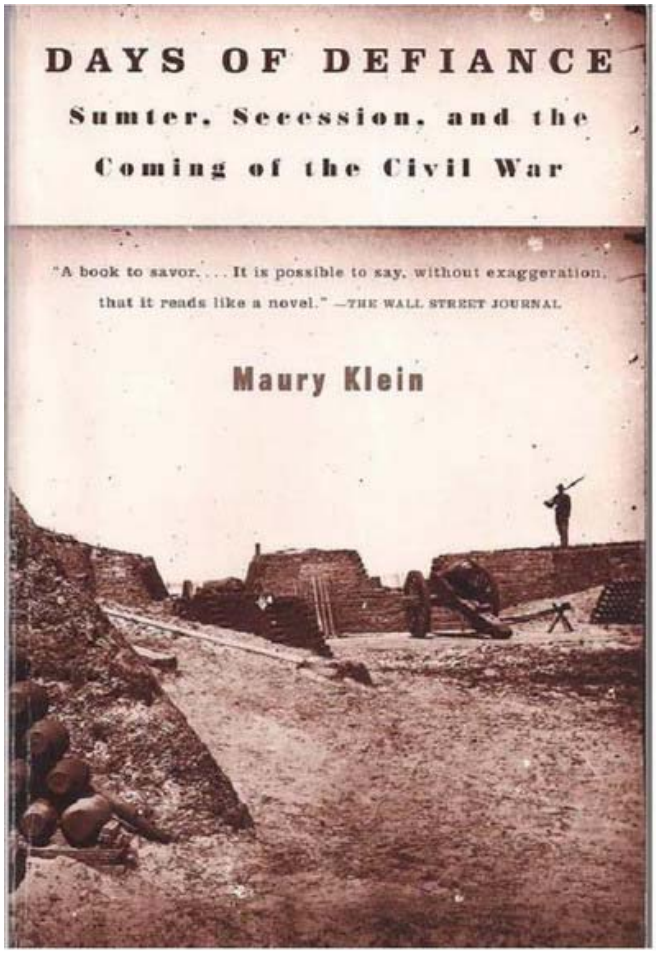
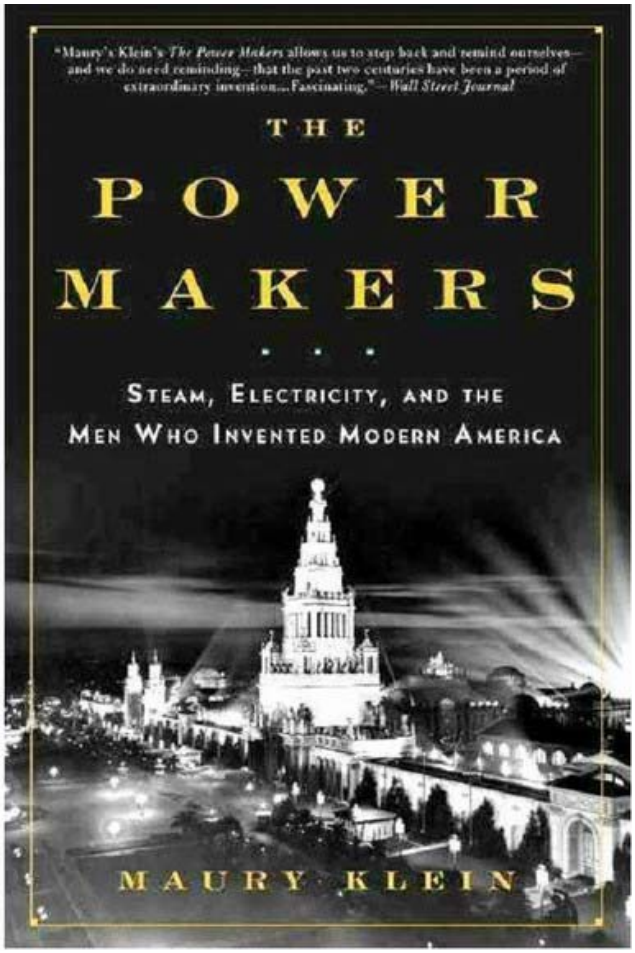
Author Profile 2010:
MAURY KLEIN (Saunderstown RI)

WHY THIS Q&A: Author of 16 books by year's end, Klein is both a social and business historian. From 1964 until recently, he taught U.S. history at the University of Rhode Island. I sought him out because his *Days of Defiance* is a masterpiece of a book, and because he exemplifies the values of ExactingEditor.com: Organize your book's research and "production" almost like a factory floor; tell the whole story, and convey the action from different views; emphasize individuals rather than theories or templates -- and set aside some popular misconceptions along the way. Klein's Literary Representative is Marian Young (of the Young Agency) in New York City -- write mbsy@mindspring.com or phone 212-229-2612. Further introduction takes place in the box below these two book covers...





BOOKS DISCUSSED in this web Q&A: ***Days of Defiance: Sumter, Secession, and the Coming of the Civil War*** (1998); and ***The Power Makers: Steam, Electricity, and the Men Who Invented Modern America*** (2008). To survey the most up-to-date Klein list, including articles, please see http://members.cox.net/mauryk/publications.html

AS A BUSINESS BIOGRAPHER -- from "The Robber Barons' Bum Rap," an article by Klein in 1995 -- http://www.city-journal.org/html/5_1_a2.html:

"Jay Gould [engaged in] swashbuckling market manipulations and titanic battles for corporate control [that] earned him the reputation as the most hated man in America..." But his "positive achievement was as full as it was complex. No one developed more of the American West than Gould did through his investments in railroads, mines, real estate, timber, and other industries... All his life he remained an outsider to the establishment, forging his independent way backed by a corps of trusted followers, whom he led in a soft-spoken, self-deprecating style... His forte was developing not only railroads but also the regions through which they ran. Unlike many men of wealth, he put none of his money into safe investments like government bonds but instead committed it to the development of mines, stockyards, industries, timberland, and other sources of freight traffic along the roads he controlled."

BOOK SET FOR RELEASE in 2010: ***Union Pacific: The Reconfiguration***

IN LINE AFTER THAT: ***Call to Arms: How America Mobilized for World War II***

DISPLAY NOTES: Blue "ink" indicates the questions that were e-mailed in advance. Everything else except the subheads and informational inserts came from the two tapes, followed by the usual tightening-up. Only the questions that center on *Days of Defiance* were e-mailed in advance. That book recreates the savagely improvised and heartbreaking weeks between the 1860 election and the rebel seizure of Fort Sumter from federal authorities. And this web Q&A is divided into these seven segments, not counting a long introduction...

FRANK GREGORSKY: At the start of Chapter Two, you ask: "What makes a nation? What are the bonds that unite a people with one another and separate them from others?" You cite factors historians can more or less agree on: "Common descent, language, territory, political entity, customs, tradition, and religion. By these standards Americans" -- as of the 1850s -- "seemed a homogenous people." Yet there soon came a Civil War that led to 620,000 dead. Slavery and racial theorizing blended with different economic systems to outweigh all of the unifying forces you list. How do you relate that question from *Days of Defiance* -- about what makes a nation -- to the lifetime riddle and inquiry on MauryKlein.com: "What makes an American?" Aren't they macro and micro versions of the same inquiry?

MAURY KLEIN: It's a really tough question, particularly these days when the culture is so divided, and so polarized. But -- it has always been polarized.

GREGORSKY: Late '60s [polarity] was incredible.

KLEIN: And that was not a fun time to be teaching. But it's been polarized since the Loyalists and the Tories. And I think the reason for that is because it's so diverse a culture. And when you have a culture that diverse -- in a country this big, with so many different interests -- it's very hard to find what is the core that holds us all together.

GREGORSKY: "Diversity" is not a unifying message?

KLEIN: No [mild laughter]. No, it's a strength in some ways -- but it's not a unifying strength.

Our national myth is that it's democracy and the love of freedom and all of those things that hold us together. Well, yes and no -- because that same philosophy tears you apart. You know, if we're all "free," then we should be able to do what we damn well please, which is part of what motivated the South [to quit the union].

When you get to the 20th century, with the culture becoming even more diverse because of the huge influx of 30 million-plus immigrants during 1880-1920, what's holding the culture together? The answer, starting in the 1920s, is the consumer economy and the consumer culture. With the rise of a national media, we all see the same movies, listen to the same radio shows, [after World War Two] watch the same TV shows, read the same magazines, etc.

Doesn't mean we react the same way, but -- that's the core.

GREGORSKY: Consumer goods and media -- at least "behaviorally," we appear to have those in common as reference points.

KLEIN: Right. Whether that's a strong glue for a nation, I don't know. This business of what an American is -- and what a nation is -- is a never-ending story. The one difference that I hope was made clear [in *Days of Defiance*] was the difference between the Republic that was before the war and the Nation that was after the war -- and that fundamental difference was a strong national government, as opposed to a Republic which is dominated by local government and (at most) by state government. You can't really have a strong nation without a strong national government.

GREGORSKY: Although some people would say that, after the Civil War and right up to the time of Teddy Roosevelt, we really didn't have a strong national government -- [instead] it was government of, by and for the corporations.

KLEIN: Ummm, yeh -- but [smiling] they don't know enough about the history of that period.

PART ONE: Early days and the 38 states

GREGORSKY: This next segment partially a carry-over from my family interviewing projects. I like to talk about where the person came from. So -- how big was your family, and what did your dad do to keep things healthy and happy?

KLEIN: Well -- my background is very unusual. I'm an only child. And my father was in ladies' ready-to-wear. He was what was called a trouble-shooter in chains of stores. Say the Des Moines store was having problems; they'd send him there; and he would take over the store for however long it took to get it going again. Then they'd send him somewhere else.

So we moved constantly, and I literally lived all over the country. My parents didn't get along very well; they separated several times, they divorced once, they remarried, they divorced again.

Bottom line: By the time I had gotten to high school, which was in Denver, I'd spent some time in 38 states. And that's where I think my interest in American history comes from -- from seeing all these different people in all these different places.

GREGORSKY: Did your dad have the same employer all this time?

KLEIN: No. He switched from one chain to another. The only reason I got 2 1/2 years in the same high school was that he finally quit, and took a job just managing a store in Denver. So, what for other people is the easiest question to answer -- "where are you from?" -- is for me the most difficult. I literally cannot reconstruct my childhood -- I've tried, and I've had help trying it. I can only put together about 40 to 45% of when I was where. But if you say "where'd you go to third grade," I can't tell you.

GREGORSKY: [Pause] My standard question is "what kind of a kid were you," but given all of that, the better question is "what kind of a kid did this make you?"

KLEIN: [Laughter] A pretty neurotic kid, I think. Pretty much a loner.

But I ended up at a really good high school in Denver and developed a whole set of interests. For me, life sort of "began" then. Before that, I was basically a "lost" kid. Not that I got into trouble; I was pretty good in school, when I was in school. But our home didn't have books or any kind of cultural stuff. All these things I had to pick up myself. So I got interested in sports, and got interested in chess -- I actually played tournament chess for a while.

GREGORSKY: Did that help you understand strategy?

KLEIN: Yeah. And it helped me understand logic. When you move as much as I did, you have this incredible craving for order. Chess is nothing if not order. I was also interested in the arts. Couldn't play a musical instrument -- but writing was something you could do, so I started doing that.

GREGORSKY: Took a class? Just began a diary?

KLEIN: No. I just started writing stories. I worked on the school newspaper -- sports reporting and also wrote a column for the sports section. I did take creative writing in college, but by that time I was already doing stuff.

GREGORSKY: Maybe it's Bell I. Wiley, who is referred to in one of the prefaces, but -- can you name an academic advisor, or some other "mentor" type, whose influence was decisive? That person caused some kind of pivot or breakout.

KLEIN: Wiley was certainly one of 'em, and another fellow at Emory -- James Harvey Young, who's done a couple of very good books on the history of patent medicines. But I'd have to name somebody from college: John Stipp -- the chairman of the History Department at Knox, where I went to college. He got me to understand what you could do with history, and why it was important, and what it meant to take work seriously.

Stipp was a bit of a martinet -- something of a Prussian; a small, well-put-together man. He wore his overcoat around his shoulders and walked with that kind of distracted air -- you almost expected a cigarette in a holder. He would come into class, and take out a pocket watch. He would take the chain of it and make it into a little base, set the watch down on this makeshift base, start lecturing; and if he'd broken off in mid-sentence the last class, he would pick up in that mid-sentence in this class -- just like that. Once I overcame my fear and trembling, he was also someone you could talk to when you had a problem.

GREGORSKY: So this was in your four-year program, not in grad school.

KLEIN: Right.

GREGORSKY: Had you committed to History as a major?

KLEIN: Well -- I can't remember exactly when I made the decision. You have to understand I was totally naive about how you make a living. I wanted to be a writer, but -- how do you make a living being a writer? I didn't have circles of friends, a network, contacts. And, if I had to major in something, probably I would end up teaching -- because I had to make a living somehow. And, if I taught, I could also write. “Okay, if I'm gonna teach, what do I want to teach?” The answer became very clear: If you teach history, you can pretty much teach any damn thing you want -- in a History class.

GREGORSKY: Sort of like a vast cafeteria? You can compose your ideal meal -- and change it next time.

KLEIN: Exactly, exactly.

GREGORSKY: What years were you at Emory?

KLEIN: From the fall of 1960 to the spring of '64 -- and I started at the University of Rhode Island in the fall of '64.

GREGORSKY: For years I've heard college professors I liked complain about "publish or perish." But that was fine with you!

KLEIN: Yeah! [Laughter] Let me put it this way. You start at this school, you go to that school, you get to a more prestigious school -- the object is to climb the academic ladder.

But I wasn't interested in that. What I liked about coming to URI [the University of Rhode Island] was the two places I'd never lived in as a kid were the Pacific Northwest and New England, so here was my chance for New England. And when I came up here, the object was to create the ideal work circumstances. From that point on, I always made the distinction between my job, which was teaching, and my work, which was writing. And when I retired after 44 years at URI, I said I had to “leave my job so I could do my work.” They thought I was joking, but I wasn't.

PART TWO: *Days of Defiance* and “not a single bad letter”

GREGORSKY (from the e-mail): On page 90 of the paperback [you write] about how John Calhoun's death at the age of 77 opened up the South Carolina political establishment...

"While [younger South Carolina politicians] battled for prominence, Charleston was changing in ways few of them noticed. Disgruntled planters were taking or selling large numbers of slaves to plantations opening in the Southwest. In their place came a motley assortment of sailors, vagrants, and immigrants seeking work. During the 1850s the black population shrank from 53% to 42%. By 1860 the working class of the city was 40% white, of whom 60% was foreign born. Some people were shocked to find whites, most of them Irish or German, acting as servants. The city's population had shrunk 6% since 1850 and developed a mix where class divisions glared as boldly as racial ones. Crime was on the upswing, and the poorhouse population doubled between 1850 and 1856. In the summer of 1860 the city compounded its woes by turning savagely on its 3,237 free blacks, many of whom earned decent livings and 122 of whom themselves owned slaves. The police launched a door-to-door inventory, demanding proof of freedom. Those unable to provide it were resold into slavery; many fled the city."

Blacks leaving to go elsewhere, and new people with funny accents coming in -- we don't think of 1850s Charleston like that at all.

KLEIN: No, you don't -- no, you don't. But remember that most of the blacks who are leaving are not leaving voluntarily. Most of the Eastern Seaboard has been farmed out, and the really good plantations are opening up in Mississippi and Alabama. So a lot of these relocations are slaves that have either been sold or are transferred by owners. But you always live with an image of what your life and your society is about -- and you're not usually aware of all the undercurrents -- until they hit you in the face.

Slaves owning slaves -- how many second-graders get that part of a story that has been simplified to bits by political correctness and ideology? Your footnotes list three different sources for the above information. A book by John Edmunds titled *Francis W. Pickens and the Politics of Destruction* (1986), Walter Fraser's *Charleston! Charleston!* (1989), and William H. Russell's *My Diary North and South* -- that's William Howard Russell, a Brit and one of the first war correspondents, writing in 1863. Take us through that single paragraph -- or at least use it as an example. It's unfair to zero in on one paragraph, but does a paragraph of that "type" sometimes take a whole day to build and get right?

KLEIN: Well, a whole day is underestimating. At least in the way I do research, I don't know what I will find. Some writers already know what they're gonna say and how they're gonna say it -- I'm not one of them. (I think you'll see that when we go downstairs.) I'm fishing around, knowing I will do a chapter, in this case "The Tale of Three Cities." I like that concept a lot. [Gregorsky's note: The cities are Charleston; Springfield, Illinois; and Washington, D.C. -- see pages 86 to 104 of *Days of Defiance*.] And so I need to find out what Charleston is about, and in what ways the cities compare and contrast. I don't have a preconception of this -- some ideas, yes, but they are all subject to change.

So I start prowling around in the sources, and then suddenly things start to connect. My favorite sentence in that entire chapter is where I compare Boston and Charleston: "A gentleman in Boston thought it was worthwhile to know everything, whereas one in Charleston thought it was only necessary to know anything worthwhile."

GREGORSKY: [Appreciative laughter]

KLEIN: And that hits it -- that's the <u>difference</u> between 'em.

The Preface to *Defiance* says: "This book attempts to tell the story through their eyes, as they saw it at the time... It seeks to show what America was in 1860 and what it was becoming, and why certain forces drove her people into deadly and unavoidable conflict..." The book carried out that job-

description extremely well. What kind of reaction -- from serious students, especially authors, of southern culture, history and politics -- did you get to *Days of Defiance*? How would you describe what you meant to do with that book, and how did it work among readers who, like my hyper-romantic friend Don Morrissey, still find honor and valor among the forces of the Confederate Grey?

KLEIN: Never got a single bad letter; and I received a number of nice letters.

But I really didn't know how my colleagues had reacted, in other places, because I don't go to [academic] conferences. But [in 2007] there was a symposium in Lancaster on James Buchanan, and I was asked to do a paper, as were quite a few other Civil War historians. So it was my first chance to talk to a lot of them. They all just heaped praise on it, which made me feel terrific.

PART THREE: The Panic of 1857, William Henry Seward

The main criticism I get of my work is "you don't tell us the answers." *What does all this mean, what does it all add up to?* That's particularly true in *Rainbow's End*. Readers want to know what caused the 1929 Crash. What caused the Depression? I tick off an array of factors -- and it's not satisfying to them. "Sorry, but -- that's it. We've been digging into this for 50-60 years, and we still don't know the answer to your question. I'm not going to pull it out of a hat."

GREGORSKY: Go back to *Days of Defiance*. I was hoping you'd say more about the Panic of 1857, and how that was one more factor knocking the stuffings out of James Buchanan's whole situation.

KLEIN: Well -- you'd think I would, given that I'm a business historian. Several reasons. One, I think the political and social factors are more important -- in this case; not in general when you study political turbulence in America but they are in this case. Two, what began in 1857 really didn't last that long. It was more like 1907 -- not as severe, but like that.

GREGORSKY: A classic financial panic as opposed to a multi-year Depression?

KLEIN: And it was turned to political use immediately -- because it affected primarily industrial entities and banking. Didn't affect the South much. So the South looked at the Panic of 1857 and said: *See how superior our system is?*

GREGORSKY: Was there an economic recovery under way by '59?

KLEIN: By '58, actually. Not a big one, but -- yes.

GREGORSKY: And other than prices for corn and wheat, what kind of stats do we have for back during that time in terms of what came to be called GDP.

KLEIN: Well, what's the biggest, most important commodity in the [1850s] economy?

GREGORSKY: I don't know.

KLEIN: Cotton.

GREGORSKY: Okay.

KLEIN: Not just because of the South, but because of northern mills. And if you look at the statistics on that -- and I've got a book downstairs that can show you -- you'll see how crucial cotton was to the whole economy. Cotton may have been "king" in the South, but it was also pretty damn important in the Northeast.

At the same time, you've got a shift developing in the traditional flow of trade. It used to come down the Mississippi River. Now it's starting to move from west to east because the rail system goes all the way out to the Mississippi River -- and that historic shift in trade is playing havoc as well. The opening up of the West is increasing the yield of things like wheat and corn, and beef.

So what you have is the potential for an expansionist economy, and what's holding it in place -- what's keeping it from really realizing its potential -- is the whole damn political squabble over everything: Over a Banking Act, over a Homestead Act -- go down the list -- over a transcontinental railroad. Everybody agrees we should have one, but where? In the middle? In the South? In the North? That's why, when Jefferson Davis was Secretary of War, they surveyed five different routes, all the way from the far north to the far south. It was such political dynamite.

GREGORSKY: Why couldn't they build two?

KLEIN: Because it was an incredible job just building one. That's the greatest construction project of the age. And I have a book on that, too [laughter].

ONE MORE from the E-MAIL: William Henry Seward [was] one of our greatest Secretaries of State. By buying Alaska from the Russians for two cents an acre, he did more to tackle the energy crisis of our own lifetimes than any 20th-century politician. Even better: What would the Cold War have been like with the USSR's easternmost tip just a two-day drive from Seattle?!? You have a marvelous but too brief sketch of Seward on pages 224-227 of the paperback version of *Defiance*. "Those who love him hesitated to trust him; those who trusted him found him difficult to love" is one good line. Also: "In public debate or private talk he was tolerant and good-natured" and "no hint of personal scandal or corruption ever stained his career." He was often vulgar, you point out (e.g., no stuffed shirt like Charles Sumner), yet not a hater. "He knew everyone, knew the game as well or better than anyone, and even had a mole in Buchanan's official family in the person of Edwin Stanton..." If Bill Seward materialized right here, what would you really want to know about him, and from him? In your mind, what are the tantalizing gaps in the Seward Saga?

KLEIN: That's a tough question. Good, but tough.

First of all, you'd be asking a guy who, as a practiced diplomat, has already got the story worked out in his head -- and you won't get through that veneer to find anything else. But what the "gaps" in Seward's story are, I think, are trying to put together his public persona -- his entertaining persona, his social facade -- and his private life. Because he has -- in common with Lincoln, in a totally different style -- an ability to keep you from seeing who he really is.

GREGORSKY: While disarming you and making you feel comfortable.

KLEIN: Absolutely. And being very much his own man. Seward doesn't care how he dresses, doesn't care how he looks. He's a fascinating character; I share your interest in him.

GREGORSKY: Any good biographies?

KLEIN: That's a funny thing. The only recent one [is] by John Taylor and I cannot remember how good it was, which tells me it probably wasn't all that terrific. Probably the best biography is still the 1960s one by van Deusen -- it's certainly the fullest one. Very good historian; he has done a lot of nice works. [*William Henry Seward* by Glyndon G. Van Deusen -- Oxford University Press, 666 pages (January 1967) ISBN-10: 0195006399 and ISBN-13: 978-0195006391.]

GREGORSKY: Has history been "fair" to Bill Seward?

KLEIN: I think so. Because he has such a full role in the whole crisis -- not just the war, but the decade leading up to the war -- he's gotten a lot of attention. The problem has been that, to most writers, Seward is a good supporting actor, but they rarely see him as the main character.

PART FOUR: Steam, electricity, and powering the modern U.S.

GREGORSKY: Did you write *The Power Makers* because you couldn't find an authoritative account on the revolutionary rise of the electric power industry?

KLEIN: Partly -- but you want to know why I really wrote it? Because, all my life, electricity has fascinated and baffled me. I never understood it. It seemed like something magical. And I wanted to understand it more. So I figured if I write a book about it, I'll have to figure out what the hell it is.

GREGORSKY: Um-hmm.

KLEIN: I convinced a publisher that this would be a good book to have -- and I was surprised to find that nobody had ever written the history of the steam and electric revolutions. And that's important -- you don't have electricity without steam! Because that's where its power comes from.

GREGORSKY: Um-hmm.

KLEIN: I'm not an engineer -- obviously. I still don't really [pause] -- it's sort of magical to me, how electricity works. But now I think I understand what it's about, and why it's so damn important.

And I loved -- absolutely loved -- being able to track those two separate things. The guys who were working out -- just sort of tinkering; they don't know anything about theory; they have no scientific background -- and the so-called intellectuals who are trying to figure out what is this stuff? What are these things -- as they tried to come up with a theory of what it is.

And [these two groups] don't really meet until the middle of the 19th century. It's just wonderful how these people did as much as they did, knowing as little as they knew. To me, history is about people.

GREGORSKY: Um-hmm [affirmingly].

KELIN: And when you tell a story -- sure, you have to include the "back story" -- but it's the characters. I literally think of a book almost as a stage play: Who's on stage now, who's walking off the stage, who's walking on. The characters are what give the book interest, and how you organize them, and how you

put them in the context. The two things that to me are important in history are the context and the characters -- the players and the setting.

GREGORSKY: And so you try to avoid the bottom-line mode of saying "here's what we need to learn for today." Nothing like that?

KLEIN: No. What I try to do is say: Here it is, here's what they did, and -- what do you think of that?

GREGORSKY: Open-ended.

KLEIN: Yeah.

GREGORSKY: In terms of its sourcing, I would define *Power Makers* as "rich to the point of denseness." You got 60 pages of footnotes -- that's a moderate amount of footnotes for a book of that size when the book is a serious work of economic and business history. But the "denseness" refers to the wealth of newspaper citations, especially in that 1890-1900 period. So the question is: How much of that comes from "in the morgue," how much did you find from other business history books, and what were you able to gin up just purely on-line?

KLEIN: None of it comes from the morgue, and the only reason is: It's hard to copy. The vast majority of it is off microfilm. That's why I invested $10,000 in that machine downstairs, and I copy literally hundreds of pages [of old newspaper and magazine text] off microfilm -- well, that's not true, it's thousands of pages.

GREGORSKY: How do you get the microfilm collections?

KLEIN: I go to inter-library loan at URI and request, say, the *Chicago Sun Times* for 1893. When doing *Power Makers*, I had to have all that coverage of the World's Fair. "Get me these Philadelphia papers, the Chicago papers, etc. etc" -- and Emily is so good at this. Right now, she's getting me magazines from World War Two. We have them in hard copy at the library, but I can't really copy from that.

GREGORSKY: Because it's physically awkward to stand near a machine pumping in dimes?

KLEIN: Well, we use a card now, but -- it's physically awkward, it's tiring. And when you're working in volume, it's not practical. Plus -- I can only go to the library when it's open. I do most of this [business history research] late at night.

GREGORSKY: Right, exactly.

KLEIN: Now, as for on line? An interesting thing is happening. A number of sources are starting to put their primary materials on line. For *The Power Makers* -- and I was overjoyed to find this out -- the Edison papers are almost -- a vast part of them -- are now on line. The documents themselves -- so you can go there as if you were at the New Jersey archives. And if you look closely at the notes in *The Power Makers*, you'll find some references to that. I never went to New Jersey; and the guy down there, Dick Israel, is a friend of mine. But I never had to go there to access the Edison documents.

GREGORSKY: This is a quirky question, but -- does "insulation" come from Samuel Insull? The term of "insulation" relating to electric wires --

KLEIN: No, I don't think so. It was around before him. Incidentally, while we're on the subject of him, Sam Insull is a good example of one of the things I try to do, and you can see it most obviously in my biography of Jay Gould. When I found somebody that I think history has just missed the boat on, I try to set the record straight on him, and I think Insull is one of those guys.

GREGORSKY: And this book also has people like Charles A. Coffin. What a great run! Thirty years shaping the young General Electric --

KLEIN: And nobody knows about him! Yeah, he's a fascinating guy.

GREGORSKY: And this quote, recollected by a later GE Chairman: "Every one has had mornings when he hates to hear the telephone ring, or see the office door open. I beg of you, gentlemen, when next you meet such a morning, take a stick of dynamite and blow up one of our plants. But do not take it out on a customer of the General Electric. We can replace the plant you have destroyed; we know its value; we have a reserve from which we can rebuild. But we cannot measure the good-will you have destroyed, and we can never know if we have replaced it."

Another question [speaking of goodwill]: Have you gotten any feedback from anyone at GE, formally or informally, on the great service you've done for their history?

KLEIN: No, actually I haven't. What I do get is quite a number of e-mails from engineers and others who thoroughly enjoyed the book. And that to me is important, because I'm working in a field where I don't know the technology. I did have an electrical engineer read the theoretical chapter -- "In Search of the Mysterious Ether" -- and he said it was "okay." But -- you know, to have the engineer say that I haven't screwed something up badly --

GREGORSKY: Right.

KLEIN -- that's good.

GREGORSKY: In terms of research and verification, can you tell me a complete story of a situation you were determined to understand and explain, for *The Power Makers*, that turned out to be mysterious, and finally exasperating, even though you pursued it and did explain it?

KLEIN: Ohhhh, there are lots of those [laughter] -- but the one that drove me the craziest was the ether. Trying to figure out what it used to be, how it was conceived, when attitudes towards it changed -- and what exactly people thought it was. This mysterious ether that was the explanation for what electricity was.

GREGORSKY: All the way back to Sir Isaac Newton, where he presumed it and later got past it --

KLEIN: All the way back to the Greeks, practically -- of course they didn't call it that. But yeah, just trying to pin down some of those kinds of things --

GREGORSKY: You might say it was an ethereal obsession? [laughter]

KLEIN: It was an ethereal obsession -- exactly [laughter]. Whenever I would find a quote where they seemed to be getting specific -- it was just heaven [laughter], because at least I had something to put a stake into. But that's probably as good an example as any of what you're asking about.

PART FIVE: The durability of Chandler and Cochran

GREGORSKY: Peter Drucker happens to be my hero in terms of business history [and] management. I've read all his books and published a long essay that inferred how he worked week to week. Drucker used to write in glowing terms about Alfred Chandler. I am ignorant about Chandler's contribution to understanding U.S. economic history. So, for serious readers like me, what can you say about seeking out Chandler?

KLEIN: First and foremost, above all else, you should read the bible of modern business history, which is his *The Visible Hand* -- I'll give you some other titles, but that's the seminal work.

GREGORSKY: Didn't he write a book called *Structure and Strategy*, around 1950?

KLEIN: Yes. That one is a series of case studies. And then he wrote a sort of sequel, for international business, called *Scale and Scope*.

GREGORSKY: That's a great title. All three of those are great titles.

KLEIN: I knew Al pretty well. He was the next generation back and I adored him. But he was also an easy guy to deal with -- a marvelous guy and just soooo bright. In terms of my own approach to business history, you'd probably have to call me a "Chandlerian." And if you read *Visible Hand*, you'll see he praises my early railroad work; he used it a lot.

GREGORSKY: And he didn't want to go the Drucker route of being a consultant to Fortune 500 companies?

KLEIN. Nahhh. Well -- he did a little of that. But he came from well-connected roots; his middle name was Du Pont. Didn't he edit the Eisenhower Papers? -- something to that effect. He did some interesting things before starting to churn out his seminal work in business history.

GREGORSKY: But was Chandler an academic by trade?

KLEIN: Yes, he was at Johns Hopkins, and the whole generation of business historians who are my age -- almost all of them were Chandler students. And then he went from there to the Strauss professorship at the Harvard Business School.

GREGORSKY: But -- I've been reading business magazines since the mid-'80s. You didn't see Chandler turn up in *Forbes, Fortune* and *Business Week*. He didn't seek out the "popular" business media, did he?

KLEIN: No. Wasn't interested in that. But I can tell a lot of the people who wrote there knew Chandler's work. And if you're at all in academic circles, you will find constant references to him. There were those who kept saying "beyond Chandler" -- but not a lot of people have gotten beyond Chandler yet [chuckling].

GREGORSKY: Was he also a good writer, just in prose style?

KLEIN: Not a great writer, but a decent one. You can understand his writing. And he makes some mistakes, because he's working on such a scale -- he's a conceptualizer, basically. A really good conceptualizer. His stuff is easy to read -- not lightly but easy to read.

> ***Strategy and Structure: Chapters in the History of the Industrial Enterprise*** *by Alfred D. Chandler Jr. (MIT Press, 1962 -- ISBN 0262530090)*
>
> ***The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business***
> by Alfred D. Chandler Jr. (the January 1993 paperback -- ISBN-13 9780674940529)

GREGORSKY: Any other recently deceased -- or people not too far past their prime -- business historians you want to call attention to?

KLEIN: [Pause] The two "bookends" of business history were Chandler, recently deceased, and Thomas Cochran, who was at Pennsylvania.

GREGORSKY: I'm ashamed to say that's a completely new name.

KLEIN: It shouldn't be. He's very influential. And most of the business historians who weren't Chandler students were Cochran students -- and I don't know if Cochran is still alive. He'd be in his nineties. He would probably be the only "luminary." And when you get to the generation beyond them? There's not one name that sticks out the way they do. There are a lot of them that I like; a lot of them are in fact friends of mine. But he's the guy -- of those two, there's nobody in their league.

> << **Thomas Childs Cochran** (April 29, 1902 -- May 2, 1999) was an American economic historian and a pioneer in that field. Born in Manhattan, he received his bachelor's and master's degrees from New York University before obtaining his doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania. He taught at N.Y.U. for almost twenty-five years before joining the University of Pennsylvania in 1950, where he became Benjamin Franklin Professor of History, a position from which he retired in 1972. He was also president of the American Historical Association in that year. In the mid-20th century, Cochran was one of the most significant economic historians of the United States, producing *The Age of Enterprise* (1961), an important work on the history of American capitalism... He opened up new methodological approaches and areas of research in the field of economic history. >>
>
> SOURCE (with the version above from November 2009) --
> http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_C._Cochran_(historian)

PART SIX: The Klein book we can expect in 2010 or 2011

GREGORSKY: All right, let's move to the next big manuscript endeavor. Your website talks about America's pre-Pearl Harbor mobilization as "greater than anything attempted in all of the world's history." Expected, at least by some, was "a unique two-front war that spanned two oceans as well as three continents." The shorthand version we got in high school was that this was "a miracle of production" -- so many ships and planes per month, rolling off the lines, and finally ending the severe 1930s slump, etc.

But this next book, as I understand it, will drill down into the bureaucratic dirt, the nuts and bolts, the near-misses, the social dynamics, all the while reporting on "the valiant efforts of so many people from all walks of life" -- and the website says you already have a publisher. So this project is past the concept stage?

KLEIN: I've got the proposals done, and a structural outline. I'm now reading the stuff to see what I want to say -- and what needs to be said will depend on what's in all that stuff.

GREGORSKY: When I hear "mobilization," I think of FDR's 1937 "quarantine the aggressor" speech, which caused all political hell to break loose -- after which he felt he had to be much more subtle, crafty, about our military buildup. For starters, can you kind of recap the first six or eight years of Franklin Roosevelt's government?

KLEIN: Let me tailor the story a little bit. The Hundred Days gets the New Deal going [in 1933]. It stalls out by 1935 because the Supreme Court shoots down, that year and next, the New Deal's two key provisions -- the AAA and the NRA -- even as people are trying to push Roosevelt farther to the left. He had come in as the broker of all interests, trying to please everybody. After he starts choosing, more of the threats to him are on the left -- especially in the form of Huey Long and Francis Townsend.

GREGORSKY: Townsend almost gets elected Governor of California in 1934.

KLEIN: Yeah! But more important, he's the one who unleashes senior citizens as a political force -- with the Townsend Clubs. So, in 1935, [Roosevelt and his people respond with] the second New Deal -- Social Security, the Wagner Act, and another flurry of bills in a pretty tight timeframe. And that's what gets him the landslide in November 1936.

GREGORSKY: Alf Landon carries just two states; FDR gets the other 46.

KLEIN: As Maine goes, so goes Vermont [laughter]. But second terms that begin with landslides tend to be disasters. And Roosevelt makes a number of bad decisions (and he knew it, by the way). He tries to pack the Court. Labor starts to assert its muscle under the Wagner Act, they expect him to take their side, and he gets caught in the middle of this, including the big fight with Mineworkers president John L. Lewis. And that's pretty much when the Administration decides that they have to spend their way out of the Depression. Up to that point, Roosevelt really wasn't too keen on deficit spending.

GREGORSKY: Unemployment had dropped from 25% to around 14% during the first FDR term, but by 1938 it is back up to 19%.

KLEIN: Which literally knocks the slats out from under the New Deal.

GREGORSKY: Wasn't the first minimum wage instituted in 1938?

KLEIN: That's the Fair Labor Standards Act -- minimum wage, maximum hours -- but it's a very weak Act. It basically excludes most of the people who need it most. In other words, it includes mostly those who are already making above that [minimum] and working below that [maximum].

GREGORSKY: Interesting. The liberal historians never tell you that part.

KLEIN: No. But the 1938 law is still important. It's the precedent; it's the camel's nose under the tent. Just like Social Security. Those historians also don't tell you that Social Security was the most conservative possible form you could have passed. Nobody got a dime until, I think, '39 -- until they built up the Fund.

GREGORSKY: It was "revenue-positive" for the first four years! As for the 1938 House and Senate elections -- they were catastrophic for FDR's party. The Republicans picked up something like 80 seats. First strong showing [for the GOP] in 10 years.

KLEIN: The important thing about this period is that he's a lame duck, and so he has no political future. Congress has created that coalition of Republicans and southern Democrats. And the government is deadlocked at the worst possible time in American history, given the situation in Europe. In my reading of the magazines even into 1940, it's hard to believe the amount of stuff that's still current. "We don't want to get involved in all of this crap."

GREGORSKY: You mean Charles Lindbergh and those monster "America First" rallies at Madison Square Garden?

KLEIN: Not so much that. I mean thinking people who still haven't quite gotten over World War One and how we got burned. "It's all Europe's fault that we jumped in."

GREGORSKY: So, beyond [Senator] Norris and the other midwestern populists of both parties -- you're talking about intellectuals, too?

KLEIN: Some intellectuals, but also editors, and other people who ought to understand what a threat Hitler and Company are.

Then there's another whole corps -- and here's the group that really interests me -- that is saying: *We're not preparing. Does nobody see the danger we're in?* There's a genuine fear on the part of this group not just that we might somehow get drawn into a war, but that we might get <u>invaded</u> -- because Germany has new types of weapons. In three or four years, Germany has built the military engine of Europe. When they overrun most of Europe, it's an eye-opener and a half.

GREGORSKY: Does the word "preparedness" exist during 1938-39?

KLEIN: It does. It's not used in the same way we use it, but it has the same meaning. They don't necessarily use it as a noun, but they're talking about the work of preparedness all the time. "We have to prepare. We have to arm."

GREGORSKY: And you're saying some of these people are what today might be called Pat Buchananites -- they don't give a damn about Europe's fate, but they're worried about <u>our</u> <u>shores</u>. They are isolationist and hawkish at the same time?

KLEIN: Um-hmm. Um-hmm.

GREGORSKY: And <u>that's</u> why [they say] we should build up the military.

KLEIN: Absolutely.

GREGORSKY: Who spoke for <u>them</u>?

KLEIN: All kinds of interesting people. Eddie Rickenbacker: "We need 250,000 airplanes, and we need pilots -- can't use airplanes if you don't have pilots. We need to be able to defend the shores."

You know, what really made an impression on [this group] was *blitzkrieg* warfare -- the combination of tanks and dive bombers. Nobody had ever done this before! "Mechanized warfare" -- which means a country doesn't turn around on a dime and build those kinds of things.

GREGORSKY: Sure.

KLEIN: So this group is asking: "Where has everybody been? What's wrong with this President?" In other words, you got this half saying he's getting too involved, and you got this other half saying: *Why are these people sitting on their thumbs when they ought to be building up the military?*

GREGORSKY: Your discovery of these "isolationist hawks" -- was that a surprise in the research?

KLEIN: Ummm, a little bit. I knew some of that existed, and it could be skewed by the magazines. So far I'm reading *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Life, Look* and I'm on *Time* right now. There's also this sense of resources -- because, remember, we're being drawn into the war in the Atlantic. Sending stuff across --

GREGORSKY: That's Lend Lease.

KLEIN: Even before Lend Lease -- this is what you might call the lead-up. I don't know if you realize this but, in those days, our big oil refineries were in New Jersey -- Bayonne and Bayway. Standard Oil, the biggest in the country. They had one in Louisiana, but these two were their prime. Well, the oil came up the East Coast -- because a lot of it now was coming from the Gulf, and to some extent from Venezuela -- and German submarines were sinking these tankers.

GREGORSKY: When? What year?

KLEIN: We're talking 1941 -- and '42 as well, of course. Because a lot of that oil, and many of the tankers, as a matter of fact, are headed for Great Britain.

GREGORSKY: Do these have American flags, or are they private-company tankers?

KLEIN: They're private-company tankers. Almost all of 'em.

GREGORSKY: And they were being sunk by German U-boats without causing a political uproar?!?

KLEIN: Oh, it caused an uproar -- yeah. But the reaction is: "We've got to prepare for this." And one of the results is an acute shortage of oil, particularly in the Northeast. Not because it doesn't exist, but because the oil's not getting there.

GREGORSKY: But how did the isolationists -- the ones opposing rearmament -- explain away [those pre-Pearl Harbor sea attacks by Hitler's forces]?

KLEIN: I don't know that they ever did explain that away. One response was: "If we weren't involved with Great Britain, this wouldn't be happening." In other words, *we're being drawn into war*. And then you got the school that says, "Well, the President's doing this deliberately; it's all part of a big plot!"

So, in a lot of ways, it's a really ugly scene, and not just of terms of theoretically what we oughta do. But (a) "we need to prepare." Well, that means you gotta spend a lot of money -- and of course a lot of these people are against government spending a lot of money. And then (b) "what are we going to spend it

on?" Build tanks? Ships? Exactly what are we doing here? And (c) what does all this have to do with what's going on over there?

GREGORSKY: I presume you would be okay with putting FDR on the list of our five greatest Presidents?

KLEIN: Oh yeah. I used to tell my students that, if you look at what Presidents were the greatest politicians -- not the greatest Presidents, but the greatest politicians -- the two at the top of the list, almost always, would be Roosevelt and Lincoln

GREGORSKY: Okay. "Politician" being --

KLEIN: Their political skills, their sheer political ability. Persuasion, manipulation, all those sorts of things.

CONCLUSION: Weight rooms and detective work

GREGORSKY: Last question. Somebody is 30, 32, 35, and they want to devote the rest of their life to the study and writing of American history. They are somewhat disoriented by the iPod and text-messaging mania, and especially by the instant news, the psuedo news, false news and non-news --

KLEIN: Right.

GREGORSKY: -- but they do have an inclination toward your approach. If so, how would you boil it down or focus it for 'em, maybe put some steel in their backbone?

KLEIN: [Pause] I don't pay much attention to the Internet. I don't spend any time at all looking at websites and chasing stuff. I read *The Providence Journal-Bulletin* and that's as much ["news"] as I get into. I also read *Time* magazine -- just to keep up with names of things.

GREGORSKY: Well, from what I saw downstairs, you're not distracted [by current events] to begin with, but -- you make an effort to wall it out.

KLEIN: And it's a conscious effort. So -- what they need to do is very simple: Find out what period interests them the most, and just go back and read. Don't watch movies, don't watch videos -- go back and read. Systematically learn that period.

GREGORSKY: Not even movies and videos purportedly about that period.

KLEIN: Right. Do that later! Because, first of all, [that movie or video] won't make any sense until you actually know what the stuff is they're talking about. A movie is kind of a "summary" of things.

GREGORSKY: Um-hmm.

KLEIN: Secondly, it will have a lot of errors. And you won't even spot those errors. You will take falsehoods for truth -- and I don't mean intentional ones, I mean just bad research -- and not know you're running with a falsehood, if you're not already grounded.

You have two advantages with this overall approach. One, you learn that period -- and find out what you really are interested in. And two, you develop a methodology for exploring anything else.

GREGORSKY: And a "period" could be five years, or it could be 50.

KLEIN: Could be five years. Could be a topical "period" -- you know, dress: What people wore then as opposed to this era. Doesn't matter what it is.

GREGORSKY: Something to focus on.

KLEIN: Something that focuses you, and forces you to take a disciplined approach. It's no different than being an athlete. You've got to hit the weight room every day. You gotta do a lot of boring stuff every day -- as long as you understand that what you're doing is fun, because it's a great detective story.

GREGORSKY: Um-hmm.

KLEIN: You're trying to solve mysteries.

GREGORSKY: Excellent.

KLEIN: And you know, it's just as much fun at my advanced age as it was 50 years ago. It really is.

GREGORSKY: I can tell. Thank you.

KLEIN: My pleasure.

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