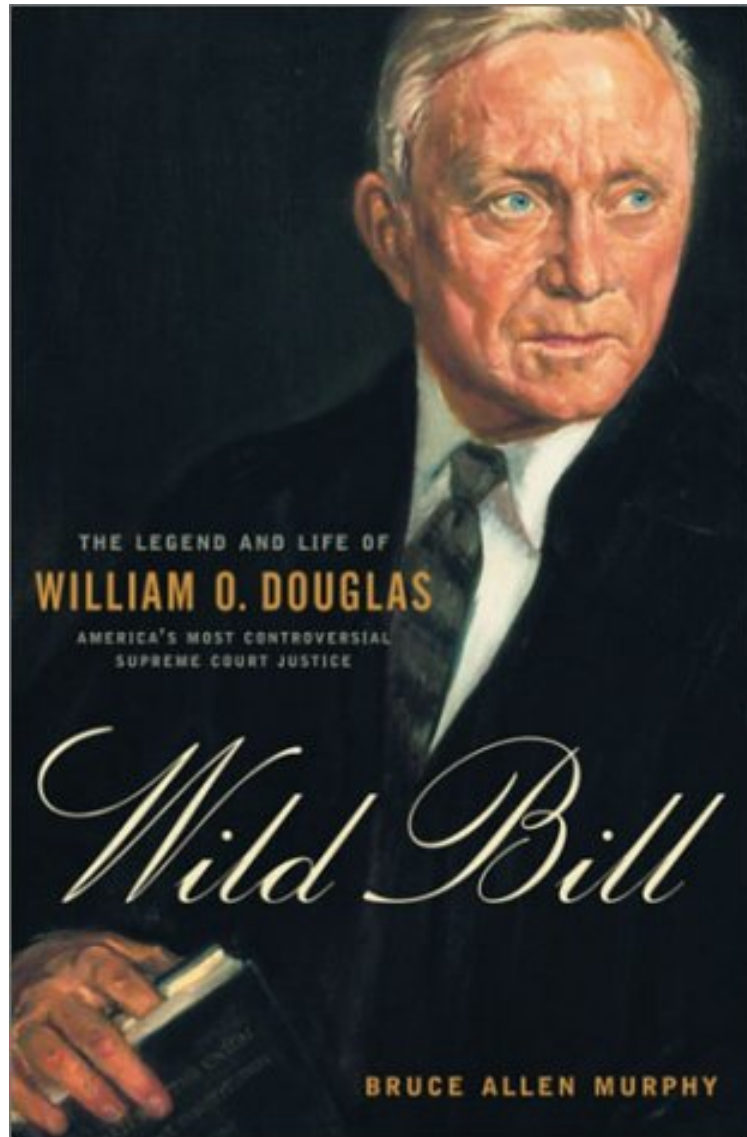


[Download free pdf] Wild Bill: The Legend and Life of William O. Douglas

Wild Bill: The Legend and Life of William O. Douglas

Bruce Murphy

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Bruce Murphy : Wild Bill: The Legend and Life of William O. Douglas before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Wild Bill: The Legend and Life of William O. Douglas:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An Outstanding BiographyBy C. Ellen ConnallyWhen this large tome arrived, I wondered if I would ever finish it and questioned whether it would hold my interest. I became interested in learning more about Justice Douglas after reading Noah Feldman's SCORPIONS which is an account of FDR's appointees to the high court. However, seven days later I finished the book! Murphy does an outstanding job of

telling the story of this complex man. One of the things that I found so interesting about the life of Justice Douglas is what he got away with. In this age of social media and constant news coverage, he could have hardly lived the life that he led - particularly his womanizing. It's also interesting how Justice and others, while serving on the Supreme Court were often vying for other positions - especially the vice presidency and even the presidency. The extra judicial affairs that Douglas engaged in would hardly be tolerated today. Douglas' story is a true Horatio Alger story, but it is also the story of a man that could alter his own story to put himself in the best light. Hardly a person with the winning personality and someone who always had money problems, he was able to survive as the longest serving Justice of the Supreme Court and hold the record for the most marriages and the most divorces. Reading his biography tells a lot about America in the first half of the 20th Century and the Supreme Court. 8 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Very impressive effort. By P. Meltzer It seems obvious that a tremendous amount of work went into this biography and I feel that the results were absolutely worth that effort and thus I would recommend this book highly. And what do we learn about Justice Douglas? As a husband (four times over), he was terrible. As a parent, he was similarly terrible, enough so that his kids more or less disowned him, and rightfully so. As a boss (to his law clerks and secretaries), he was atrocious to work for. Indeed, looking at the "private Douglas", there is almost nothing admirable about the man. On the other hand, looking at "Justice Douglas", we see a hard-working, extremely bright man, whose views on the Amendments in the Bill of Rights (especially the First Amendment) made him the champion of the poor, the dispossessed, the repressed and the oppressed. Moreover, with the benefit of hindsight, I would say that most of his liberal leaning opinions (whether in the majority or in dissent) have held up well over the years, especially in the First Amendment area. Of course, one might conclude that certain issues he had to deal with, particularly on the race front (say, whether a poll tax in the South was constitutional) were less tricky than issues we confront today such as reverse discrimination under the guise of diversity (such as the U. of Michigan Law School case currently awaiting decision by the Supreme Court). It is interesting to note however that in one of his last cases on the bench in 1974, he indicated that he had no tolerance any kind of quotas, even if dressed up in the lingo of diversity. On a more general note, I would say that writing a biography of a judge is in some ways more challenging than writing the biography of other famous people from other professions like, say, entertainers, athletes, performers or even politicians. For those kinds of subjects, when they "do their profession", whether for better or worse, the public is watching and, more importantly, reacting. Thus, one can compare the actions of the subject with the response of the public, whether the subject is on the way up or on the way down. However, with a judge, even an influential Justice like Douglas, when he is doing his job, he is simply writing opinions. While it is interesting to see what those opinions are (particularly if a judicial philosophy changes over time as Douglas' clearly did), to summarize or recite all those opinions may not, in the hands of the wrong person, make for such a fascinating biography. However I feel that Murphy did a masterly job. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars. By Mary C. Good read

William Orville Douglas was both the most accomplished and the most controversial justice ever to serve on the United States Supreme Court. He emerged from isolated Yakima, Washington, to be dubbed, by the age of thirty, the most outstanding law professor in the nation; at age thirty-eight, he was the chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, cleaning up a corrupt Wall Street during the Great Depression; by the age of forty, he was the second youngest Supreme Court justice in American history, going on to serve longer and to write more opinions and dissents than any other justice. In evolving from a pro-government advocate in the 1940s to an icon of liberalism in the 1960s, Douglas became a champion for the rights of privacy, free speech, and the environment. While doing so, Wild Bill lived up to his nickname by racking up more marriages, more divorces, and more impeachment attempts aimed against him than any other member of the Court. But it was what Douglas did not accomplish that haunted him: He never fulfilled his mother's ambition for him to become president of the United States. Douglas's life was the stuff of novels, but with his eye on his public image and his potential electability to the White House, the truth was not good enough for him. Using what he called literary license, he wrote three memoirs in which the American public was led to believe that he had suffered from polio as an infant and was raised by an impoverished, widowed mother whose life savings were stolen by the family attorney. He further chronicled his time as a poverty-stricken student sleeping in a tent while attending Whitman College, serving as a private in the army during World War I, and riding the rods like a hobo to attend Columbia Law School. Relying on fifteen years of exhaustive research in eighty-six manuscript collections, revealing long-hidden documents, and interviews conducted with more than one hundred people, many sharing their recollections for the first time, Bruce Allen Murphy reveals the truth behind Douglas's carefully constructed image. While William O. Douglas wrote fiction in the form of memoir, Murphy presents the truth with a narrative flair that reads like a novel.

From Publishers Weekly Despite the enduring image of former Supreme Court justice William O. Douglas as the white-haired, mountain-climbing protector of individual rights and liberal causes, the man who emerges from Murphy's thorough biography is a great deal more complicated. In such books as *Of Men and Mountains*, Douglas himself carefully crafted the myth of the poor boy from the state of Washington who arrived in New York with just a few cents

in his pocket and ended up conquering the Eastern establishment in the name of the little guy. Like so many of the stories he fostered about himself, though, this one was only partially true; others, such as a childhood bout with polio, were outright false. In reality, Douglas enjoyed tremendous emotional and financial support throughout his life from his family, friends and multiple wives. On a professional level, he achieved much that has been overshadowed by his career on the Court. As the chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission during the 1930s, he helped to curb self-dealing by Wall Street brokers and bankers who manipulated the system at the expense of the small investor. (This discussion has obvious parallels to today's scandals, as does Murphy's examination of how civil liberties eroded during the Cold War despite Douglas's efforts to the contrary.)

Murphy (*Fortas: The Rise and Ruin of a Supreme Court Justice*) does a wonderful job of providing just enough historical context to allow general readers to appreciate the complexity of his brilliant, but flawed, subject without bogging down his narrative in a crush of detail. Douglas's biography is as much a history of American politics in the mid-20th century as it is a portrayal of the man himself. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist

Murphy, a judicial scholar and biographer of three Supreme Court justices, this time reveals the genius and the warts of William O. Douglas, arguably the greatest influence on American jurisprudence. Douglas was one of the youngest and longest-serving Supreme Court justices, a perennial dissenter who shaped the right to privacy and attempted to halt President Nixon's Vietnam War efforts. After graduating with honors from Columbia Law School, Douglas was highly sought after and eventually settled on a professorship at Yale Law School. Attracted by the New Deal of Roosevelt's administration, he accepted the post of chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission and helped reform Wall Street. Here Murphy explores new material on Douglas, including his hidden ambitions to be president. This extraordinary man, a rugged outdoorsman and master of political machinations, endured four impeachment attempts to unseat him from the court, as well as four sometimes-turbulent marriages, and yet remained an American giant. This is a well-researched and absorbing look at an enduring figure in American legal history. Vernon Ford Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved

Praise for Bruce Allen Murphy *Fortas: The Rise and Ruin of a Supreme Court Justice* The tragedy of Abe Fortas, who would have been one of the great chief justices ever, in my opinion, is detailed in vivid fashion by Murphy, who has a case to build and builds it well. Larry King, USA Today One of the best recent biographies I have read. It brings Fortas to life, explaining his career and how he operated. More than that, it tells the most complete story we have about the events that led to Fortas's downfall. It will be the standard work on this personal and professional tragedy. Bernard Schwartz, Edwin D. Webb Professor of Law, New York University, author of *Super Chief: Earl Warren and His Supreme Court* An engrossing tale. As in Greek tragedy, flaws of character and hubris led to disaster. Raoul Berger, Harvard Law School, author of *Government by Judiciary: The Transformation of the Fourteenth Amendment* The Brandeis/Frankfurter Connection: The Secret Political Activities of Two Supreme Court Justices Murphy challenges us in this pathbreaking and thoroughly documented study to reexamine our preconceptions of the role of the judiciary in American government and society. Richard Bernstein, Harvard Law Record