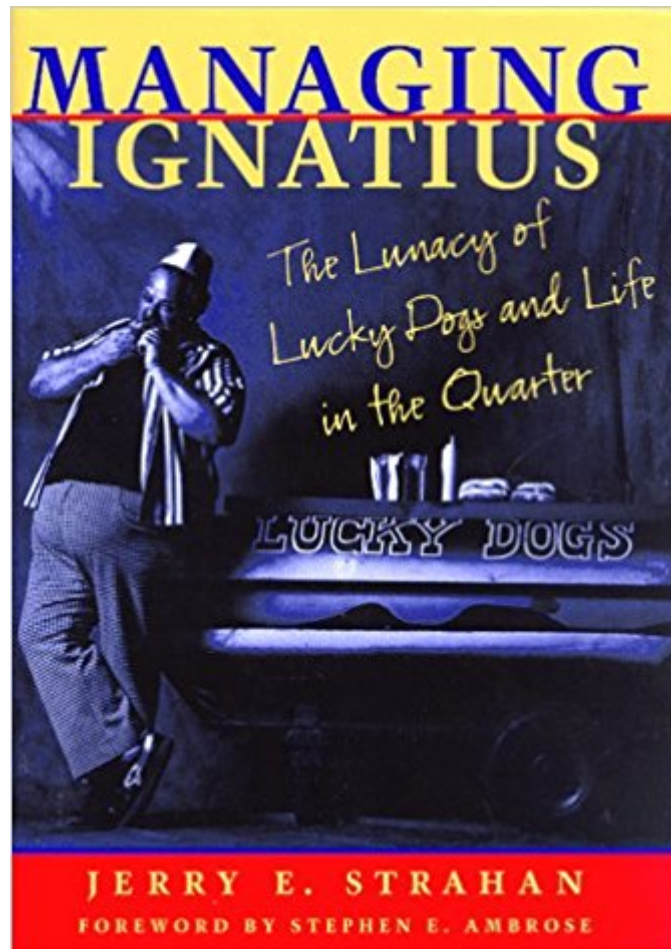




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# Managing Ignatius: The Lunacy Of Lucky Dogs And Life In The Quarter



## Synopsis

In John Kennedy Toole's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel "A Confederacy of Dunces, Ignatius J. Reilly, an overweight genius misfit, winds up selling wienies for Paradise Vendors, Inc. (the fictional equivalent of Lucky Dogs) in New Orleans' French Quarter. In "Managing Ignatius", Strahan relates his amusing--and bemusing--experiences working for more than two decades with the audacious characters who comprise the actual stable of Lucky Dog vendors. 24 halftones.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

For more than 20 years, Strahan managed the Lucky Dog company, whose vendors sell wienies out of the seven-foot-long hot dog-shaped carts that can be found on almost any street corner in New Orleans's French Quarter. He gave his book its present title because Ignatius J. Reilly, the outsized hero of John Kennedy Toole's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *A Confederacy of Dunces*, is a composite of actual Lucky Dog vendors, though Strahan confesses he thought of calling it *A Hundred and One People I Wish I Had Never Met*. Apparently, altar boys don't peddle pups in the Quarter, and the author found himself riding herd on a crew mainly of transients too antsy to do any other kind of work; some stayed for years, but most took off after a few weeks, often with the company's share of the proceeds. "Deep down inside they were basically kind, loyal, and caring people," writes Strahan, "but these qualities rarely surfaced." A historian who dropped out of the Tulane doctoral program for a temporary job that became a permanent one, Strahan kept his sanity by flexing a comic sense that also keeps the reader laughing. And drooling, too, because only a diehard frankophobe will be able to read *Managing Ignatius* without intermittent longings for a Lucky

Dog in a steamed bun topped with chili, cheese and onions; the product stays the same, even if the vendors don't. 24 halftones. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

The "Ignatius" in the title alludes to Ignatius J. Reilly, the colorful hero of John Kennedy Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces* (1980), who worked briefly for Paradise Vendors, Inc., the fictional counterpart of Lucky Dogs. Armed with a master's degree in history, Strahan left academia to peddle weenies in New Orleans and to manage an assortment of misfits rivaled only by Henry Miller's motley crew at the Cosmodemonic Telegraph Company (*Tropic of Capricorn*). Strahan recounts the antics of the petty criminals, drunks, and madmen he supervised for over 25 years as he traces the rise of Lucky Dogs from a single Orange Julius store on Bourbon Street to an international franchise of successful hot dog stands. Frank about his vendors' moral failings, Strahan nevertheless treats them with sympathy and affection. Those with an appetite for hot dogs and the French Quarter will relish this delicious read. William Gargan, Brooklyn Coll. Lib., CUNY Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This book made me laugh out loud. It is a wonderful read, period. But, if you grew up or live in New Orleans and saw a Lucky Dog vendor on just about every corner, you will love it. The title refers to the character in the book "Confederacy of Dunces"

This is a fun read about the people who man the Lucky Dogs carts in New Orleans. The cast of characters that populate the book sound like works of fiction but are not. Pity the poor manager!

Lucky Dogs hold a Zen quintessence that can only be approximated by the sobriquet "Bourbon Street Steak," and are oddly more satisfying than Café du Monde beignets and chicory coffee in invoking memories of New Orleans and her pleasures. Are Lucky Dogs, therefore, our petite Madeleine dipped in tea? Proust's ghost will not say, for now is discretion, and these are our memories, after all. Historian Jerry Strahan has had a very American career. He is a respected and indeed famous and authoritative scholar of military history, but like many a family man needed to provide for his brood with a higher cash flow than itinerant academic leavings would provide, and fell into managing the Lucky Dog operation through those twin hands, fate and opportunity surrounded by less appealing alternatives. Over the decades he grew into the job, and even expanded the operation to Washington, D.C., where I was a happy customer. Strahan's academic career is only a leitmotif in "Managing Ignatius: The Lunacy of Lucky Dogs and Life in New Orleans" for he places

the characters of the vendors he deals with and his colorful memories front and center. For those not in the know, the "Ignatius" of the title is the immortal character of John Kennedy Toole's "Confederacy of Dunces" who has a comic scene selling weenies from a push wagon that is possibly one of the greatest memorable pieces of character and action reinforcing each other in American literature. To describe this scene as classic damns it with faint praise, for it simultaneously captures the character, the city, the soul, comedy, and tragedy in a single sustained breath. It should be a tattoo, and no American high school student should be unfamiliar with it. And the primary emphasis of "Managing Ignatius" story is that Strahan works with many who are at the margins of employability, yet have personalities that draw you. "Managing Ignatius" therefore should serve as a management science alternative textbook, for indeed Strahan's goal is to sell weenies with a volatile cast and crew. He makes many bricks with very little straw. Yet, there is a very tender side to his memoir, for Strahan never deprecates nor condemns even the most fricative people he must motivate. Indeed, he often observes that some of his most prickly characters end up being the best and most enduring vendors, and acknowledges that in an odd way many of them have found their calling in life, just as Strahan has found his. This is an excellent, amusing, informative book that commands attention on multiple levels, and is not simply for tourists of New Orleans or Toole fans. For the story Strahan tells here is like our own as even the soul has a journey in life. In "Managing Ignatius" Strahan tells that story and "...the result of all our travels will be to arrive back where we started, and know it for the very first time." (T.S. Eliot)

A classic tale of life in New Orleans.

Living in New Orleans for the last 20 years has given me the background for appreciating this book. It's a entertaining view of one of our iconic businesses. The stars of the book are the people that worked there over the years and just like New Orleans, they are unique.

I started to read this book because I am a fan of Confederacy of Dunces, but now I am a fan of Jerry Strahan. Here is a educated man that has lived a life in a world of transients and street people that I will never know. I feel I have had an up close and personal visit to the strange but real world of misfits - hookers, hustlers and folks that will never be my suburban idea of normal. Thanks for the trip.

Yeah you Right!

Very satisfied with book the book and the book seller.

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