For years, Steven T. Rosenthal, associate professor of history at the University of Hartford, had been struck by American Jews’ lack of critical examination of their support for Israel. After all, he thought, Jews are generally regarded as fairly liberal and argumentative, and they love to discuss things. “What is the Talmud but a compendium of different opinions?” he points out. When it came to Israel, however, he observed an unflinching, uncritical consensus of support.

Rosenthal decided that it was time for a book that would persuade American Jews to be more critical as they thought about issues affecting and involving Israel, and one that would make clear that the consequences of noncriticism are much worse than an open dialogue.

As he pursued his research for the book, though, he was in for a surprise. The unity of support that he was researching had been unraveling over the last two decades. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the Palestinian Intifada, increasing debate over Israeli defense and security policies, disagreements over religious legitimacy, and the evolution of Jewish identity in both Israeli and American society—all were significant factors in what was becoming a radical transformation in how American Jews relate to Israel.

Rosenthal realized that the book, originally intended as a plea for criticism, needed to be a scholarly work examining the development, workings, and waning of American Jewish support for Israel.

The resulting work, *Irreconcilable Differences: The Waning of the American Jewish Love Affair with Israel*, was published this past spring to favorable reviews from both the scholarly and popular press. It is the first full-scale examination of the nature and development of the American Jewish response to Israel.

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The controversial book has hit a nerve with those who do not want to acknowledge this sea change in how American Jews think about Israel. But the majority of the reviews praise Rosenthal for his objectivity and applaud the appearance of a scholarly book that is written in such an accessible style.

The media attention to the book is not limited to the United States. Articles have appeared in the *Jerusalem Post, The Economist*, and *Die Zeit*, among others. Coverage has ranged from a guest appearance by Rosenthal on a radio talk show in Chicago to a lengthy interview with him that appears in the online magazine *Salon*: www.salon.com/books/int/2001/05/04/israel/index.html. This coming year, Rosenthal’s schedule of media interviews and appearances in bookstores and at book fairs throughout the country is an unusually full one for an academic book.

He has learned that the book is already being used in Israel in courses on American Jewish–Israeli relations.

Since the book’s publication in the spring, violence between the Israelis and Palestinians has increased significantly. Rosenthal says that American Jews are once again uniting around Israel but with a significant difference: their new skepticism causes them to reflect on the issues much more critically.

Furthermore, he says, the support is moderated by distrust of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, given the “baggage” of his hawkish past, his association with such troubling incidents as the Sabra and Chatilla massacres in Lebanon in 1982, and fears of his potential extremism in the future.

In a chapter of his book devoted to Lebanon, Rosenthal writes that the invasion “created a crisis in the soul and identity of Israel.” Indeed, for American Jews, the image of Israelis as “moral supermen” could no longer hold. This disillusionment is a sign of American Jews’ political maturity, he says; “Israel is no longer seen as an icon but as a nation with flaws because its people are human beings like anyone else.”

Jonathan Rieder of Barnard College notes that while illuminating “the fascinating twists and turns in the American Jewish love affair with Israel,” Rosenthal’s book “demonstrates that Israel is a projective screen, and American Jews’ relationship to it reflects not just their feelings toward Israel but their own integration into American society and all the identity dilemmas that go with it.”

And that is what Rosenthal finds most compelling about the latest Mideast crises and reaction in the United States—that
“American Jews are willing to stand on their own and exercise their own independent judgements without depending on Israel to speak for their Jewish identity,” he says.

Without Israel as a focus, what will that identity be? “The new challenge for American Jews is not how to support an increasingly secure Israel but formulating a Jewish response to America’s open society,” Rosenthal writes. “As American Jews recognize what many consider to be the shallowness of their religious commitment, some have begun to feel that 40 years of obsession with Israel has prevented them from laying the religious and spiritual groundwork for the next generation.”

Currently, with prospects for peace growing dimmer every day, Rosenthal sees few signs of hope in the Middle East. What he does find encouraging is the reaction of American Jews. They seem to be supporting Israel during this period of the most unpromising diplomatic conditions. This time, though, it is not the reflexive rallying around Israel that had caused Rosenthal so much concern in the past but a response based on the knowledge, independence, and sophistication that they have developed in the past two decades.

Creating a Corporate Culture That Fosters Quality
Corporate Culture and the Quality Organization

James W. Fairfield-Sonn
Foreword by Lawrence K. Williams
Quorum Books

by David Isgur

Efforts to improve the quality of an organization can only succeed when the drive for continuous quality improvement becomes an integral part of an organization’s culture. James Fairfield-Sonn, associate professor of management at the University’s Barney School of Business, not only discusses why this is so in his new book, but also provides real-world examples of how large and small businesses, as well as a nonprofit organization, have successfully integrated quality improvement at all levels of management.

In Corporate Culture and the Quality Organization, Fairfield-Sonn provides an outline of a fundamental model of quality improvement that works for companies across the board.

As Phil Johnson, a principal in the The Human Resource Connection in Cromwell, Conn., and a former student of Fairfield-Sonn, notes in a review of Corporate Culture in the Human Resources Communicator, “Jim Fairfield-Sonn does what no one else has: he has brought together all of the important thinkers on quality and continuous improvement and has found a way to make sense of it all for those who are trying to understand where to start, as well as for those who need an inspiring guide to making real change occur in their enterprise. In addition, he provides comparison data showing that quality, as a strategy, and success are directly linked.”

Johnson, who graduated from the University of Hartford in 1994 with a master’s degree in organizational behavior, wrote in the postscript to his review of the book, “As a former student of Jim Fairfield-Sonn, I have experienced firsthand his natural way of putting things in a plain and easily digestible way. Reading his book is like sitting in class with him. He builds your understanding through a series of straightforward discussions, never forcing more detail into the learning than you can handle.”

Fairfield-Sonn himself says it with a Star Trek twist—”quality companies are the ones that live long and prosper. ‘The book was written as an observation of what works and what doesn’t.’”

—James W. Fairfield-Sonn
The Soros Family’s Dance around Death

Masquerade: Dancing around Death in Nazi-Occupied Hungary

Tivadar Soros
Edited and translated from the Esperanto by Humphrey Tonkin
Forewords by Paul and George Soros
Arcade Publishing
by Diana Simonds

Noted financier and philanthropist George Soros was a 13-year-old living in Budapest, Hungary, when the Nazis occupied the city in March 1944. Soros, a Jew, escaped death by assuming a new identity and disappearing from sight for the remainder of World War II. The story of the survival of the Soros family is told in *Masquerade: Dancing around Death in Nazi-Occupied Hungary*, a newly published, gripping account—an account that had gone largely unnoticed—written over 35 years ago in Esperanto by George’s father, Tivadar Soros (1894–1968).

Now, Humphrey Tonkin, president emeritus of the University and currently University Professor of the Humanities, has translated the story into English, together with an account of the historical background and extensive notes. George Soros, who turned 71 in August, writes in the book’s foreword, “I cannot be objective about this book. It deals with the formative period of my life, and it is written by my father who was the most important figure in my life at that time.”

Among the passengers on the first train bringing top Nazi officials to Budapest was Adolf Eichmann, charged with applying the Final Solution in Hungary. Hungary’s Jews until then had largely escaped the Nazis’ clutches.

Tivadar Soros, whose survival skills had been honed as a prisoner of war in Siberia during World War I, concluded that the best way to avoid Eichmann and his accomplices was simply to disappear. As an attorney, he had access to legal papers, and he located contacts who were able to forge documents for him and his wife, Elizabeth; his sons, George and Paul; his mother-in-law; and many friends and clients. With new, Christian identities, they scattered and disappeared. George was lodged with a sympathetic Hungarian government official; his elder brother, Paul, rented a room elsewhere in Budapest. Elizabeth left for the country, and Tivadar took up residence in a secret room in an apartment building that, in happier days, he had owned.

Tivadar describes the months before the arrival of the liberating but ill-disciplined Russians, when gangs of Fascist thugs roamed Budapest, Russian planes strafed the streets, and the retreating Nazis organized death marches to herd the remaining Jews toward the Austrian border. While estimates vary, by the end of the war, well over half a million Hungarian Jews had lost their lives. Perhaps 130,000 Jews, the Soros family among them, survived.

Before writing his memoir of the Nazi occupation, Tivadar Soros had long been literate in Esperanto, an international language created in the late 19th century and spoken today by a million or more enthusiasts. His interest began when he was an officer in the Austro-Hungarian army during World War I.

Captured by the Russians, Tivadar escaped from prison camp and trekked through the Siberian mountains, making his way to Moscow in the chaotic aftermath of the Russian Revolution. Here, he helped to establish the Soviet Esperanto Union. He later returned to Budapest, where he and two friends launched an Esperanto literary magazine and he published a memoir of World War I in Esperanto. After the end of World War II, Tivadar and George attended the 1947 World Esperanto Congress in Switzerland as part of the Hungarian delegation.

Tivadar fled Budapest in 1956, at the time of the failed Hungarian Revolution against the Communists, and emigrated to the United States. In 1965 he published an account of his World War II experiences through a small Spanish publishing house specializing in books in Esperanto. Long out of print, the book was translated into English by Tonkin at the urging of the Soros family, particularly Flora Fraser, Paul Soros’s daughter-in-law. She is a noted historian whose account of the life of Queen Caroline, George IV’s notorious consort, was published in 1996. Tonkin, a linguistics scholar, knows Esperanto well and has published extensively on its history and background.

George’s financial acumen may be traced in part to the ingenuity and risk-taking of his courageous father. His current interest in building democratic institutions in Central and Eastern Europe also has its beginnings in the idealism of Tivadar, who dreamed of a better world in which people would understand one another, perhaps through Esperanto. Tivadar’s hope that people would learn to work together for freedom and dignity remained with him until the day he died, despite the agonies of two world wars and the horrors of the Holocaust.

Raymond Carver Calls, UH Answers
Call If You Need Me: The Uncollected Fiction and Prose
Raymond Carver
Edited by William L. Stull
Foreword by Tess Gallagher
Vintage Books
by Michelle Godin ’00

More than a decade after the death of the writer Raymond Carver (Hon. ’88), UH Professor of English William L. Stull has published Call If You Need Me: The Uncollected Fiction and Prose, a book that presents five newly discovered stories by the American short-story master. In her introduction to the posthumous collection, Carver’s widow, the writer Tess Gallagher, calls these stories “the last of the last”—rewards for readers around the world who have waited to hear Carver’s quietly resonant voice speak again.

The author of such widely anthologized stories as “Cathedral,” “Neighbors,” and “What We Talk about When We Talk about Love,” Carver was at the peak of his powers when he lost his battle with lung cancer at the age of 50 in 1988. His writings have been translated into 20 languages and are celebrated around the world for their ability to suggest that something momentous lies beneath the surface of ordinary American lives. Carver, who struggled for years against poverty, obscurity, and alcoholism, used his own blue-collar experiences as the basis of his work. Not surprisingly, the characters in the new stories face harsh truths about love, loss, and starting over.

“These are stories he was writing in the mid-1980s, when he was at the absolute peak of his power.”

—Jay Woodruff

A longtime Carver scholar who has previously edited half a dozen books by or about “Ray,” Stull did not merely prepare the texts for publication. Working alongside his wife and research partner, Maureen P. Carroll, an attorney and adjunct professor of humanities in UH’s All-University Curriculum, he discovered two of the five new stories while studying Carver’s papers in the William Charvat Collection of American Fiction at Ohio State University.

“Like archaeologists, literary scholars dream of unearthing something new,” Stull said, “something that will increase the body of an author’s work.” This is particularly the case with Carver, whose high reputation and wide influence rest on a relatively limited number of publications. An ample sampling of his best-known stories—“Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?” (1976), “What We Talk about When We Talk about Love” (1981), and “Cathedral” (1983)—fits comfortably in a single volume, Where I’m Calling From: New and Selected Stories (1988). “When we found the first story, ’Call If You Need Me,’ we were thrilled, but we managed to behave ourselves,” Stull recalled. “When we found the second, ’What Would You Like to See?’ we had to leave the reading room so we could let out whoops of joy.”

That was in the summer of 1999, shortly after Tess Gallagher and Jay Woodruff, then a senior editor at Esquire magazine, had discovered three other unpublished stories—“Kindling,” “Vandals,” and “Dreams”—in Carver’s wooden desk in Port Angeles, Washington. “These aren’t stories he wrote when he was 20 and put aside,” Woodruff said. “These are stories he was writing in the mid-1980s, when he was at the absolute peak of his power.”

Critics have agreed. After it appeared in Granta magazine, “Call If You Need Me” was selected for Best American Short Stories 2000. “Kindling,” which appeared in Esquire, was included in Prize Stories 2000: The O. Henry Awards. “To have two stories chosen for the annual ‘bests’ in one year is exceptional,” Stull said. “Fame came late to Ray, and death came much too early. For anyone who loves his fiction, reading these last stories is going to be a happy-sad event.”

continued on page 32