

foundations orchestrate public loathing of “political correctness” on campus (it’s really just “civility”). Violent inner-city males and TV violence aren’t the problem; the gun industry is. Overblown concerns about on-line smut, missing children, teen moms, and illegitimacy all divert us, Glassner says, from “facing up to our collective lack of responsibility toward our nation’s children.”

So what should we fear? Glassner has his list, a distinctly political one: “hunger, dilapidated schools, gun proliferation, and deficient health care for much of the U.S. population.” To resolve these real problems, we must “finance and organize.” Where Ross prescribes better-informed individual choices, Glassner seeks a solution in collective action.

—Peter Huber

HOME TOWN.

By Tracy Kidder. Random House. 338 pp. \$25.95

American culture of the late 20th century holds that everything significant happens in the big city. It is acknowledged, perhaps, that strong character and noble suffering exist in the rural heart of this great country, but the national secular religion maintains that our political, artistic, and civic genius resides in the great metropolises of New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago; secondarily in the old and new worlds of Boston, San Francisco, and perhaps Miami; and, somewhat grudgingly, in the decadent bureaucratic pits of Washington. Left out of the calculus are the smaller cities and towns where the society carries out its essential business and endures its angst in microcosm—left out, that is, until a schoolchild slaughters his classmates and teachers, or a tornado wipes out a community.

Now along comes master chronicler Kidder, who focuses his considerable talents on Northampton, Massachusetts. Like every other distinct community across America that has its own soul, Northampton is hardly immune to outside influences and internal dysfunction. Far from it. But its people know who they are and what they want from life; their pride in their community and their

fundamental faith in the future gets them through all manner of adversity and confusion. “If you do all your growing up in the same small place,” writes Kidder, “you don’t shed identities. You accumulate them.” During his several years of intense reporting in the town, he particularly followed the life and times of one Tommy O’Connor, the youngest member of a large working-class family who became a policeman and whose experiences offer a winding, revealing (if at times overdramatized) path through the recent adventures of Northampton.

Some will insist that Northampton is not in any sense typical—that, for example, the presence of Smith College distorts and softens its experience. But Kidder does not claim to have looked for anything representative of a grand phenomenon. As with his other successful and sensitive works, including *The Soul of a New Machine* (1981) and *House* (1985), he has sought merely to tell a good story in a way that teaches us something. That he has done.

—Sanford J. Ungar

HARD BALL:

The Abuse of Power in Pro Team Sports.

By James Quirk and Rodney Fort. Princeton Univ. Press.

248 pp. \$22.95

When I was growing up in a Boston suburb, for \$2 I could watch NBA double-headers in Boston Garden or sit in the Fenway Park bleachers and see the Red Sox fade. Today those humble seats go for \$12 and \$14; getting closer to the action can run as high as \$85 at the Fleet Center, where the Celtics now play their home games. The

