

Who Was Revilo Oliver?

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It is not often one encounters someone with a palindromic name, spelled the same forward and backward. Revilo Oliver (1908–1994), a classics professor at the University of Illinois, had one. But Oliver's claim to fame went far beyond his intriguing name: if a thorough history of the white racial movement is ever written, he will indeed be prominent in it.

The way things have lined up since World War II, those who take the side of white people, as Dr. Oliver did, are certain to be vilified. The most they can hope for are mixed reviews, call them that, on how they conduct their lives, and Oliver accomplished that: while a colleague at his university called him a "filthy fascist swine," others thought the world of him and spoke of him with great respect and fondness. This writing, drawn from my book *The Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds*, paints a portrait of him.

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In the 1950s, Revilo Oliver was one of the founding members of the John Birch Society, a group that became prominent in those years and was known for its anti-communism and advocacy of limited government. Oliver and the Birch Society parted company when his publicly stated racial views made its leadership uncomfortable. He was alleged to have said in a speech to the Daughters of the American Revolution that the pre-Castro Cuban government under Fulgencio Batista was as good as could reasonably be expected in a country largely populated by mongrels.

Oliver wrote a number of pieces for William Buckley's magazine *National Review* in its early years, the late 1950s. *National Review*

became a very influential component in a rising conservative movement that culminated in the election of Ronald Reagan as president in 1980. Oliver's animosity toward Jews eventually made him *persona non grata* at the magazine, as he reportedly referred to the thought of "vaporizing the Jews" as "a beatific vision."

In 1969, Oliver made a promotional film—about a half hour long—for the National Youth Alliance, an organization founded in 1968 to counter liberal and Marxist influences on college campuses, which provided me with a sense of him. He was 61-years-old at the time.

Oliver spoke to the camera sitting at a desk in a book-lined study or office that looked to be something out of the nineteenth century with its quaint lamps and old pictures on the wall. Every few minutes, he stood up and walked to what I suppose was his mark, talked a bit from there, and then it was back to the desk.

The first impression I had of Oliver was his imposing size. He appeared to have been about 6'5" and to have weighed in the neighborhood of 250 pounds. He gave the appearance and bearing of an old-time professor. He wore a dark blue suit with a conservative tie and had a white handkerchief neatly folded in his left breast suit coat pocket. His thinning dark hair (dyed?) was watered down and combed severely back, and he had a dark mustache. No glasses. His manner was assured and serious, though he gave a hint of a sarcastic smile from time to time when referring to the antics of his adversaries.

Oliver looked formidable, like someone you wouldn't want to have on the wrong side of you. For those readers who know of the writer from the 1920s to '40s, Robert Benchley, Oliver came across to me as a vaguely malevolent version of Benchley. People who knew Oliver personally have told me that what I hadn't picked up from his film persona was his gentility, warmth, kindness, and approachability.

In his presentation in the film, Oliver's antagonism toward Jews came through. While he didn't refer to them explicitly, when he talks about "alien slime" and "scabrous aliens," we get the message. We also get the message that the National Youth Alliance was not seeking to attract what these years would be called a diverse membership. Oliver tells us that the college students the NYA wants are young men and women who have "inherited the quality peculiar to our race that finds expression in our great sagas of Beowulf, King Arthur, Roland, Parsifal, and Siegfried."

In many a required course, they [white students] must hear and recite once more, as they have had to do every year since kindergarten, the dreary drivel about "democracy," "social good," "underdeveloped nations," "one world," and all the other myths of liberal make-believe, and they see that the purpose is to excite in them the feeling of guilt because they belong to the only race that could attain power over the forces of nature—guilt because their ancestors' intelligence and courage raised them above the squalor of universal "equality." They parrot, as they must, the professor's gabble, but what they feel is not guilt, but anger. And they are sick of equality.

Oliver says he hopes the National Youth Alliance will

tell the elite of young [white] Americans what they have so long and doubtlessly waited to hear: not the economic advantages of "free enterprise," to be reaped by helping some corporation sell more Coca-Cola or hair oil or paint remover, or the blessings of freedom to buy a mortgage in the suburbs, or running faster in the rat-race and raising children to be taught that Paradise is a place where hominoids with full bellies live in perpetual rut, but rather about honor, loyalty, race, and Western man's will to

conquer or die. Young men and women should not be summoned to meetings of a Ladies' Missionary Society, but to a struggle against great odds. They need to be warned not that lady-like conservatives must be careful to Love Everybody, but that the treason of the slimy Ganelon can be defeated only if the men of the West are still willing to die in the pass at Roncesvalles.

The reference to “slimy Ganelon” in this last quote is a reference to the medieval epic poem *The Song of Roland* in which Ganelon, described by scholar Brewster Fitz as “typologically Jewish,” betrays the hero Roland by arranging an ambush of Charlemagne’s army as it returns home from battling the Saracens in Spain. Roland, a commander in the army, survives the attack, but then dies of exhaustion. Thus a “slimy Ganelon” refers to the connivers and traitors among us—that is to say, the Jews.

Oliver's writings have been collected in a book called *America's Decline: The Education of a Conservative*, which I found useful reading. The book was published in London in 1981. It was never published in the United States, likely because what Oliver had to say in the book was unacceptable to the publishing industry in this country. *America's Decline* is available on Amazon, but at the super hefty prices of from \$126 to \$323. If you are interested in reading it, a library can help you obtain a copy through interlibrary loan, which is how I obtained it.

In the introduction to *America's Decline*, Sam Dickson, an American attorney and white racial activist still going strong all these years later, refers to Oliver as “a leader of the racial nationalist movement.” Dickson writes that Oliver focuses on racial self-love among whites rather than animosity toward blacks or Jews. He notes that Oliver believes whites would do well to emulate the loyalties Jews demonstrate toward their own people and traditions.

Oliver writes in *America's Decline*: "Liberals are forever chatting

about 'all mankind,' a term that does not have a specific meaning, as do parallel terms in biology such as 'all marsupials' or 'all species of the genus Canis.' The fanatics give to the term a mystic and special meaning that imposes a transcendental unity on the manifest diversity of the various human species." Liberals, he argues, "engage in frantic and often hysterical efforts to suppress scientific knowledge about genetics and the obviously innate differences among the different human sub-species and among the individuals of a given sub-species."

"I reached the conclusion," Oliver reports, "that our race was a viable species, and that therefore, like all viable species of animal life, it had an innate instinct to survive and perpetuate itself." He points out that his race does not realize its precarious status: "Whites are a small and endangered minority on this planet, but how many members of our race seem to have even an inkling of that fact?"

Are whites superior to other races of men? Oliver asks rhetorically. It depends on what values you bring to answering the question. "We must understand that all races naturally regard themselves as superior to all others. If we attribute to ourselves a superiority—intellectual, moral, or other—in terms of our standards, we are simply indulging in a tautology. The only objective criterion of superiority among human races, as among all other species, is biological: the strong survive, the weak perish. The superior race of mankind is the one that will emerge victorious whether by its technology or its fecundity from the proximate struggle for life on an overcrowded planet."

To understand the nature of a society, he contends, you need to take into account its racial make-up, which includes the race of those who enter it and the racial breeding patterns of those who reside within it. "The decline in a civilization is always accompanied by a change in the racial composition and deterioration in the quality of the population."

Oliver linked race to his conservative politics, arguing that American whites are being threatened by a liberal-dominated government. "The power of government over us is being used to accelerate our deterioration and hasten our disappearance as a people by every means short of mass massacre. To mention one small example, many states now pick the pockets of their taxpayers to subsidize and promote the breeding of bastards, who, with negligible exceptions, are the products of the lowest dregs of our population, the morally irresponsible and mentally feeble. Our 'Big Brains' [leftist intellectuals] assure us that it is unthinkable to be so wicked as to fight to survive."

"Liberals rant about 'human rights,' but a moment's thought suffices to show that the only rights are those which the citizens of a stable society, by agreement or by a long usage that has acquired the force of law, bestow on themselves. American society has been so artfully manipulated our citizens no longer have constitutional rights that are not subject to revocation in the name of Social Welfare. In effect, there are no citizens here, only masses existing in a state of indiscriminate equality, a state of *de facto* slavery."

Oliver comes down hard on psychology (understood to be Jewish), which "propagates the grotesque belief rapidly becoming universal in this country that man is an imbecile creature whom government and the therapy industry must protect from society and even from himself." He quotes a writer as noting that psychoanalysts "strive to relieve the patient of all responsibility for his difficulties, and to shift it to society."

"The welfare state currently being foisted on our country," writes Oliver, "takes away each year some part of our power to make decisions for ourselves over our own lives. It is perfectly obvious that if this process continues for a few more decades (as our masters' power to take our money to bribe and bamboozle the masses may make inevitable), we shall become mere human livestock managed by a ruthless and inhuman bureaucracy at the

orders of an even more inhuman master."

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At a lunch meeting in Washington, D.C. in 1974, white activist William Pierce told Oliver that he was finding it hard getting his messages across to people. Oliver asked him whether he had ever thought of fiction as a way to do that (Pierce hadn't). Oliver told Pierce that when he got back home in Illinois he would mail him a book of fiction the John Birch Society had published that was the kind of fiction he had in mind for Pierce to think about writing.

A couple of weeks later, Pierce received in the mail a photocopy of the book Oliver had talked about. It was called *The John Franklin Letters*, and had been published in 1959. Pierce told me he didn't read the book carefully, but that he looked through it enough to get an idea of how he could do something like that. The "something like that" turned out to be *The Turner Diaries*, a book that, without commercial publisher backing, has sold tens of thousands of copies and become—the mixed-review phenomenon again—either one of the most edifying or vilest books ever written.

I went through Pierce's copy of *The John Franklin Letters*. It is made up of chronologically arranged fictional letters from John Semmes Franklin to his 93-year-old uncle. The letters span a two-year period, from 1972 to 1974. (Recall that the book was written in 1959 and thus its events transpire in the future.) Pierce told me that the letters format of *The John Franklin Letters* gave him the idea of a diary, which he decided would be a good format for writing a first novel because he would just have to look at the world through the eyes of one person, Earl Turner; he wouldn't have to put himself in the place of a number of characters, or assume the position of an omniscient observer.

No author is listed for *The John Franklin Letters*. The preface is

written by a Harley Ogdon (fictional, no such person existed), who identifies himself as a professor of American history at the University of Illinois. He informs the reader that Franklin's letters to his uncle record the ousting of the "Buros" (Bureaucrats) by the Rangers, an underground patriotic military force Franklin helped organize. The Rangers, Ogdon writes, represented the resistance to the excesses of state control of every facet of American life. They combatted the government paternalism that was destroying this country.

As I read along in the book, I became certain I knew who the author of *The John Franklin Letters* was—Revilo Oliver. I had read enough of Oliver's writings by that time to recognize his thinking and his writing style. "Did Oliver ever tell you who wrote *The John Franklin Letters*?" I asked Pierce.

"I don't know who wrote it," Pierce answered. "It doesn't give an author because the premise is that this is a collection of letters."

"I believe Oliver himself wrote this book, and that he didn't want his identity known. It could be that at that time, in the 1950s, he wasn't excited about the idea of the people at *National Review* magazine or the University of Illinois knowing he was writing this kind of thing."

"That could be," Pierce responded. "All I know is that he didn't tell me he had written the book."

Even though *The John Franklin Letters* was written sixty years ago, it reflects many of the political concerns of white analysts and activists in contemporary times.

The worry about "big brother," liberal, paternalistic government, particularly at the federal level. Franklin writes his uncle that it all began with Roosevelt and the New Deal back in the 1930s: "By government, the great orator [Roosevelt] did not mean the people of the United States acting with courage and common sense in their own communities. He meant a parcel of professional experts minding other people's business, who were even then descending

on Washington—a flock of theorists bent on confiscating the nation's money through taxation." And later on, "The 'experts' have planned us into economic serfdom; now they'll manage us into organized captivity with an orgy of deficit spending, pump-priming controls, and population shifts."

A misguided welfare system. "Anyone can get on the relief roles. All you have to do is convince a bureaucrat, himself living on other people's money, that you are in need." And elsewhere: "Charity to those in need has turned into a vast system of 'projects' in the hands of 'social engineers.' Something for nothing—that is now the battle cry."

Criticism of blacks. "One third of the nation's crime is committed by Negroes, mostly in Northern cities—home of enlightenment and integration, you'll notice. The liberals cry, scarlet with rage, 'Well what do you expect? They live in substandard conditions.' And I add, those rapists, killers, and thieves are behaving in a substandard manner." In another letter, blacks are referred to as a "tax-supported proletariat."

Worry about "hate laws." "As bad as blacks are, you can't criticize them because of the Javits hate literature law, [Jacob Javits was a Jewish senator from New York at that time] which prevents what is considered to be unfair propaganda against minority groups." Later on, Franklin writes to his uncle about a Mr. White (white man?), who is serving a ten-year "administrative penalty" for being discourteous to a black. "This had been regarded as a form of genocide, since it could do psychological harm to an entire minority element." The New York Commission on Intergroup Relations had previously been after Mr. White because he was the president of a country club that failed to include a black among its members. "White's remark to the Commission that he thought he and his friends had the right to choose their own associates was most unwise under the circumstances."

Fears about the New World Order. Franklin's letters assert that America's sovereignty is being given over to "world governments" such as the United Nations as part of a movement toward a "world-wide people's democratic government." He tells his uncle that the United States is now being governed by international organizations and "The Peoples' Democratic Anti-Fascist Government of North America."

Gun control concerns. "No dictatorship has ever been imposed on a nation of free men that has not first required them to register their privately-owned weapons. However, we are not, as were the Hungarians [referring to the 1956 uprising against the Soviet-dominated government in that country], reduced to fighting with our bare hands and Molotov cocktails [explosive devices made out of soda pop bottles and gasoline]. Millions of Americans still have deadly weapons which the Buros tried too late to seize."

The Rangers win the day. Franklin tells his uncle: "Rangers appeared in Washington just before dawn. Within an hour we had control of the metropolitan police headquarters, the broadcasting stations, and the Buro guard posts throughout the city. Shortly after sunrise, two battalions of Ranger paratroopers jumped from the old military and commercial aircraft about which you know. A command post was set up in Rock Creek Park. We had almost no trouble with the UN and Buro guards around the city. They are, as we found out early in the game, more on the order of custodians and doorkeepers than fighting infantry. The professional military forces which had plagued us for a while—Soviet, Chinese, and Indian troops—had been withdrawn for some months to deal with unrest on their home grounds."

Franklin's last letter, dated July 4th, 1974 (again, the book was written in the 1950s), tells of the re-establishment of "the legal government of the United States of America. The book ends on an ominous note, as Franklin refers to retribution: "Certain high-minded liberals will be among the first to be executed and they will go to their deaths not understanding why."

Guided by the example of *The John Franklin Letters*, Pierce began writing what became *The Turner Diaries* as installments in his monthly tabloid *Attack!* Later they were published in book form. As with *The John Franklin Letters*, the basic situation is a revolt against those in control of America in a future time. Instead of the Rangers, in Pierce's book it is the Organization. Instead of fighting the Buros as in the Oliver book, Earl Turner and his compatriots are taking on the System. And of course, instead of writing letters, Earl Turner keeps a diary.

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Four months after Revalo Oliver's death in August of 1994, a memorial symposium was held in his honor in Urbana, Illinois, the home of the University of Illinois, where he had been a professor for 32 years. The master of ceremonies was Sam Dickson who had written the introduction to Oliver's book, *America's Decline*. Among the speakers paying tribute to Oliver on that occasion were Kevin Strom and his wife Kirsten.

The Kevin Strom standing at the microphone that day so long ago now was a youngish, clean-cut man who appeared to be in his mid-to late-thirties. He was of medium height and build, and was dressed conservatively in a coat and tie. His straight features and aviator glasses give him a John Denver-like appearance. Unlike Denver, however, Strom's hair was dark and cut to medium length. It was parted neatly and combed to the side, and the ends fell toward his right eyebrow. He spoke in a soft-spoken and formal way:

On August 10, 1994, I found myself living in a world that did not contain Revalo Oliver. My wife Kirsten and I visited Dr. and Mrs. Oliver in July 1994, about one month before his death. At that time, Kirsten was pregnant with our second child. Our first-born son, Oskar Oliver Strom, was named to honor Revalo Oliver. I hope that our growing family and our family's dedication to the cause for which Revalo Oliver sacrificed so much gave him some small

satisfaction. If our race's future lies, as I believe it does, in the stars rather than in the nothingness of extinction, then Revilo Oliver's consciousness was of the intellectual and spiritual greatness of which European man is capable. Dr. Oliver shunned sentimental illusions and was often pessimistic about the future of our race, but his existence on this planet is evidence that our future path is upward to greater understanding and mastery. Before he died, I was able to tell him how much I loved him, how much he had affected my life, how much he had inspired me and thousands like me, and how as long as I drew breath the cause for which he lived would continue.

Several speakers later, it was Kirsten Strom's turn to pay tribute to Revilo Oliver. She was the only woman to speak that day. The microphone had been chest high to most of the male speakers, and some had to lean down to speak into it. Kirsten could barely be seen over the podium and the microphone was right in front of her face. My guess is that she was in her mid-thirties, but she could have passed for someone a decade younger. She had on large clear plastic-framed glasses and dark lipstick. She wore a dark round hat of the sort women wore in the '40s, the kind that often had a veil, although hers didn't, pitched toward the back of her head. Her hair was dark and wavy and outlined her round face and soft features. She wore a dark woman's suit over a white blouse open at the collar. A loosely tied scarf was around her neck. "My name is Kirsten," she began.

One of the things my husband Kevin and I used to do on a date—I know it was kind of a strange thing to do on a date—was listen to Doctor Oliver's speeches. The first time I heard him speak I knew he was extraordinary. When I came to know him personally, he was incredibly gracious to me. He always referred to me as Kevin's bride, even after we had been married several years. I thought that was extremely courteous of him. Doctor Oliver was so nice to Kevin and me. We enjoyed talking to him so much. Everything he said is just seared into my memory, as I am sure it is to anybody's who ever spoke to him. You could

never forget him, never ever. The last time I saw him was in July—we wanted to see him for his birthday. We were distressed to find out that he was very sick. We were lucky to have been able to tell him how much we loved him and how he had changed our lives forever. I just had a baby about two weeks ago, and I was afraid I wouldn't be able to come today. After a great deal of thought, I decided to come, and I am very glad that I did, because this is something I will never forget. I hope we will forever remember Doctor Oliver, and that we will have the same kind of courage he had to keep on going, day in and day out, saying what we know is true. That is all I have to say. I am very honored to be here. Thank you. Goodbye.