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Left Is Right: The Survival Guide for Living Lefty in a Right-Handed World

Rae Lindsay

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What do Bill Clinton, Jay Leno, Monica Seles, Bruce Willis, Jerry Seinfeld, Paul McCartney, Prince Charles, Keanu Reeves and Oprah Winfrey have in common?

If you answer "they are all left-handed," right on, because these famous men and women are among the thousands of left-handers who have left their mark on the world. In LEFT IS RIGHT: The Survival Guide for Living Lefty in a Right-Handed World, author Rae Lindsay presents an upbeat look at the sinistral side of life. She lists dozens of notables, past and present, who belong to this "exclusive club" (estimated members in the Unit ed States: 40 million), discusses the theories about hand preference and brain organization, and traces the superstitions and religious customs as sociated with lefties through history.

Lindsay notes that presidents and presidential wannabes may swing left or right politically, but favor their left hands physically. In the last race for the White House, Clinton, Perot and Dole (whose right hand and arm were injured in World War II), were all southpaws. Earlier, lefties Steve Forbes and Alan Keyes also vied for the Republican slot. Three of the last five presidents have been left-handed: Gerald Ford, #38 (and his vice-president, Nelson Rockefeller), George Bush, #41, and currently, Bill Clinton. The feisty Harry Truman, #33, was a lefty, and so was the ill-fated James A. Garfield, #20.

Rae Lindsay writes that "all the world's major languages have special terms for being left-sided or left-handed...and very few of them are flattering," dating back to the Latin word sinister, which really meant "the pocket side" of togas. In modern languages gauche means "clumsy" or "awkward," as well as left; mancini indicates "crooked" or "maimed"in Italian; in Romany bongo translates as "evil" or "crooked;" and in Spanish, no ser zurdo means to be "very clever," in other words, not to be left-handed.

On the brighter side, lefties seem more adept at processing information and concepts from the right side of the brain, the hemisphere which controls intuitions, the five senses, and "holistic thinking" which allows us to grasp broader concepts, such as an entire painting or musical compositi on. LEFT IS RIGHT: The Survival Guide for Living Lefty in a Right-Handed World also lists sources for special products for southpaws, ranging from t-shirts and diaper pins to the "Left is Right"

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