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You can't tell Peter Baird's new book by its cover. Based on the title story, the cover features a Soviet jet fighter and a U.S. Air Force insignia against the background of a setting sun. It gives no hint of the revelations inside.

Baird is a successful lawyer. A big firm, corner office guy. Like others of his ilk, the interior walls of Baird's office are splattered with trophies. There is a plaque announcing that Baird has been listed in *Best Lawyers in America* for 20 years running. He grins

genially from a laminated cover of a publication called *Super Lawyers: The Top Attorneys in Arizona and New Mexico*. The Arizona Bar Foundation Walter E. Craig Distinguished Service Award floats nearby and, not far away, are framed news stories about Baird's triumphs at the United States Supreme Court and the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Other trophies are more offbeat. One commends Baird for having raised money for cancer research from his magic shows.

Others celebrate his writing with laminated covers of *Newsweek*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *Beyond Peleliu*, his novel. In short, his office walls proclaim a man of reach, achievement and probity.

Yet, in the autobiographical essays, articles and fiction in *Protecting Moscow*, we learn that the wild wallpaper of Peter Baird's heart is vastly different from the self-promotional walls of his office.

The Global to the Personal

Baird's self-revelations run the gamut. In this volume we encounter tales of a lawyer's practice. But the author goes far beyond that. Some of his writing chronicles the tribulations of a American generation grappling with changing mores. And in some of the most revelatory stories, he delves deeply into his own family relations and into the personal demons with which he has wrestled, not always successfully.

Some pieces are funny. Others are darkly confessional. With few exceptions, all are very personal, which is obvious from this sampling of chapter titles: "Representing My Wife Before The United States Supreme Court," "My Stupid Mistakes," "Rejectionology," "Letters from Hell," "Magic and Herpes in Las Vegas," "The Leg that Wouldn't Work," "The Night the Police Came," "Moving Out," "My Father Fights The Japanese, PTSD and Me," "Snoring Through Two Marriages," "Could I Euthanize My Own Father?" "Watching Sex Videos with My Wife," and "A Lawyer Battles Depression."

Baird's willingness to speak frankly about his highs, lows and inner demons is the chief

value of the book. It also is what makes it unique among lawyer autobiographies, which are typically long on self-celebration and short on raw truth. Why my longtime friend should choose to make such private information so public and what we can learn from his bold willingness to do so are the mysteries this review seeks to explore. But for starters, I want to talk about several of *Moscow's* chapters.

Baird wrote the pieces in this collection over a 25-year period in no particular thematic order. Although a few of his stories come from his “towering mountain of rejects,” most were published in periodicals as well known as *Newsweek* and as unknown as *Interrace*. Some also appeared in books from publishers as prominent as Simon & Schuster and as obscure as Pushcart Press. Like most books written by lawyers, *Protecting Moscow* contains war stories from his cases as well as reflections on the legal profession.

A Lawyer’s Journey

The first offering in the legal section is “Representing the Hare Krishna in City Court,” which recounts the least glamorous of lawyer tasks—appearing for an arraignment in the old Phoenix City Court building. Baird describes the venue: “Poorly janitored, windowless, and illuminated by a grimy florescence, the Phoenix City Magistrate’s Court handles the petty criminal offenses from downtown business and inner city squalor.” The central puzzle of this episode is what Baird’s clients, four Hare Krishna members charged with trespassing and loitering, were doing with their hands in their laps while waiting in court for their case to be called. It is a hoot.

“My Client, Ernesto Miranda” takes us behind the scenes of one of our nation’s most famous cases to meet the unsavory man Baird helped represent after the U.S. Supreme Court decided *Miranda v. Arizona*. “Representing My Wife in the United States Supreme Court” and “The Feds Bug Worship Services” resemble stories that Louis Nizer wrote in the 1960s in his best-selling book, *My Life in Court*. “You Have

the Right to Remain Silent” and “Post 9-11 Freedom and Security” are essays on criminal procedure and civil liberties.

“Magician in the Courtroom,” “Deskside Manners,” “My Stupid Mistakes” and “My Son the Lawyer” belong to a different genre. Baird’s father—whose presence hovers over the book—makes an idealized appearance in “Deskside Manners” as Baird advocates that lawyers emulate the attentive bedside manners of an old-time country doctor, like his dad. “Magician in the Courtroom” provides a provocative comparison between the task of a trial lawyer and that of an illusionist. “My Stupid Mistakes” relates a few not-to-do’s with self-effacing good humor.

Though these chapters are good, the star is “My Son the Lawyer,” first published in *Litigation Magazine* as “A Lawyer’s Letter to His Son.” In it, Baird avoids the self-parody of Polonius and the sententiousness of Lord Chesterfield by limiting his counsel to one simple message. If you had to choose only one tidbit of advice to give to a young lawyer, what would it be? Baird’s answer to that question will surprise you.

Changing Times

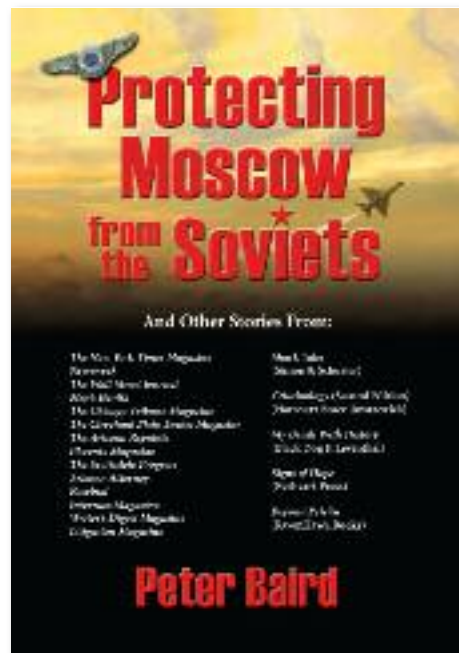
Protecting Moscow From the Soviets is also about a little-chronicled generation. Born in 1941, Baird belongs to the demographic sliver of early pre-baby boomers. Raised innocent and married young, he was taught to believe without qualification in the American Dream and its legal equivalent, progress through law. Drugs, sex, and rock and roll? Baird missed them all. In “Moving Out,” he tells us:

Maybe hippies could “let it all hang out;” but we were older; we didn’t suck on sugar cubes laced with LSD; we didn’t wear long hair or psychedelic rags; and we were still the inhibited, button-down children of the Eisenhower Administration, “Ozzie and Harriet” and “Father Knows Best.” It is hardly surprising that, as children of the 1950’s, we associated open expression with weakness, rudeness, and discomfort.

He was too late for the Sexual Revolution, but Baird was on time to

catch the most chilling years of the Cold War. The “Moscow” in the title essay is Moscow, Idaho, where Baird did most of his growing up. During the height of the 1950’s Red Scare, the members of Baird’s Boy Scout Buffalo Patrol, along with 375,000 other Americans, joined the Air Force Ground Observer Corps and scanned the skies for incoming Soviet bombers and their MIG escorts. *Protecting Moscow From The Soviets* recounts young Baird’s hours on the observation deck and what happened when he spotted a MIG fighter jet speeding toward his home town.

Polio was the plague of those days. “The Leg That Wouldn’t Work” tells how nine-year-old Peter came down with it; how he stayed virtually immobile during three months of paralysis and painful therapies; how he eventually achieved a complete recovery; but how, much later in life, he experienced the “polio bounce back” effect in his right eye. If you ever yearn for the simple life of those Good Old Days, it’s well to remember what a dark shadow polio cast before the miracle of the Salk and Sabin vaccines.



Protecting Moscow From the Soviets by Peter Baird

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To Baird's mind, rock and roll music was another scourge. "The Evening Breeze Caressed the Trees" rhapsodizes about Baird's days as a member of a seven-piece dance band, the Aristo-Katz, that played big band dance music at University of Idaho fraternity parties. "Tenderly" was his signature solo. Baird would look out over his saxophone as he played and see dancers whispering the lyrics in each others' ears. "It was sublime," he tells us. But sublimity proved to be a transitory state. In 1954, when Bill Haley And The Comets blared out "Rock Around The Clock" in the movie *Blackboard Jungle*, the Aristo-Katz reacted with condemnation:

[W]e disdained the raw, driving rhythm; laughed at the blaring guitars; and ridiculed the musicians' raunchy body movements. Our smug prediction was that this cacophony would disappear into squalid venues where greasy misfits gathered on motorcycles.

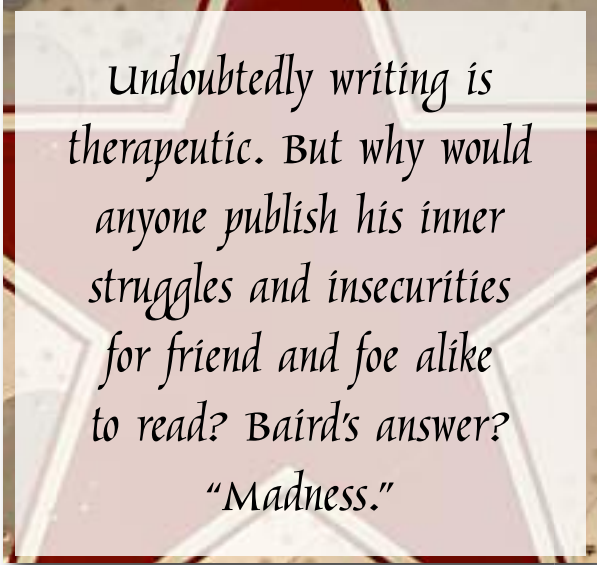
Ultimately, the primitive new sound cost Baird his music career—and it might even have cost him his life.

And—ah, yes—Sex and the Early Pre-Baby Boomer.

"Magic and Herpes in Las Vegas" recounts how, for a special treat—big wink—Baird and his first wife found themselves booked into a Fantasy Suite at Caesar's Palace by an obliging organization for whom Baird had agreed to perform a magic show to benefit cancer research. Sadly, the only fantasy they acted upon (in that "deep, hemoglobin red" luxury pad with overhead mirrors) was a recollection that the genital herpes virus could live for 15 hours outside the human host. Obviously, the place had to be infested. "Watching Sex Videos With My Wife" (his second wife) is among the few essays in *Moscow* that has not been previously published. It will disappoint hardcore porn hounds. The videos in question (wouldn't you know it?) were billed in *The New York Times Book Review* as "instructional products" put out by The

Sinclair Institute and advertised as "SEX EDUCATION VIDEOS THAT INCREASE SEXUAL PLEASURE FOR BOTH PARTIES." I cannot resist this excerpt:

Bug-eyed and embarrassed, my wife and I sat there silently as a zoom lens took us closer to the couples' nether regions than we were to our own. After gaping slack-jawed, we started mumbling, "Oh-my-god-what-*are*-they-doing?"



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for friend and foe alike
to read? Baird's answer?
"Madness."

A Family's Influence

Chapter Four, "Writer: Short Fiction, Long Fiction and Literary Rejection," contains the first three chapters of Baird's novel and two short stories. The *Beyond Peleliu* excerpts describe the stand-ins for his parents before the birth of their only child, David McQuade, who bears a striking resemblance to Baird. In "Guns," an alcoholic doctor threatens his wife and son with a pistol. "Overnight in Seattle" comes across as an entertaining daydream until a sudden, phenomenally ironic twist at the end.

"Moving Out" tells of the failure of Baird's first marriage:

Unlike the classical melodramas about divorce, our marriage did not end with a hurled coffee pot, shouted epithet or sexy interloper. Instead, it died silently during years of a deferential, sometimes craven civility that masked unspoken frustrations, bottled-up hostilities and

undisclosed needs. Translation: we couldn't talk about anything personally sensitive.

"The Night The Police Came" is about Baird's neurologically and psychiatrically disturbed daughter who, when she was 12 and living with Baird, ran away, called the police and accused him of "child abuse." When officers asked him to tell what had happened, Baird had to choose between his legal right to remain silent and his instinctual inclination to speak. Read the story and decide what you would have done.

"Forever Mamma" describes young Peter's relationship with his mother, a prison social worker, magician, calculating Las Vegas gambler and inveterate writer who had "precious few fawnings" for her only child. It drops a hint about the genesis of Baird's passion for writing. Mother Baird once won a literary prize for a travelogue about Uruguay, a country she had never visited.

But the book's dominating figure—as he has been in Baird's life—is his "six-foot-two-inch, combat-veteran father" who, Baird tells us, had "limitless anger if

I crossed him or if I didn't do what he demanded." Fueled by alcohol and self-loathing, Doctor Baird sought to have his son compensate for his own physical and emotional wounds mysteriously sustained during the bloody World War II Battle of Peleliu in the South Pacific. To his young son, Baird's father issued orders: "never need an eraser"; "do it right the first time"; "don't be a puff"; "win"; "use your head"; "never quit"; "hit first"; "work like hell"; "never back off"; "fight to the finish"; and the all-purpose, "be a man."

The pressure was unrelenting, and it provided some Dickensian experiences. "Christmas 1960" recounts Baird's first Christmas vacation home from college after his mother's death from cancer. The low point was when Baird got thrown in a snow bank by his father, and the high point occurred during a Christmas Eve Midnight Mass that went comically wrong.

Eventually, Baird tells us that his father's disapproval culminated during the Vietnam War "when he lobbied the local Selective Service Board to have me drafted and, as he saw it, fight for freedom the way he had."

He then spent most of his life vainly trying to win his father's approval.

As if recorded on a tape deck surgically implanted in my brain, my father's fierce commands played on for years, drowning out other voices, blocking out other values and slowly turning a specific fear of father into a general fear of failure and then into a relentless perfectionism in which enough was never enough and the most was not enough either.

The Depression Within

None of us, as the saying goes, is perfect. The vicissitudes of daily life and the practice of law require striving and an acceptance of unavoidable and even avoidable failures. But Baird was not programmed to accept either. As a result, perhaps with an assist from hereditary defective blood chemistry, Baird has spent his adult life suffering from clinical depression.

In "A Lawyer Battles Depression," Baird tells how it was first diagnosed as a result of a spontaneous tirade he unleashed, accusing his partners of incompetence at a firm retreat. Even in his disease, Baird excelled, as the Chief of Psychiatry at the University of Arizona Medical School bestowed upon Baird this accolade: "You may be one of the most driven yet depressed patients I've ever treated. ... Most people with this powerful a form of depression are either marginally functional or end up in the hospital." Baird details his trek through one psychologist, five psychiatrists, group therapy and a succession of psycho-pharmaceutical concoctions in search of balance. His battle, Baird tells us, continues.

For even the brightest, it takes monumental effort to accumulate a wall's worth of trophies. They are valuable accomplishments. Wall plaques impress clients, instill respect in adversaries, awe associates and reassure those who hang them that they

are big cheeses. Why, then, would Baird undermine these hard-earned benefits by displaying the wallpaper beneath?

He suggests an answer in the preface to *Protecting Moscow* with a quote from a story in Ernest Hemingway's collection *Winner Take Nothing*: "If he wrote about it, he could get rid of it. He had gotten rid of many things by writing them."

Ah, but did he? In print and persona, Hemingway portrayed himself as a wordily wise tough, certainly never a lacerated victim of childhood abuse; and, sadly, whatever Papa got rid of was insufficient to prevent his own suicide. When I posed this quandary to Baird, he said that the quotation meant that writing is therapeutic, not that the therapy is always successful.

My sense is that Baird's comments are accurate about his own work on both scores. "December Thaw," which appeared in *The New York Times Magazine* and which describes Baird's first visit with his father after 15 years of separation, is the first of three that movingly describe his father's progressive descent into Alzheimer's. Like so many of the other stories, each ends on a note of reconciliation. Here is an example from "Letters From Hell," Baird's reflections on 26 letters his father wrote during World War II combat that came into Baird's possession after the publication of Baird's novel, *Beyond Peleliu*: "As I put the letters down, Peleliu didn't matter anymore but my father did, now more than ever. Finally, I am beyond Peleliu."

Undoubtedly writing is therapeutic. By fitting emotional experience into words, it promotes self-understanding and provides at least a transitory sense of control. Writing a diary is a time-honored way to achieve these benefits. But why would anyone, especially a high-profile lawyer who litigates multimillion-dollar cases, publish his inner struggles and insecurities for friend and foe alike to read? I asked Baird the question. His answer? "Madness."

Maybe. Or maybe, as some say, Baird is modest about his own strange brand of personal courage. I will throw two other possibilities into the pot. If the trophies on Baird's walls represent his efforts to win his

father's approval, maybe Baird has discovered that it is not enough to be valued for what he has achieved. Maybe he wants to be accepted for who he really is, not for the person he made himself become to satisfy his father—and this cannot happen while his wild wallpaper remains plastered over. Or perhaps there is something about human beings, or at least about writers, that causes them to want the truth about themselves to be known.

A Profession's Affliction

Whatever led Peter Baird to publish and now republish his extremely personal essays, we should be grateful that he did. His work is especially valuable to those of us who practice law. Perfectionists flock to our profession. Law's entry hurdles eliminate most who are not driven. Once on board, the competition is unrelenting.

Baird is not alone. According to a Johns Hopkins study, lawyers suffer the highest rates of depression among workers in 104 tested occupations. A University of Washington study found that lawyers experience 8 to 15 times the anxiety, hostility and depression of the general population, and a University of Arizona study found that 19 percent of practicing lawyers experience depression. Numerous articles recite discouraging statistics about lawyers' high substance abuse and divorce rates. There is even a Web site, www.lawyerswithdepression.com. Baird's story "A Lawyer Battles Depression" is an immensely helpful guide to at least one out of five members of our profession, and to their colleagues and friends as well. It should be required reading for all lawyers.

But Baird's essays reach much further. *Protecting Moscow* paints an unforgettable, Goya-esque picture of the human consequences of an unbalanced pursuit of success, and inspiration for all who struggle to overcome destructive patterns of behavior they learned in order to survive difficult childhoods. Whether motivated by courage, compassion or compulsion, Peter Baird's willingness to display the wild wallpaper of his heart is a service to all who read his book. 