

TELEVISION

Just can't put down C-SPAN'S 'Booknotes'

By Howard Rosenberg
Los Angeles Times

Harry Truman's idea of heaven was "a good, comfortable arm-chair and a good reading lamp and a stack of new history and biography that he wanted to read," said David McCullough, author of "Truman," a fat best-selling biography of the nation's 33rd president.

McCullough didn't say it to Letterman. He didn't say it to Leno. He didn't say it to Arsenio. He didn't say it to Oprah or Sally Jessy Raphael or Regis and Kathie Lee.

As if they'd care in the first place.

He said it to Brian P. Lamb.

Lamb is not only chairman and chief executive officer of C-SPAN but also host of C-SPAN's "Booknotes," television's only regular weekly national program devoted to authors and their books. The Sunday series recently marked its fifth birthday with a two-hour retrospective featuring excerpts from past shows and brief blurbs from Lamb, producer Sarah Trahern and authors.

The focus of Lamb's program is non-fiction. The authors have ranged from lofty historian Daniel Boorstin to earthy ex-school principal Madeline Cartwright, the political tome from former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher on the hard right to British-born Christopher Hitchens, a self-proclaimed "extreme leftist" who rarely has access to mainstream TV.

Although Hitchens and the young Bill Clinton attended Oxford University simultaneously, their paths never crossed, convincing Hitchens that the president was, indeed, the college moderate he claimed to have been. "If he was a radical, I would have known him," Hitchens told Lamb.

You frequently discover as much about the authors as their books. For example, when that positive thinker Cartwright ("For the Children") learned that her unmarried college-freshman daughter was pregnant, did she let it get her down? No, sir, she told Lamb, recalling her message to her husband at the time: "For the same money, everybody got 15 credits. We got 15 credits and a rascal (child). Let's take that rascal and go home with it."

So they did. The daughter returned to class, Cartwright to her elementary school — totting her 2-month-old grandson to the office.

Lamb is especially absorbed by the process of writing. To Hitchens ("For the Sake of Argument"): "Where do you write?"

Hitchens: "I write on a table, alone, in longhand."

To David Halberstam ("The Fifties"): "Where do you write?"

In a room that he regards almost as a dungeon, Halberstam replies. "The pressure of writing and being in that room is so great that when it's over, I don't want to be in that room."

The amazing thing about Lamb — and this is something so bizarre, so outrageous, so against type for TV interviewers that you won't believe it — is that he's always reads the book of the author he's interviewing.

Unlike the tweedy, baggy-pants, bow-tied set that one might associate with such a program, Lamb is utterly without pretense, casting himself almost as the blue collar of literati. To "Truman" author McCullough: "You write on page 949 — by the way, what does this thing cost?"

• McCullough: "Thirty bucks."

To "Truman"
author David
McCullough:
"You write on
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by the way,
what does
this thing
cost?"

— Brian Lamb,
"Booknotes" host

MONDAY

VIEWING TIPS

AUTISTIC

Continued from C1

tremendous results over the past three years.

"When I see him now playing on the playground, you cannot tell he's autistic," she says.

This is a world of unabashed boosterism. The classroom walls are tagged with sign after sign throwing out words of support:

Autism's symptoms include mental aloneness, insistence on routine

months of life and then become increasingly unresponsive. An early signal may be screaming to be put down after being picked up, even if the child is hurt or tired.

■ Delayed development in speech is typical. An autistic child must struggle to develop an ability to understand or copy speech and gestures. Even when speech develops, the language can be immature, unimaginative and have a robotlike sound.

■ There may be other behavioral abnormalities, such as walking on tiptoe, twiddling fingers for hours, rocking, self-injury, sudden screaming fits and hyperactivity.

■ Appearance and muscular coordination are normal. Though rare, sometimes autistic children have a special skill, such as an outstanding rote memory or musical or artistic abilities.

■ Autistic children can be taught to overcome some of their limitations with intensive one-on-one learning programs.

tion available by calling 951-1055.

W

Widowed Persons Association has a support group meeting and sack lunch for new members, prospective members and guests at 11:30 a.m. Thursday at the home of Teddy Hale, 4550 Lorenzo Lane, No. 502, Stockton. For more information, call 477-1177. The group also has drop-in sessions for the public from 2 to 4 p.m. Sundays in the private dining room at Carson Oaks, 6725 Inglewood Ave., Stockton. For information, call 931-1648.

■ **Women's Center of San Joaquin County** offers a variety of groups.

Stockton groups aid battered women, women molested as children, sexual assault survivors and victims with concerns about drug or alcohol use. For times and locations, call 941-2611.

Lodi has a women's empowerment group at 6 p.m. Mondays, support groups for victims of domestic violence at 9:30 a.m. Tuesdays and 6 p.m. Thursdays, a depression and anxiety support group at 3:30 p.m. May 11 and 25, and a support group for adults molested as children. Call 368-3406 for more information.

■ **Women in Transition Support Group**, for women who find themselves alone after long relationships or marriages, meets at 6 p.m. every Wednesday at The Learning Outlet, Suite A, 6707 Embarcadero Drive, Stockton. \$5 a session.

■ **Women Who Love Too Much**, for women who want to explore the addictive nature of their relationships, meets at 5:30 p.m. each Monday at the Women's Center, 620 N. San Joaquin St. Call 941-2611.

Support group meetings are published the first Monday of each month. Meeting notices must be submitted by the 25th of the preceding month. Send notices to Today, The Record, P.O. Box 900, Stockton CA 95201.

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