martin's career to 1947. Thirdly, there is a substantial body of archival material available for this period, although not nearly as much as Martin and Young face for volume 2. Fourthly, by stopping at 1947 few restricted archival collections obstruct a full review of Martin's first years as a member of Parliament and minister. Fifthly, we are far enough removed from the period covered in the memoirs that few very sensitive issues remain. Again, for the next volume, they will not enjoy this advantage.

This volume traces Martin's early years in Pembroke, Ontario where, as a French Canadian, he belonged to a minority. It then follows the young man to Collège St. Alexandre near Hull, Quebec, to university at Toronto, Osgoode Hall, Harvard, Cambridge, and Geneva, law practice in Windsor, the House of Commons in 1935 (when Mackenzie King swept R.B. Bennett from office), and elevation to the King Cabinet in 1945 as Secretary of State and then Minister of Health and Welfare in 1946.

These memoirs are aptly titled *A Very Public Life* for Paul Martin's relentless drive for public office is the overwhelming theme of volume 1. It is central in his university years, directly influencing his selection of courses, extracurricular travel, and choice of friends and acquaintances. It may seem that one hundred pages is excessive to chronicle his life to the end of his university years; however, this section is necessary to understand the "public" Martin. He sought inspiration from others such as W.L. Grant, Principal of Upper Canada College, who in speaking to Martin in 1930 as he was about to venture into the practice of law stated: "Surely you don't want to be *just* a lawyer." (p. 96) Martin never forgot this comment. Several years earlier as he enrolled at Harvard, he wrote: "Although I am primarily impressed with the intellectual and scholastic halo encircling the university, I cannot help but hope and think that my coming to Harvard, just as Mr. King came in 1907, has a tinge of significance. . . . It will be interesting many years hence to know whether my association with Harvard will have as enriching an influence." (pp. 70-71) Young Martin was a serious fellow indeed, and he might well have called this volume "A Very Serious Life."

Born into a Liberal household, Martin's political passions were enflamed when he attended his first political meeting in 1917 during the federal election campaign. The conscription issue and Regulation 17 were in full debate when Prime Minister Borden came to Pembroke and the fourteen-year-old Martin was not impressed by what he heard at the meeting. Sir Wilfrid Laurier had

become his first political hero; and later in life he held Franklin Delano Roosevelt in equally high esteem. Martin also admired Mackenzie King, especially as a political strategist. King, for his part, thought Martin much too ambitious; Martin believed this to be a reason why he was not promoted to the rank of parliamentary assistant before 1943 or to the cabinet before 1945. One must not forget, however, that he was up against some stiff competition in the Liberal caucus for there were a number of equally young and well-qualified members of Parliament waiting in the wings such as Brooke Claxton, Douglas Abbott, and Lionel Chevrier. All eventually joined Louis St. Laurent, C.D. Howe, and others in what became one of our strongest cabinets.

Paul Martin became a consummate politician with a fine ability to organize and to raise funds. His only defeat at the polls was in an Ontario provincial by-election in 1928 when as a student he was soundly defeated in North Renfrew. His drive and ambition did, however, pay off. His left-of-centre views were tolerated in the Liberal party and he was courted for a time by the CCF where he had some very close friends. Ever careful to comprehend his opponents, he recalls an amusing incident about beating a hasty retreat from a meeting of communists in Windsor in 1945 after he had dropped in to "find out what made them tick." (p. 368)

Memoirs by their very nature provide us with one person's view of the universe. These memoirs are no exception and must of course be balanced against other accounts. Once the Martin Papers are open to researchers, others will want to examine and measure Martin's contributions to the social issues and international matters he held as priorities.

Although volume 1 of Martin's memoirs whets one's appetite for more, I must take issue with the decision to forego the use of footnotes for material used from the Martin Papers. While this may result in a tidy manuscript, it makes it particularly difficult to trace sources; future historians and archivists will pay the price. Another drawback is that one cannot easily tell at times whether the text reflects Martin's views at the time in the storyline or at the time he wrote the memoirs. Precise footnotes for material used from the Martin Papers would help here.

Carman V. Carroll
Manuscript Division
Public Archives of Canada

Riel and the Rebellion: 1885 Reconsidered. THOMAS FLANAGAN. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1983. ix, 177 p. ISBN 0-88833-108-8.

This is in many respects an admirable book. Thomas Flanagan knows the sources more thoroughly than any writer on Louis Riel since George Stanley. He has a unique ability to use this knowledge to formulate relevant and searching questions which challenge the conventional wisdom. Those who teach Canadian history will be grateful to have a book that is so ideally suited for enlightening students about the techniques of historical analysis and, perhaps more important, the relevance of historical inquiry. But with all its strengths, *Riel and the Rebellion* has a number of serious weaknesses.