

## An Unlikely Hero Takes Reader On A Bizarre Tour

A CONFEDERACY OF DUNCES. By John Kennedy Toole. LSU Press. 338 Pages. \$12.95.

The term "unlikely hero" has been misused, I suspect, until Ignatius J. Reilly waddled into literature via "A Confederacy of Dunces."

Ignatius is a fat slob of a man who could think of nothing more nauseating than to be living in the 20th century. He leads the reader on a bizarre tour of the city of New Orleans during this farce of everything that modern man holds dear.

This book is a masterpiece, pure and simple. It is ironic that the reading public was almost denied the opportunity to share in the lives of Ignatius, his mother Irene, Santa Battaglia, Burma Jones, Gus Levy, Myrna Minkoff and Miss Trixie.

The author killed himself in 1969. His mother took a smudged carbon copy of the manuscript to Walker Percy, the novelist, who at first didn't want to read it. After he had, he made sure it was published.

The novel's comedic nature (it will make you laugh out loud, even if you don't generally laugh at books) is matched only by the inventiveness of the story line and the priceless caricatures Toole paints of his New Orleans and its inhabitants. The story seems to generate itself; the characters speak in hauntingly accurate prose.

One critic of this book has said, to paraphrase Tom Robbins ("Another Roadside Attraction," "Even Cowgirls Get the Blues" and, most recently, "Still Life with Woodpecker") would have written "Confederacy of Dunces," if he could have.

That critic was right.

Tony Brown  
Staff Review