AIR POWER: KEY TO SURVIVAL
by Alexander P. de Seversky
Simon and Schuster, New York, $3.50, cloth; $1, paper
Reviewed by George K. Tanham, Instructor of History

Air power: key to survival might well be termed a repeat performance, with some slight modifications made by the eight years that have gone by since Seversky's previous book. The thesis is the same one he advocated in Victory Through Air Power in 1942—that "air power alone can impose surrender on an enemy."

A common misunderstanding is that by this Seversky means strategic bombing of the enemy. He does not: he means "conquest of the air," and then bombing as an incidental procedure until the enemy seeks peace. He feels that once an opponent is stripped of his air power—just as in previous times when his army was wiped out—he will seek peace.

Two factors have added strength to the already persuasive nature of this thesis. In the first place World War II demonstrated the great value of air power, especially in the final defeat of Japan. Vannevar Bush, in his Modern Arms and Free Men, admits that, without friendly control of the air, land and sea forces are practically useless. Even opponents of air power concede that without air superiority other military operations are extremely difficult, if not impossible. In a sense this is encouraging to Seversky, but he claims that by clinging to the idea of the need for land and naval forces as equal partners in war, these thinkers have weakened the concept of air power and unnecessarily divided our defense effort. Since the war will be won by planes based in the United States, there will be no need for overseas bases or the army or navy.

A second factor strengthening the theory is that in the present cold war with Russia the United States is inferior in numbers and materials, and only in a technological sense does it have a real superiority. As this seems to be the case, we must utilize our strength and wage war on our terms—not fight on Russia's terms of masses of men and material.

Since many Americans have recognized these facts, the Seversky theory becomes all the more appealing. He does not, however, foresee a twenty-four hour victory, but feels that there will be bitter and perhaps drawn-out fighting for air control. So it is no cheap or easy means of victory.

The weakness in this book seems to be the failure of the author to objectively appraise the defense. Since the offensive was dominant in the last war, he assumes that it always has been and always will be, though lessons of World War I would seem to indicate that at given periods of history the defense can be nearly impregnable.

Seversky claims that in air warfare all the instruments and methods used by the defense may be used by the bombers to combat the defensive forces. This may be true, but he fails to recognize the fact that the technique of ground installations (radar, etc.) and ground control have been and will probably remain superior to those utilized in a bomber.

Defensive aspects of battle

Two illustrations may be used to show Seversky's neglect of the defensive aspects of battle. In the first plan he states that escort planes will no longer be 'small one-seaters,' but as large as bombers and equipped with all the latest scientific devices for air combat. He fails to point out that the defensive fighter may be of the same type.

Secondly, after he has admitted that homing devices and proximity fuses may be used by the defense, he then states that the same measures may be used by the bombers to explode the missiles aimed at them by the opposing ground defense. He neglects to say that if these devices are so perfectioned they might be used by the defending air forces against enemy bombers and fighters, and even to explode dropped bombs before they reach the target.

Even though Seversky relegates bombing to a minor role, it would seem that, if the war-producing capacity of a nation was not destroyed, the ability to continue the war would still exist. Therefore bombing would seem to be essential. While denying this, he gives great space to strategic bombing. Here again he assumes that precision bombing will be infallible and completely effective, though there is considerable evidence that during World War II bombers at times not only could not locate their targets, but also were ineffective against them. Vannevar Bush even goes so far as to say that the days of mass bombings are over, not only because of improved defenses, but because of the difficulty of hitting the targets.

While Major Seversky marshals many facts, thinks clearly, and argues persuasively for his theory, it still seems a large gamble.
All in all, it's about as good a book on Los Angeles as you can find—and a natural, of course, for Christmas.

**BLACK BONANZA**
by Frank J. Taylor and Earl M. Welty
McGraw Hill, New York, $4.00

**SUBLTITLED** "How an Oil Hunt Grew Into the Union Oil Company of California," Black Bonanza attempts to describe the fantastic growth of "the industry that furnishes the lifeblood of modern living" by describing the growth of one oil company from a wildcatting operation in the late nineteenth century to one of the "Big Twenty" today.

Union Oil serves as an excellent case study in this endeavor. It bridges the complete life span of the oil business; big as it is, it's still classified as an independent; and it can take credit for an impressive list of "firsts": building the first tanker on the Pacific Coast, for instance; laying the first pipeline from the oil fields to tidewater; first spanning the Isthmus of Panama with a pipeline from the Pacific to the Atlantic; and perfecting the first oil burner—to mention just a few.

The authors, both professional writers, find little to criticize—and a great deal to praise—in the history of Union Oil, and have managed to make a fairly lively story out of a mass of research material and old records. For good measure, the book contains nearly 200 photographs.

**ADVENTURE INTO THE UNKNOWN**
The First 50 Years of the General Electric Research Laboratory by Laurence A. Hawkins
William Morrow, N.Y., $3.50

This doesn't pretend to be a full-scale history of the 50-year-old General Electric Research Laboratory; it's merely a quick survey of some of the prominent men who have worked in the lab, and some of the valuable developments which have come out of it.

The book is intended for popular consumption, and, aside from an occasional passage of purely intramural interest (the author was with the Research Laboratory for 38 years—having retired as its business manager in 1948) should appeal to most science-minded laymen.

Adventure Into the Unknown concentrates chiefly on the contributions of the three directors of the Research Laboratory—Willis R. Whitney (1900-32), W. D. Coolidge (1932-45), and the present director, C. G. Suits—as well as those of the laboratory's most distinguished scientists, Irving Langmuir. Other men and their contributions are mentioned briefly and the work of the laboratory in general reviewed and brought up to date with a description of the plant and program of the new Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory.

**MAN THE MAKER**
by R. J. Forbes
Henry Schuman, New York, $4.00

Reviewed by R. L. Daugherty, Professor of Mechanical Engineering

This book traces the development of man from the pre-dawn of history down to the present day, not so much through the growth of his brain and increase in culture as by unfolding for us his achievements in inventing, making, and improving tools and machines from their crudest beginnings.

The story starts with the Stone Age and traces the developments in irrigation, spinning and weaving, pottery making, working stone, metallurgy, and communication. It goes on to the works of the peoples in the empires of the Near East; the contributions of the Greeks and the Romans, such as the building of roads, aqueducts, bridges, and war machines; the rise of the medieval engineer; the use of the water wheel and windmill, the production of cast iron and of paper, and the beginning of the art of printing.

A chapter headed "Steam Comes of Age" describes the various early types of steam engines and the industrial revolution brought into being by this new source of power.

Another chapter, on "The Conquest of Distance," describes the growth of highway systems with good paving and the evolution of the railroad, streetcar, bicycle, automobile, and airplane. The closing chapter, entitled "Steel and Electricity," covers the development of the modern steel industry on which so much of our present-day civilization is based; the electric power industry, together with radio and television; and finally some phases of modern chemical engineering.

The author—a chemical engineer, formerly on the staff of the Shell Oil Company, and now professor of the history of science and technology at the Amsterdam Municipal University in the Netherlands—has condensed a vast amount of material, both in time and in content, into this book. But he has done a skillful job and the book is not highly technical, so it can be read with interest and profit by anyone.
"You can have a laugh in Los Angeles, or you can weep in Los Angeles, depending on your attitude towards it." —Miranda Richardson. With its multiple levels of narration, the book will remind you that the fantastic and the absurd are sometimes the strongest vehicle for truth. Recommended for: People who are down with magic realism. Amazon | Goodreads.

3. City of Quartz by Mike Davis. creativeurbanite.wordpress.com. In his breathtaking book, Davis chronicles the history of Los Angeles as a history of conflict. Los Angeles emerges as a city of haves and have-nots with deeply racist roots. Starting from the 19th century, his sweeping take contextualizes the growth of the city and the problems that continue to plague its peop

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Award winning journalist and author Adrienne Bankert has released her first book. You might Continued. Langston Hughes, Kevin Young and African American Poetry. Daniel Tures, Adult Librarian. African American History Month begins today; on February 1 we also celebrate the birthday of Continued. From LA noir to 21st-century satire, the literature of this Californian city embraces extremes of wealth, fame, frustration and failure. Here’s a selection of our readers’ suggestions of books to bring you closer to the city of Angels. Los Angeles-born Bret Easton Ellis set several of his works in Los Angeles, but two of his books were recommended repeatedly by our readers. stellabarakanianou said of The Informers, a collection of short stories: LA is inevitably a writer’s paradise or haven, as it integrates the necessary stage set.