

# A Letter from the Publisher

*When I am dead, I hope it may be said:  
"His sins were scarlet, but his books were read."*

That sentiment, written by British Author Hilaire Belloc, may well be echoed by the authors and publishers who send some 60 volumes per week to the TIME Books section in the hope that their works will be reviewed. As Christmas approaches, the incoming stream becomes a torrent in anticipation of our annual section on gift books, which appears in this issue. The new volumes—on subjects ranging from Peruvian highways to Sumerian icons, from precious plants to psychic phenomena—are delivered to the office of Books Editor Stefan Kanfer. "It's like getting a lot of Christmas cards," he says. "You are suddenly reminded not only of people, but also of subjects that you haven't been in touch with for a long time."

Kanfer's office in its normal state is legendary for its clutter. As the Christmas volumes pile ever higher, it becomes increasingly difficult to maneuver to the editor's desk. Says Kanfer: "The maids used to say, 'Oh, Mr. Kanfer, if you would just clean

your office once a week, it would be so nice.' Now they say, 'Mr. Kanfer, if you would just clean your office once a month...'" What Kanfer does not mention is that he was once assaulted by a cleaning lady driven to violence over the impenetrable litter. The cause of her ire: the discovery of her long-lost feather duster under a pile of manuscripts.



Sheppard, Gray and Kanfer confer amidst the clutter

Kanfer, Senior Writer R.Z. Shapiro and Associate Editor Paul Gray write most of TIME's reviews. "To find a good book to review and to get back on ground, we each read up to six books a week," says Gray, who once taught English at Princeton. Says Sheppard, who was editor of the book supplement of the now defunct New York Herald Tribune: "The question people always ask is, 'Do you speed-read?' No, I don't. Reading is a pleasure; like eating or loving, it should not be rushed. After the books have been read and the reviews written, the three relax by playing folk rock on ukulele, guitar and washtub-and-broom-handle bass. Then, as he did last week, Kanfer sits back and reflects on the gentlemanly art of viewing: "I've written books too, so I've played both sides of the net," he says. "Which is easier? The net."

Ralph P. Davidson

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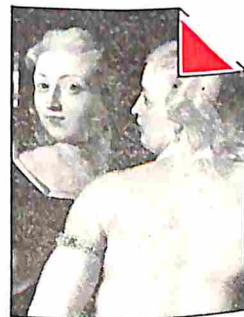
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CHRISTMAS BOOKS  
The Art of  
Giving

# TIME

## The Pacific Northwest



Washington Governor  
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