



The Duke Legacy

D.W. Duke

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Washington Duke is very young when he first realizes there is racial discrimination in the South. Living outside of Hillsboro, North Carolina, in the mid-1820s, he is one of ten children in a family that shares the wilderness with bears, rattlesnakes, and mountain lions. Washington learns about the world around him from his scholarly father, nurtures a compassion for others, and eventually grows into a man deeply troubled by the institution of slavery. Unaware of what awaits him, Washington is conscripted into the Confederate Army and reluctantly leaves his three-hundred-acre farm in 1864 to fight in the war.

When the Civil War is over, Washington is left widowed, with nothing but his farm, two blind mules, a wagon load of tobacco, and his four children. Determined to rise from the rubble, Washington soon begins building the foundation for the Duke financial empire although not without challenges. As Washington ages, his sons eventually capture his dream to establish Duke University. Even with the family's successes, though, there is tragedy and heartache; Washington's granddaughter, Doris, dies under suspicious circumstances in 1993 and her estate becomes embroiled in a legal battle.

Based on a true story, this compelling and inspirational tale examines the life of a gentle giant and his descendants who together built a multibillion-dollar empire, numerous charitable foundations, and a renowned academic institution, proving that anyone can overcome adversity to achieve greatness.

The Duke Legacy Details

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From Reader Review The Duke Legacy for online ebook

Ed says

We loved it. A very very good read. Should be required reading for every Duke freshman, Ed and Marilyn

David Johnson says

I thought this book was exceptional. I believe that to understand it one has to fully understand historical fiction and not forget that the writer is a lawyer. He did not dumb the language down like a pop fiction writer (Grisham and others). Instead, he wrote with elegance and proper sentence structure throughout, more like one would expect from Jane Austen or Charles Dickens. For the most part he portrayed the Duke family members as well educated and not using poor sentence structure. Again, I believe this would have been consistent with reality. He explains that their ancestor Henry was well educated and from Virginia high society. I know that education was very important to this family. Washington Duke's father Taylor was on the school board and was a captain in the NC militia and Washington's brother Billy was an ordained Methodist minister. They were not a backwoods hick family most people in North Carolina believe them to have been. I am so grateful that he did not dumb down the text to create a pop fiction novel but kept it up there.

I might add that the book seems to be serving his intended purpose in that I have seen that it is being used in law schools as a case study on elder abuse (the Doris Duke section). I read recently that Duke (the author) and Doris Duke's attorneys are giving lectures in law schools and elsewhere on elder abuse using the book as a case study. I think this is exactly what he intended and probably could not have been done if he had reduced the language to feign a Huck Finn drawl in order to "capture the culture". That would have been artificial in my opinion and not true to the Duke family.

In the text the author explains that he is not writing a biography. There are quite a few biographies on the Duke family, which no one reads anyway, and there was no reason to reinvent the wheel. Nor do I believe he was necessarily trying to write a literary masterpiece, though he may well have. Even though it is a novel, he cites in footnotes the source for every story told so the reader knows exactly where the story came from and whether a particular story is fact or fiction. I have never seen this done before and some have said that he has raised historical fiction to a higher standard. Likely for some, citing sources in footnotes will automatically transform the book into a biography, or place it somewhere between a biography and a novel. This will no doubt cause consternation for those who dwell in a finite limited frame of reference and cannot differentiate between form and substance, but those whose opinions matter have found the style quite fascinating and cutting edge. I think his true goal was simply to share a collection of stories, some of which have never been heard before, and to highlight some biographical information in a narrative format, to cause an interest in the Duke family through dramatization. He even refers the reader to writers such as Robert Durden and Pony Duke for a more in depth biographical work. So in that sense, I believe he was attempting to provide information at a level most would consider sufficient and to serve as a spring board for the few who would like to study the the family in greater depth.

This book does contain some information no other book contains in that he addresses the court case of Doris Duke's death with over 100 pages of court transcripts and depositions. He also includes an interview of Doris Duke's attorneys. This has never been done before which I believe is the reason the book is being picked up

by law schools. He gives enough information to provide a good flavor of this fascinating family, without overburdening the text with details most people would not have an interest in knowing, as the biographies have done.

In addition to the new information about Doris Duke, the author has provided hundreds of pages of stories that have never been told in any publication before. These stories are based on information exclusively within the Duke family. If you are hoping that he will trash the family and portray them as moral degenerates, then don't waste your time on this book. While many writers have done this, by focusing on certain troubled members of the family, this writer has not. Clearly, the author was not interested in selling his soul to sell a few more books. Frankly, I cannot think of a more fascinating source of information than the folklore of one of the most secret and powerful families the world has ever seen, and I can only assume that the number of stories he has told are miniscule in comparison to the number stories he chose not to tell.

I had the privilege of meeting the author at Washington Duke Inn in Durham when he was in town for a conference with Coach K. Based on our discussion, I think that he wrote this book out of love for the Duke family and to demystify the family by showing them for who they really are. It is nice to know that a person can be good and wealthy at the same time. I give *The Duke Legacy* five stars hands down as most reviewers elsewhere have.

Yaaresse says

Replaced original review: 4/5/15

When I finished this book back in March, I wrote a fairly long opinion of it which contained a lot of reasons why I thought it sub-par. As I said in my original opinion, It's not a horrible book, just very average. I'm not changing my GR star rating, but I have since realized the this book just doesn't rate the attention or page space I'd given it previously, so I have deleted the original review. (I was tempted to bust it down to one star after a "friend of the author" became so obnoxious in his zealous defense that I ended up blocking someone for the first time ever.)

In my opinion, this book brings nothing new to the subject (or the genre of historical fiction). The writing is uneven, the characters and dialog is hyperbolic, and there's no feel for the time or place which is essential in historical fiction.

There is a review of the book that appeared in the Burlington, NC daily paper in October 2014. It's more positive than my opinion was/is, but makes some of the same points about the weaknesses in the writing style.

If you're looking for a good book on the Dukes, I suggest Robert Durden's excellent and entertaining biography, *The Dukes of Durham*..
