

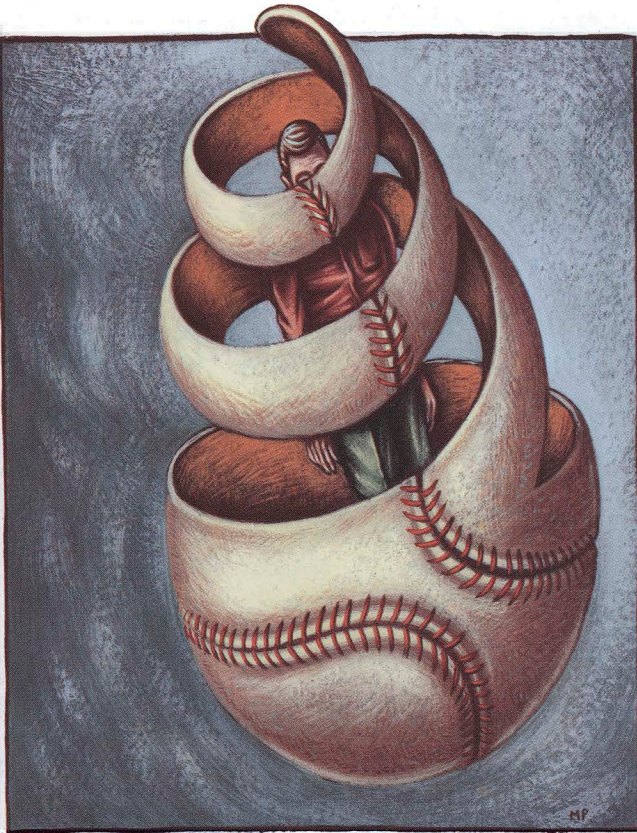


COVER TO COVER

Hitting Home

Everyone needs to score a personal best in the game of life.

MICHAEL PRINZO



The Elements of Hitting

By Matthew F. Jones G'80
304 pp. Hyperion.
\$22.95

The *Elements of Hitting* is not a book about baseball. This must be set straight from the start, should nonsports fans dismiss Matthew Jones's latest book from a cursory glance at its title. What this elegantly written novel is about includes all that is essential—broken and mending hearts, lost and damaged souls, and painful but necessary memories.

This trinity guides the reader from the past to the present and back again, much like the conscience itself. Yes, baseball plays a part. It serves as the past and the future and encompasses the experiences of the protagonist, Walter Innis. But the roar of the crowd in *The Elements of Hitting* erupts not from sidelines or bleachers, but from the need inside everyone to hit home, to score a personal best while alive.

Jones, a 1980 *magna cum laude* graduate of SU's College of Law who divides his time in Charlottesville, Virginia, between roles as attorney and author, has created in Innis an Everyman for our time. In chapters undulating like the tide and like memory itself, the adult Innis, middle-aged, in marital crisis, wondering what's gone wrong and what to do, dreams of his childhood and of his parents' unconscious examples that shaped his own history.

Innis's father was a baseball legend until his star unexpectedly fell. Innis's mother, distant and romantic and tragic to her son, would row across a lake

every day to maintain a millionaire's home. But the young Innis discovers his mother and her master share more than a housekeeping contract. As a man, Innis dreams of his mother's affair and tries to comprehend why his own wife has packed and headed for Boston to serve him divorce papers from afar.

Jones writes of Innis's mother: "She was interested in historic figures—martyrs and heroes like the Virgin Mary and Jesus—and how they were perceived in their own time. She spoke to my sister and me of Jesus as if he were an interesting fellow who, many years before, had brought about some very significant changes. Some people, she said, claimed that he was the Son of God—others, only that he was a worldly saint. She didn't attempt to sway us in any particular direction. I seldom saw her pray. She always wore a gold cross about her neck as if she had been born with it."

That sense of self, which so confused yet awed the child, is the same self-knowledge the grown Innis longs for. He visits his father in the nursing home, but his father is mute. Yet the elderly Innis's roommate tells Innis that his father talks to God at night. He doesn't pray, the roommate insists, it's more like a conversation.

Into this spiritual confusion and malaise comes Jeannie, Innis's plump high school sweetheart, now a single mother. Jeannie's spirited but unsuccessful career as her son's Little League coach spurs Innis to take over. In the process of instilling self-esteem into the boys on the team, Innis realizes what's really significant.

Jones's novel is a powerful treatise of hope, to the human spirit that seeks sustenance until it's satisfied, until the individual discovers his or her incarnation as a vital soul on Earth. Yet *The Elements of Hitting* escapes the sentimentality of a lesser book and, in the last inning, throws Walter Innis a curve as only life itself could. The novel's gentle, funny, graceful writing ushers the reader into the mind and the memory of Innis himself, and the reader soon realizes that all lives sift together in memory, in the collective unconscious, as one.

—L. ELISABETH BEATTIE

OTHER ALUMNI BOOKS

Deathright: Culture, Medicine, Politics, and the Right to Die

By James M. Hoefler '77
292 pp. Westview Press. \$39.95 hardcover; \$15.55 paperback

Deathright offers a comprehensive survey of the different notions, potential policy resolutions, judicial decisions, and legislative activity throughout the United States regarding the right to die. The author presents his findings by looking at prominent case studies, including Jack Kevorkian and Karen Ann Quinlan.

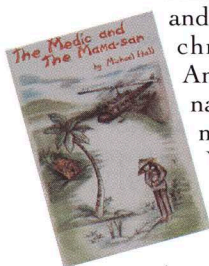
Put Your Best Foot Forward

By Lee Ann Levinson '78
165 pp. Two Bytes Publishing. \$11.95

This book is designed to help parents and teachers play more creatively with children. The collection of 350 play exercises is colorfully illustrated and accompanied by two booklets for children and an index of suggested music.

The Medic and the Mama-san

By Michael H. Hall '66
285 pp. Hawkeye Publishing. \$18.95 hardcover; \$10.95 paperback



This true story about the author and his wife, Doan Thi Minh, chronicles the events of an American medic and a Vietnamese woman who met and married during the Vietnam War. Detailing the significant events of their lives, the book culminates with the story of her family reunion upon their return to Vietnam 22 later.

Charles Lathrop Pack: Timberman, Forest Conservationist, and Pioneer in Forest Education

By Alexandra Mitchell Eyle '79
344 pp. Syracuse University Press. \$34.95
Charles Lathrop Pack was passionate about preserving the nation's forests. This book is a biography of the timber magnate who devoted 30 years and much of his fortune to this environmental cause.

Alison Lurie: A Critical Biography

By Richard Hauer Costa G'50
120 pp. Twayne/Maxwell Macmillan International. \$24.95

This is the first book-length study to appraise Alison Lurie's major works of adult fiction and nonfiction. The critical biography traces Lurie's themes of family life, adultery, and academia through eight novels. Costa demonstrates that "Lurie is a probing satirist who sees self-deception as the handiwork of a culture facing bankruptcy, and nowhere more so than in the domestic realm."

Once Upon a Time in Junior High

By Lisa Norment '89
128 pp. Scholastic. \$2.95

This young-reader's novel tells the story of 12-year-old Amber, an African-American, and her white best friend Shelby, as they enter junior high school in hopes of finding "cool." The experience turns out to be less than "cool," as they are confronted with disapproval of their interracial friendship and Amber feels isolated as one of the few African-American students in the school.

Hostile Acts: U.S. Policy in Costa Rica in the 1980s

By Martha Honey G'72
640 pp. University Press of Florida. \$49.95 hardcover; \$24.95 paperback

Hostile Acts documents and analyzes the outcome of United States foreign policy initiatives in Costa Rica in the eighties. Taking a critical look at the effect of federal assistance, Honey asserts that policymakers deliberately employed covert action, shortsighted economic policies, and military pressure to undermine Latin America's oldest democracy.

Moon People

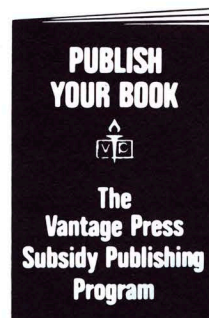
By Sondra Shulman '55
355 pp. Baskerville Publishers. \$20

Set in a comfortable Miami condominium, this author's first novel is a study of Jewish people and those who care for them, prey on them, and murder them.

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