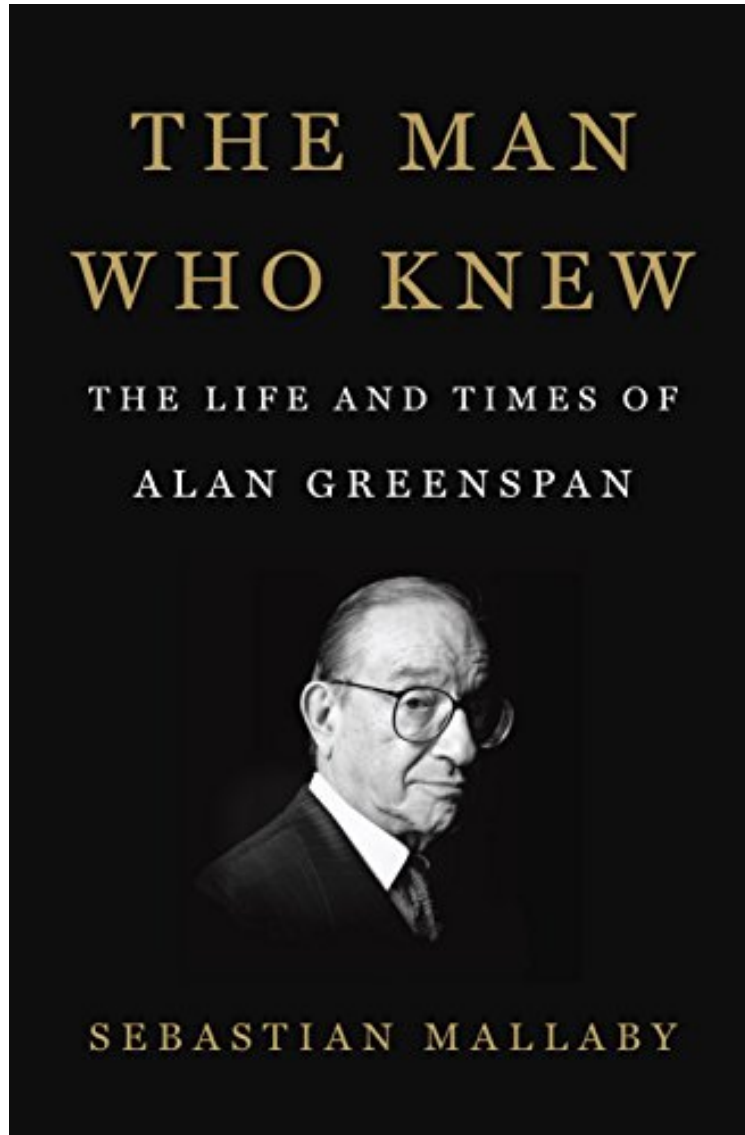


The Man Who Knew: The Life and Times of Alan Greenspan

Sebastian Mallaby

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Sebastian Mallaby : The Man Who Knew: The Life and Times of Alan Greenspan before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Man Who Knew: The Life and Times of Alan Greenspan:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A book for the timesBy R. AnthonyTHE MAN WHO KNEW is the perfect book for this time in our country's history. Mr. Mallaby's book is a thorough review of the Fed System, including FOMC deliberations, the materiality of politics that impact Fed decisions and the politics of arm twisting that are so prevalent in this arena.What makes this book so very compelling is associated with the vast swath of

disciplines incorporated to truly forge a comprehensive, thoughtful, balanced, and technical explanation of both subtle and broad operations of the Federal Reserve System, its relation to political considerations and, ultimately, the resulting impact on this country and its citizens. By focusing primarily on Alan Greenspan, the longest serving Fed Chairman, the economics, finance, and Fed decision process is both broadly explicated and (interestingly) humanized; a tough job in economics. Mallaby does this by employing and combining aspects of Greenspan's childhood development, family relationships (including possible psychological impacts) and work background. This includes his desire to become a musician; he played the sax and clarinet professionally for Henry Jerome and His Orchestra before going to NYU to study finance and thereafter economics. (His PhD thesis is at least a basis in economic logic for forming his friendship with Ayn Rand, author of *Atlas Shrugged* fame, inter alia.) This mosaic is incorporated into a fully framed discussion of the operational mechanisms of Fed decision making, including, the litany of economic theories employed over more than 50 years; starting, for purposes of this book, in the 1950's and, basically, concluding when Greenspan's term ended in 2006. Greenspan and those before and after him at the Fed made a variety of decisions based on the aforementioned theories which impacted this country positively, and negatively --- sometimes catastrophically. Mallaby pulls no punches. What makes this book a more complete and fulfilling educational experience is his comprehensive analysis of the economic, political, and inter-human relationships that tell the full story; along with a full analysis of the monetary and fiscal theories which were such an important series of considerations during this time frame. I would only add this addendum. Mallaby's book is extremely well researched and written. (I have read his previous excellent book: *More Money than God: Hedge Funds and the Making of the New Elite*.) Both are inclusive of associated, relevant economic and technical financial concepts. Some knowledge in this area would be helpful. That said, this should not be a deterrent. It is a real education "across the board". Both were a joy to read. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Terrific book about a towering figure of the last 40 plus years. By Narut Ujnat Allen Greenspan is a towering figure in American lives for the last 30 plus years whether people really do or not. When I saw this book, I thought I would pass because I had read Greenspan's autobiography (which was well done). However, after listening to Mallaby in an interview and reading the many positive reviews, I wanted to read this book. This is a terrifically well written book. The subject is infinitely interesting. Why? Greenspan was a living contradiction. Follower of Ayn Rand. Opponent of Keynesian policies but yet someone who resorted to Keynesian policies at times. Inscrutable in public appearances, yet someone seemingly in love with his celebrity. Shy, but a musician in a band as a young man. This book is a great examination of the last 60 plus years of American history and economic history. This book is not just a simple biography, but a examination of economic policies. Greenspan, more than his predecessor Paul Volker, transformed the Federal Reserve from minor player, to a source of power in our present government formulation (for better or worse). I really enjoyed this book and it is well worth reading. Recommended. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The flaw By J. Werner This is my second book by Mallaby. I enjoyed it equally as well. It's rather clear Greenspan's brilliance and desire for greatness led him to his chairmanship of the Federal Reserve. But his core beliefs as refined by Rand never allowed him to get beyond his central conflict. This libertarian had to wrestle daily with the philosophical and real contradictions in his work wrapped in free markets and central banking. Maybe this was the flaw and when the conflict was too much that he turned his focus another way. And of course, as Mallaby rightfully points out, what if AG decided to stand and fight in the name of limited government and free markets? Clearly it would have been an exercise in futility. At the very least he would be ignored. At the very worst he would have been fired sooner rather than later. Neither is fitting for a man as gifted as Alan Greenspan.

The definitive biography of the most important economic statesman of our time; Sebastian Mallaby's magisterial biography of Alan Greenspan, the product of over five years of research based on untrammelled access to his subject and his closest professional and personal intimates, brings into vivid focus the mysterious point where the government and the economy meet. To understand Greenspan's story is to see the economic and political landscape of the last 30 years--and the presidency from Reagan to George W. Bush--in a whole new light. As the most influential economic statesman of his age, Greenspan spent a lifetime grappling with a momentous shift: the transformation of finance from the fixed and regulated system of the post-war era to the free-for-all of the past quarter century. The story of Greenspan is also the story of the making of modern finance, for good and for ill. Greenspan's life is a quintessential American success story: raised by a single mother in the Jewish enclave of Washington Heights, he was a math prodigy who found a niche as a stats-crunching consultant. A master at explaining the economic weather to captains of industry, he translated that skill into advising Richard Nixon in his 1968 campaign. This led to a perch on the White House Council of Economic Advisers, and then to a dazzling array of business and government roles, from which the path to the Fed was relatively clear. A fire-breathing libertarian and disciple of Ayn Rand in his youth who once called the Fed's creation a historic mistake, Mallaby shows how Greenspan reinvented himself as a pragmatist once in power. In his analysis, and in his core mission of keeping inflation in check, he was a maestro indeed, and hailed as such. At his retirement in 2006, he was lauded as the age's necessary man, the veritable God in the machine, the global economy's avatar. His memoirs sold for record sums to

publishers around the world. But then came 2008. Mallaby's story lands with both feet on the great crash which did so much to damage Alan Greenspan's reputation. Mallaby argues that the conventional wisdom is off base: Greenspan wasn't a naive ideologue who believed greater regulation was unnecessary. He had pressed for greater regulation of some key areas of finance over the years, and had gotten nowhere. To argue that he didn't know the risks in irrational markets is to miss the point. He knew more than almost anyone; the question is why he didn't act, and whether anyone else could or would have. A close reading of Greenspan's life provides fascinating answers to these questions, answers whose lessons we would do well to heed. Because perhaps Mallaby's greatest lesson is that economic statesmanship, like political statesmanship, is the art of the possible. *The Man Who Knew* is a searching reckoning with what exactly comprised the art, and the possible, in the career of Alan Greenspan. From the Hardcover edition.

“An impressive achievement and an important piece of scholarship that both deserves and rewards the careful reader. . . . A brilliant rendering of key moments in recent economic and financial history that provides the context needed to appreciate Greenspan's extraordinary mixed legacy.” — Peter Fisher, *International Finance*
“Highly recommended. . . anyone with an interest in postwar U.S. economic and political history will enjoy *The Man Who Knew*.” — Ben Bernanke
“While Greenspan was (and is) a more capable economist than he gets credit for these days, he was an even better politician. This view of Greenspan as a political animal is central to Mallaby's account. It is also, along with the often amusing depictions of Greenspan's personal life, what makes it so much fun to read. . . [An] excellent biography.” — *New York Times Book Review*
“Mallaby's masterful biography — which doubles as an excellent economic history of the past three decades — tells a story of Greenspan's technocratic ascent, from his modest boyhood in New York City, to a young adulthood colored by his philosophical attraction to the antigovernment libertarianism of the novelist Ayn Rand, to his career as a high-flying economic consultant, and finally to his rise to the pinnacle of power at the Fed.” — *Foreign Affairs*
“A rock-star central banker emerges in all his contradictions in Sebastian Mallaby's fine biography. Deeply researched and elegantly written. . . [An] exceptional new biography.” — *Financial Times*
“A tour de force — the most deeply reported work on the dry art of central banking since William Greider's *Secrets of the Temple* (1988). But Greider's work was flawed because he pushed his reporting through a meat grinder of questionable economic theories. Mallaby avoids that pitfall. Much like the man he profiles, Mallaby shows a solid understanding of competing economic and political theories, without tying himself inextricably to any one.” — *The Washington Post*
“The *Man Who Knew* is a tour de force, the story not just of Alan Greenspan's career but equally of America's economic triumphs and failures over five decades. This carefully researched and elegantly written book will be essential reading for those who aspire to make policy and for anyone who wants to divine what drives the choices that our leaders make.” — *The Wall Street Journal*
“In a superb new book, the product of more than five years' research, Sebastian Mallaby helps history make up its mind about Alan Greenspan, the man hailed in 2000 by Phil Gramm, a former senator, as ‘the best central banker we have ever had,’ but now blamed for the financial crisis of 2007-08.” — *The Economist*
“Deeply researched and elegantly written. As a description of the politics and pressures under which modern independent central banking has to operate, the book is incomparable.” — *Financial Times*
“Mallaby pulls back the curtain on the controversial Fed chairman and takes a fresh look at his record.” — *Esquire*
“Economics is dubbed the dreary science, but as this comprehensive and absorbing biography reveals, economists can certainly enjoy lively and interesting lives. . . Mallaby strives to fairly consider Greenspan's successes and failures in this balanced account. A portrait of a many-faceted and brilliant man far more appealing than the stolid technocrat who appeared before Congress and the public during his long tenure (1987–2006) as chairman of the Federal Reserve.” — *Booklist*
“Thorough, balanced, and well informed. A masterful, detailed portrait of one of the leading economic figures of our time.” — *Publishers Weekly*
“The astonishing story of how a solitary young man, who found solace in numbers, became the world's most powerful economic decision-maker, presiding over the revolution in finance that touches everyone. With judgment and authority, *The Man Who Knew* takes us inside the great economic crises of our times — and provides insight for the crises and turmoil yet to come.” — Daniel Yergin, author of *The Prize: the Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power* and *The Quest: Energy, Security, and the Remaking of the Modern World*
“One of the best books I've read recently. . . out until October. It is a biography of Alan Greenspan titled, *The Man Who Knew: The Life and Times of Alan Greenspan*. Mr. Greenspan is a fascinating subject because for so long he was considered a genius, only to later be blamed for the financial crisis. Mr. Mallaby does an exquisite job going beyond these two versions of the Greenspan narrative and taking the reader inside the complicated mind of a man who may have had one of the largest ever influences over our economy.” — Andrew Ross Sorkin, *The New York Times*
“A masterful biography of Alan Greenspan, full of astute insights and deft judgments about the career of one of the most consequential, and yet enigmatic,

economic statesman of our era, a book that provides a unique and fascinating window into the major economic policy debates of the last 50 years" — Liaquat Ahamed, Pulitzer-Prize winning author of *Lords of Finance: The Bankers Who Broke the World* "Mallaby has a rare ability to blend the stories of powerful people with insights into influential institutions and formidable policy challenges. 'The Man Who Knew' is a superb biography -- as well as an economic history, political profile, and monetary policy primer. Careful research, fine writing, an intriguing narrative, and a cautionary tale: This book has it all." — Robert B. Zoellick, Former President of the World Bank, US Trade Representative, and US Deputy Secretary of State "A fascinating and balanced study of arguably the most important figure of the post-war global financial scene." — Mervyn King, Former Governor of the Bank of England and Chairman of its Monetary Policy Committee "Admire him or despise him, Alan Greenspan was the preeminent financial statesman of the post-war era. But Sebastian Mallaby's magisterial biography casts him as something more (and more intriguing) than that: a masterly and mesmerizing politician. Whether counseling Richard Nixon on the race-freighted Southern strategy, scheming with Watergate felon Charles Colson on a plan to neuter the Federal Reserve's independence, or waging bureaucratic war against Henry Kissinger (and winning!), Greenspan was cunning, stealthy, and ruthless, neck deep in the political intrigues of his era — less the bloodless monetary technocrat of lore than the J. Edgar Hoover of economics. In riveting, page-turning fashion, *The Man Who Knew* reveals the man in full." — John Heilemann, managing editor of Bloomberg Politics, host of *With All Due Respect*, author of *Game Change* and *Double Down* "A splendid biography — compelling, readable, provocative, richly researched, brimming with authorial intelligence. A rich, subtle portrait of a complex and surprisingly vulnerable human being. *The Man Who Knew* is a courageous book, for it reckons with Greenspan's shortcomings with unbridled honesty. Its judgments are all the more devastating because Mallaby is scrupulously fair, as unafraid to praise as he is to critique. And as he leads us through the passages of Greenspan's life, Mallaby takes us on a tour of the sizzling financial dramas and of the great intellectual debates of the postwar years, from the inflation agonies of Gerald Ford to the mortgage bubble of the early 2000s. *The Man Who Knew* will surely become the definitive Greenspan biography." — Roger Lowenstein, author of *America's Bank: The Epic Struggle to Create the Federal Reserve, and When Genius Failed*. About the Author Sebastian Mallaby is the author of several books, including the bestselling *More Money Than God*. A former Financial Times contributing editor and two-time Pulitzer Prize finalist, Mallaby is the Paul A. Volcker Senior Fellow for International Economics at the Council on Foreign Relations. Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. One The Feeling of a Conqueror Growing up in the 1930s, he fell in love with the railroads. The great locomotives, puffing and panting as they hauled their unimaginable loads, seemed less like machines than mythical creatures — "some species of mastodon," as a book of the time put it. To watch the beam of light from the great monster's headlamps, to glimpse the hellish fire lighting the interior of the cab, to see the shadow of the fireman silhouetted against the glow — all this was to experience the thrill and terror of industry and progress, to see precisely what was meant by the American century. From around the age of eleven, the young Alan collected train timetables, memorized the routes and the towns along the way, and imagined himself traveling the continent: Duluth to Minneapolis, Minneapolis to Fargo, and then onward and westward to Helena, Spokane, and finally Seattle. It was a way of conjuring a world beyond Washington Heights, the neighborhood of immigrants he inhabited on the northern tongue of Manhattan; a way of escaping the squat redbrick apartment building with its ornate stucco moldings, of freeing his mind from the too-familiar streets filled with European accents — Yiddish, Irish, and German. Washington Heights had been developed just a few years earlier, after the New York subway stretched north to reach it in 1906. But although the subway had arrived, you could still see horses on the streets and men who cleaned up after them. No wonder the railroads seemed romantic. Alan lived with his grandparents Nathan and Anna Goldsmith and with his dotting mother, Rose. They shared a one-bedroom apartment at 600 West 163rd Street; Nathan and Anna had the bedroom, while Alan and Rose slept in what had been built as the dining room. It was a modest accommodation for four people, but it seemed a reasonable lot — better than the crowded tenements of the Lower East Side, where other immigrants lived, and not bad given that the country was in the grip of the Depression. The Goldsmiths lived on the west side of Broadway, the dividing line that separated the salubrious part of the neighborhood from the rough-and-tumble east. "The . . . gentility of the neighborhood . . . along with the style of the buildings, the parks nearby, and the cool breeze from the Hudson in the evening carried vague reminders of the bourgeois sections of German cities," a contemporary wrote. German immigrants flocked to Washington Heights in such numbers that the area was sometimes known as Frankfurt on the Hudson. To Nathan and Anna, born in Russia, driven to migrate to Hungary and then from Hungary to America, life in New York must have seemed a blessing almost divine — they had boarded their grandson's imaginary train, and after much adventure had arrived safely. As for Rose, born in Hungary though now as American as baseball, there was much to celebrate, too. She had a steady job as a salesperson at the Ludwig-Baumann furniture store in the Bronx, which paid enough to meet the rent of \$48 each month, keep food on the table, and even spare Alan a quarter a week for pocket money. Besides, she was happy to be living just half a block away from her sister, the well-to-do Mary. In summer Alan would stay with Mary at her vacation house close to Rockaway Beach, on the near end of Long Island. Alan and his cousin Wesley would spend hours walking the sands with their heads down, searching doggedly for lost

coins. Then they would spend the fruits of their labor on candy. Rose's greatest blessing was young Alan himself, born on March 6, 1926, the product of her brief marriage to Herbert Greenspan. The boy naturally expanded to fill the gaps in Rose's life—the husband who had left when their son was still small, the absence of other children. Each morning her young hero with his perfectly even features and broad smile would soldier off to the P.S. 169 elementary school on Audubon Avenue, and each afternoon he would return with extraordinary things. From very early on, he could add large numbers in his head, and seemed even to enjoy it. Rose trotted him out in front of aunts and uncles to perform. "Alan, what's thirty-five plus ninety-two?" she would ask. "A hundred and twenty-seven," came back the answer. A few years after he turned addition into a performance art, Alan developed a passion for baseball, and it was hard to say what thrilled him more: the excitement of listening to the radio commentary of the 1936 World Series or the discovery of a world that could be reduced to the statistics and symbols of a prodigious ten-year-old's devising. The statistics were straightforward, but pleasing all the same: a player who got a hit on three out of eleven appearances had a batting average of .273; one who succeeded five out of thirteen times had an average of .385; it was thanks to baseball that Alan memorized the conversion tables for fractions into decimals. But the symbols were where the creativity came in. Alan invented a notation that allowed him to track each play of the big games. If a player hit a ground ball, he would inscribe a careful x on his green scoring sheet. If the player hit a line drive, he would enter an ellipse; a circle with an x through it meant a high fly, and an alpha meant a deep hit into the outfield. Each fielder's position was assigned a number that could be combined with the symbols to create a precise record of the play: for example, an ellipse next to an 11 meant a line drive to right center field. Reflecting on his childhood some seventy-five years later, Alan remained convinced that his system was better than anything that even the newspaper writers had invented. Rose, no doubt, had agreed with him. Alan was too young to remember his father's departure, but the separation affected him deeply. To be a single child can be character forming. To be the single child of a single mother can be overwhelming. It has been said that Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the statesman who loomed over the America of Alan's youth, drew his confidence and ambition from his widowed mother's unrelenting attention: he was the work of her life, her monument. Fortunately for Alan, his mother was far less controlling than the imposing Sara Roosevelt, who thought nothing of installing her married son in a town house adjoining hers, then cutting a door from her large bedroom through her daughter-in-law's much smaller one in order to gain access to Franklin's quarters. But though Rose was mild by comparison, her son was nonetheless the sole outlet for her love, and it seems likely that his sense of what he might achieve expanded correspondingly. "A man who has been the indisputable favorite of his mother keeps for life the feeling of a conqueror, that confidence of success that often induces real success," Sigmund Freud declared, possibly with more intuition than evidence. At a minimum, Alan was prepared to believe that he could beat baseball writers at their own game, and that one day he might ride a train as far as the Pacific. Yet if Alan felt confident in his intellectual abilities, he was less comfortable with people. He could master baseball through force of intellect; human chemistry was different. Part of his self-doubt may have come from his mother, for Rose was a hard act to follow. Pretty, vivacious, and gregarious, she could easily have made any child feel tongue-tied by comparison. At family gatherings, Alan's uncle Murray, who now went by the name of Mario and tried to pass as Italian, would play the piano with great flair; he had achieved success as a writer of musicals in Hollywood. But it was Rose who provided the accompaniment, a repertoire of period songs performed in the loose and haunting manner of a torch singer. Leaning over the baby grand piano in the living room of their apartment, flashing her infectious smile, Rose could make herself the center of the party. Alan would be left feeling that he was somehow off toward the side—a "sideman," he would call himself. But the most obvious explanation for the young Alan's diffidence lay with his father. Herbert Greenspan had arrived in the United States as the four-year-old Haim Grunspan, a lowly "steerage alien" aboard a ship that docked in Ellis Island in August 1906. Like Rose, he was good-looking, with the aquiline nose and fine cheekbones of the film star Gene Kelly. But while Rose was unfailingly sunny, Herbert could be awkward and withdrawn, and he may have passed down to Alan a tendency to live inside his own head. The fact of Herbert's absence reinforced that tendency greatly. After the divorce, Herbert moved back in with his family in Brooklyn, barely twenty miles away. But though he would promise to take Alan on outings, he often failed to keep his word. "Alan hardly got to see him. But I do remember the ecstasy that Alan exhibited on those rare occasions when his father visited," his cousin Wesley remembered. The experience of being let down by his father taught Alan that depending on the love of others could be a path to pain. It seemed safer to retreat into his own mind, to the controlled world of baseball statistics and railroad timetables. As a very young child, Alan expressed his longing for a father directly. His stern grandfather was no substitute—Nathan spoke in a forbidding Yiddish accent and was consumed by the world of his synagogue, which Alan found so alien that he later came close to refusing the bar mitzvah. But Alan's uncle Irwin, the father of Wesley, was a more approachable figure. Sometimes Irwin would set out for a walk holding Wesley with one hand and Wesley's younger sister with the other, with Alan tagging alongside. Pretty soon Alan would worm his way between uncle and cousin until his hand was being held, and Wesley was left to keep up independently. But as Alan grew older, these transparent pleas for love were less frequent; he dealt with the gap left by his father by withdrawing into himself, and found that spending time alone made him feel comfortable and happy. Even his school friends could see that he was unusually self-contained. Irwin Kantor, Alan's closest companion at the Edward W. Stitt Junior High School on 164th Street,

spent hours at his apartment, absorbed in a game the two boys invented, a form of baseball with dice. Years later, Irwin remembered Alan as a strange loner-no siblings, no father, a mother who was out at work, and grandparents who seemed stuck in an old world in which children spoke only when spoken to. "I think he really grew up with the radio, with his own thoughts," Greenspan's wife, Andrea Mitchell, would say later. "I don't know if it made him sad and lonely, but it certainly shaped the person he is. He's not easily accessible to people and he's very shy." "Very shy," she added. If Alan's circumstances fed his natural introspection, they also nourished his ambition. A powerful voice inside him whispered that he was capable of greatness-his facility with numbers showed that this was so, and his mother's adoration removed all doubt of it. Yet he also understood that the world would never recognize his greatness unless he demonstrated it beyond doubt, for he lacked the levity and carefree charm necessary to attain status without effort. If he was ever going to be someone, he would have to work hard. By doing things, achieving things, the sideman would be noticed. His father had a clear idea of how Alan's ambition might be directed. In 1935, Herbert published a tract called *Recovery Ahead!*, a paean to the New Deal that likened Roosevelt to a grand general leading the country to the "Delectable Mountains of prosperity." Herbert's motives for writing were commercial, not literary or scholarly; an ad for the book in the *New York Times* promised "a chart in which the writer predicts the month by month fluctuations of the stock market during 1935 and 1936." Unembarrassed by this startling claim of foresight, Herbert presented a copy of *Recovery* to his son, with an inscription hoping that the nine-year-old would take an interest in economics. "At your maturity you may look back and endeavor to interpret the reasoning behind these logical forecasts and begin a like work of your own," Herbert wrote. But although his son would ultimately follow his suggested path, the advice meant nothing at the time. Alan read a few pages of the book and then gave up. It was too much for a nine-year-old. Pushing the New Deal to one side, Alan focused his ambitions on baseball-as well as analyzing the game, he played it. As he entered his teens, he developed an athletic frame, and his agility and reflexes gave him what the sport demanded. He was a left-hander, which made him a natural first baseman; playing in a local park with older kids one day, he hit a curveball so confidently that an impressed high schooler declared he was headed for the major leagues. The compliment filled Alan with a powerful pride. He would go to Yankee Stadium and gaze down at his heroes: Lou Gehrig on first, Joe DiMaggio in the outfield, Lefty Gomez or Red Ruffing pitching-seventy years later, he could still recite the lineup from memory. And as he watched those champions playing, he sometimes imagined a fantastic reversal of his role. One day, instead of looking down at that exquisite diamond, he might be down there himself. Instead of gazing, he would be gazed upon. He would take his position at the center of the universe. He would be a major league first baseman. Alan completed junior high school in 1939, having skipped one year on the advice of his teachers. His next port of call was George Washington High School, a formidable structure with Italianate columns perched on a hilly promontory overlooking the Harlem River; the dramatic setting reinforced the building's mass and height, as if it were some temple lifted from antiquity. The school was among the best in the city: it boasted excellent teachers, and it served a neighborhood of ambitious immigrants determined to succeed in their new land by excelling in the classroom. Alan continued to play baseball in high school, no doubt replaying that scene of himself at Yankee Stadium inside his head. But the truth was that his athletic progress began to taper off, and gradually he came to realize that his ambition needed a new outlet. This time he found it in music. Alan's focus on music confirmed his mother's influence-and his father's lack of it. As well as presenting the boy with his book on economics, Herbert had taken him to visit an uncle, an accountant who lived in enviable splendor in an apartment on Central Park South; given Alan's aptitude for math, he might have decided in his teens to adopt this uncle as a role model. But nothing about the father appealed much to the son; he was far more drawn to his maternal family. Grandfather Nathan was a cantor in a synagogue in the Bronx; Uncle Mario could play the most complex piano pieces on sight; Cousin Claire was on her way to becoming a professional singer. And, of course, music was Rose's love. The sound of a Bach concerto or a music-hall ballad transported Alan to a happy place, where his mother was singing and the rhythm and melody bound the two of them together.