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It is a gratifying thing, indeed, to be chosen as a member of an organization of historians.

The better members of my own profession and those of your profession ~~to~~ address themselves to a common purpose. / ^{The late} Herbert Elliston, the longtime editor of the editorial page of The Washington Post, was fond of saying that newspapermen, each day, wrote the rough first draft of history. You have an opportunity to greatly edit and refine that rough first draft with the advantage that perspective gives.

Such inter-professional likeness and similarities can be exaggerated, of course. The search for a common ground beneath two vocations can be overdone. We are warned of the precedent of a newspaper set by the English editor/addressing an association of fish and chip dealers. He said: "Your business, after all, is wrapped up in ours".

Our two professions, however, do have one great common purpose--the search for the facts. Some of your advocate-journalists and some of your psycho-historians might dispute this, but for most of us in both professions, it is the search for facts that engages our energy, interest, and attention.

A great writer of our times whom both of us would be glad to claim said it very well in her book THE MEANING OF TREASON, when she wrote:

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"It is the presentation of the facts that matter, the facts that put together are the face of the age; the rise in the price of coal, the new ballet, the woman found dead in a kimono on the golf links, the latest sermon of the Archbishop of York, the marriage of a Prime Minister's daughter. For if people do not have the face of the age set clear before them they begin to imagine it; and fantasy, if it is not disciplined by the intellect and kept in faith with reality by the instinct of art, dwells among the wishes and fears of childhood, and so sees life either as simply answering any prayer or as endlessly emitting nightmare monsters from a womb-like cave".

If our professions have a common purpose, their members have a common weakness. In my long newspaper career I have frequently encountered both newspapermen and historians who have too freely used that word with the lying prefix "unprecedented". It has been my constant endeavor to persuade reporters that the "un" in that word is generally a liar. There are few things on this old planet that are "unprecedented". What the writer who uses that terminology really means, most of the time, is that the event he is about to record, within the fallible limits of his narrow inquiry has not happened before. It is not that ^{an event} it is without precedent but that the writer is without the knowledge that would enable him to remind the reader of the pertinent precedent. This is an offense mostly of young writers, and young historians, but it happens with others, as well. It is safe to use that term, I suppose, when talking about the moon-landings. Off hand, I can think of few other events of my own time that could be safely called "unprecedented".

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Reporters certainly need to remember that, but so do historians. That lying prefix invades the field ~~of~~ history in such facile expressions as "history repeats itself, monotonously, like an ^{idiot} idiot". Often, it may seem to repeat itself. The similarities between a succession of historical periods or circumstances are sometimes so great as to strain credulity.

Barbara Tuchman's new book THE DISTANT MIRROR divulges likenesses between the Fourteenth Century and our own Century that certainly are striking. She found in that "distant mirror" the story of the disintegration of tradition, order, custom, law, and government. The tax revolts that swept France in that century deprive the movement that began with proposition thirteen of any entitlement to be called "unprecedented". The decline of chivalry and the schisms of religion in that century have certain resemblance to events in our own time. But there generally are subtle differences that discourage the notion that history conforms to some repetitive pattern, that events are predestined by the emerging past. Isaiah Berlin has called this search for an historical pattern "metahistory". It is not as popular with scholarly communities as it once was. Not as many believe in Arnold Toynbe's pattern of inevitable decline and fall, or Marx's theory of the inevitable decline of capitalism. When Thucydides wrote his History of the Peloponnesian War he hoped it would be "useful" to "those who wish to know the exact character of events now past, which, human nature being what it is, will recur in similar and analogous forms".

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Perhaps that is as far (or maybe a little farther) than we ought to go, in relying on the past to ~~PERFORM~~ present a prologue ^{of} ~~for~~ the future.

If we are skeptical of all mechanistic theories that imply a repetition of history, we need not and cannot suppress interest and excitement when we read historians like Tacitus with their gift of narrative. What a memorable page there is in his opening of the history of the reign of Galba which he commences by saying: "We now enter upon the history of a period, rich in disaster, gloomy with wars, rent by sedition, and savage in its very hours of peace. Slaves betray their masters, feedmen their patrons, and he who has no enemy is destroyed by his friends". His further description of that era inspire the hope that history does not repeat itself while arousing the anxiety that it may be doing so.

If we cannot ~~find~~ find a frame of ~~work~~ the future in the history of the past why study history? Or write it?

Theodore White in his new book IN SEARCH OF HISTORY, sees its relevance in the examination of the uses of power. Like the French historian Merimee he recommended history as a study of human behaviour. White and Merimee both scorn G. M. Young's contemptuous remark that : "Servants talk about people; Gentle folk discuss things".

Certainly, one could wish that all our leaders and great men studied history. President Truman is one of a few of recent times who was a real student of history. Those who do read much history will know that a leader who may escape from every other form of retribution and reproach cannot evade the judgments of history. Those judgments rest upon the comparison of his

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conduct with those of men who have gone before. The public man who puts history to such a use sees himself in the role that others have played and gains instruction thereby not only in the art of statecraft and the subtleties of politics, but lessons in manliness and courage, fortitude and integrity. He is made aware that he may depart from precedent but that he cannot escape the comparison of his conduct with that of predecessors whose records ~~constitute~~ a kind of immortality. A dictator can silence the criticism of contemporary countrymen, but the most absolute dictator alive cannot shut up the historians. He can stop the expression of horror at his conduct by his fellowmen. He can close every forum on which they might give voice to indignation and reproach; but until he has destroyed every page of history, he cannot prevent that silent condemnation, that awful universal reproach of the informed, the educated, and the knowledgeable. Between the covers of every history book, immune to every process of punishment and intimidation, there are his silent and subtle accusers, framing the verdict that no public man can escape, heaping upon him the scorn that he can never surmount or suppress, and crying out the contempt that never can be silenced, if he behave unworthily. This is a use of history and a debt that society owes it, not to be lightly estimated.

But it is not public men and public leaders alone who can profit from perusing the pages of history. A whole people, infused with a knowledge of history, would be well nigh invincible against the impact of fluctuating fortune. They would be buoyed up in adversity and held down in triumph by the knowledge of the past. A people well informed of history would accept disasters as incidents in the slow-unwinding of history, and welcome triumphs with certain restraint. Such a people would

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less likely to swing wildly from the euphoria of success to the depression of passing failure.

Perhaps this is what John Stuart Mill was talking about in his essay on politics and culture, in which he wrote: "An important place in the scheme of education would be occupied by history, not under the puerile notion that political wisdom can be founded upon it, but partly because it is the record of all the great things which have been achieved by mankind, and partly because when philosophically studied ^t ~~it~~ gives a certain largeness of conception to the student, and familiarizes him with the action of great causes. In no other way can he so completely realize in his own mind the great principles by which the progress of man and the condition of society are governed. Nowhere else will the infinite varieties of human nature be so vividly brought home to him, and anything ~~cramped~~ ^{cramped} or one-sided ~~in~~ ^{his} own standard of it be so effectually corrected; and nowhere else will he behold so strongly exemplified the astonishing pliability of our nature, and the vast effects which may under good guidance be produced upon it by honest endeavor".

The true scholar does not ask of history a blueprint of the future. He has his rewards in the thrill of discovery that brightens his research; the satisfaction of disclosures of the hidden past that confer their own rewards; the pleasure of acquaintance with the figures of ^{another day;} ~~the past;~~ a better appreciation of the present through a greater understanding of the past. That ~~his~~ ^{real} the reward of history.

Still, it is hard to suppress the further search for what it all means, what it teaches, what it counsels, what it portends.

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The most satisfactory exposition on that subject that has come to my hand is from neither an historian ^{or} or a journalist, but from a dramatist--Thornton Wilder. Nowhere else have I found a more personally persuasive and satisfactory account of what it is all about than I have discovered in THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH. Here is the story of ~~makinx~~ mankind's stubborn survivability, and the lesson of history that emerges from this unfolding tale of ~~the~~ the George Antrobous family that has had the most impact on me comes at the end of the play. The family has survived the ice age, flood, fire and war and George Antrobous, standing in the midst of the ruin of the latest calamity, one of his precious books in hand, declaims:

"I know that every good and excellent thing in the ~~world~~ world stands moment by moment on the razor-edge of danger and must be fought for--whether it's a field , or a home, or a country".

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