



DAVID SWANSON / Inquirer Staff Photographer

Influences What shapes the minds that make the news

Al Filreis

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Quotation to live by: "Things explain each other, not themselves." — George Oppen

Books on my nightstand right now:

Oranges, by John McPhee; *The Lay of the Land*, by Richard Ford; *IFLIFE*, by Bob Perelman; *Darfur Diaries: Stories of Survival* (<http://go.philly.com/darfurdiaries>), by Jen Marlowe, Aisha Bain, Adam Shapiro and Paul Rusesabagina.

Favorite author, fiction: Grace Paley.

Favorite author, nonfiction: Roger Angell.

Favorite poets or poems: William Carlos Williams and Emily Dickinson. Poems: Williams' "To Elsie" (<http://go.philly.com/toelsie>); Dickinson's "I dwell in possibility" (<http://go.philly.com/possibility>).

Favorite beach reading: Any good book about baseball.

Book or author other people praise, but I never liked: *Night*, by Elie Wiesel.

A book that influenced how I live my life: *The Periodic Table*, by Primo Levi.

TV show I'm not ashamed to admit I watch: *Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip*, on NBC.

TV show I hate to admit I like: *American Idol*, on Fox.

Favorite comic strip: Don't read them at all.

Movie I love so much I've watched it more than twice: *Fail-Safe* (1964).

Web sites I visit regularly: UbuWeb, by Kenny Goldsmith (www.ubu.com); Human Rights Watch (www.hrw.org).

If you turned my car radio on right now, it would be tuned to: WXPB-FM (88.5).

Magazines I read regularly: The New Yorker.

Favorite type of music: Bob Dylan — himself, or anyone covering a Dylan song.

Last concert/performance attended: Francis Dunnery at the Tin Angel, June 16, 2006.

Recording I play when my soul needs a lift: Patty Griffin, "Making Pies," from her album *1,000 Kisses*.

Person in my field whom I most admire: Bob Lucid, who died in December. Bob, an emeritus professor of English at Penn, first had the idea (in 1995) of creating the Kelly Writers House.

Living person I'd most like to join for dinner and conversation: Pete Seeger.

Heroes from history: Kazik (Simha Rotem — a leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising); Roberto Clemente; Rosie the Riveter; Marian Anderson.

If I had the power to order all of the Philadelphia region to read one book, it would be: *The Periodic Table*, by Primo Levi.

And here's why: The book is in part a plea for nonspecialized, ethical science — for a form of empirical understanding that depends on the poetic sensibility, a sensibility that has the power to prevent genocide.