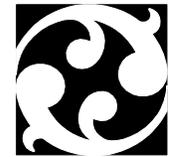




CAMELOT BOOK CLUB



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THE BIG RICH : The Rise and Fall of the Texas Greatest Oil Fortunes
by Bryan Burrough

Author Burrough chronicles the rise and fall of one of the great economic and political powerhouses of the twentieth century – Texas oil.

Known in their day as the Big Four, Roy Cullen, H.L. Hunt, Clint Murchison, and Sid Richardson were all from modest backgrounds, and all became patriarchs of the richest and most influential oil families in Texas – the state’s equivalent of royalty. Along with their peers, they shifted wealth and power in America both south and west, largely bankrolling the rise of modern conservatism, and sending three of their state’s native sons to the White House. As a class they came to be known as the Big Rich, and together they created a new legend in America – the swaggering Texas oil tycoon who owns private islands, sprawling ranches, and perhaps a football team or two, and mingles with presidents and Hollywood stars.

(Editor’s Note: The above is adapted from the book jacket’s description.)

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NOTES from CAMELOT'S DISCUSSION

- ★ These men were huge risk-takers. They gambled the most enormous amounts of money to dig a new well or lay a pipe-line across long distances. – They seemed to us to be of a different breed.
- ★ We could see the truth in the saying “Money is power” as they used their influences in high places.
- ★ We laughed at Bunker Hunt’s saying “A billion dollars isn’t what it used to be.”
- ★ They often carried very large amounts of cash so they could wrap up a deal without delay.
- ★ Their huge influence was seen in the political arena, as they cultivated friendships with the persons in power in government, e.g. Dwight Eisenhower, LBJ, J. Edgar Hoover.
- ★ They espoused the ultra-conservative policies, even supported the far-right John Birch Society.

(continued next page)

- ★ We noted the enormous competition between the cities of Dallas and Houston, which still continues to some extent to this day.
 - ★ We laughed at Clint Murchison Jr.'s antics in the practical jokes he pulled, such as bringing in a crane to plop a forty-foot yacht in an associate's swimming-pool.
 - ★ The lack of morality and lack of ethics among the Big Four was rampant. We were especially shocked at H.L. Hunt's bigamist life style.
 - ★ We noted the author seemed to be slanted against the conservative elements depicted in the story.
 - ★ There was lots of personal reminiscing as many of us are native or long-time Texans and had some association with some of the places or people in the story.
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NEXT MEETING

When? Friday, September 18, 2009, 1:30p.

Where? At Ann Fitzgerald's house

Why? To have fun, and to discuss our September selection,

A Handful of Dust by Evelyn Waugh, a satirical novel which examines the themes of contemporary amorality and the death of spiritual values.

(Note: October book selection is *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett.)

MEETING NOTES

Our meeting was hosted by Tim Latta, our Guest Hostess, who adeptly led the book discussion and served us wonderful fresh fruit and ice-cream and cookies. Thanks, Tim.

As usual, our conversations covered the water-front. We talked about the charms of McKinney, Texas -- a wonderful town; and had a "Luann Update", as Tim had spent time with her in McKinney. We all love Luann Van Winckel, and are so happy to know she is busy with her current projects and is carrying on bravely after losing Rip last October. --We enjoyed the brief company of the charming Brad, Anne Simms' small, 16-month-old, smiling grandchild.

We heard tales of horrific bee stings - (ground bees, bumble-bees) - the lesson is, don't poke into a place or a hole outside in East Texas if you don't know what's in there.

When the glare from the windows became a problem, our hostess lowered her wonderful solar shades with a remote control. Great technology -- this must be the 21st century. - Sue Ward brought up the subject of dangers to our water supply. She had done her homework, and got our attention. Now, if we can just stop polluting our waters!

We didn't solve all the problems of the world, but we got a good start.

CAMELOT COMMENTS on *THE BIG RICH*

Very interesting book - lived in Texas all my life and wouldn't want to live anywhere else.

Liked the book and learned a lot about Texas.

Looking forward to reading it.

A cautionary tale - what wealth does to peoples' lives.

Very interesting book - enjoyed hearing about the lives of the characters.

Really enjoyed it - learned a lot of Texas history.

Enjoyed it - liked learning about early Texas.

I'm a third-generation Texan, and so thankful they discovered oil. Without it, my parents may have been poor farmers. But my father worked for an oil company, and also my husband's father did. Oil gave everyone jobs and opened up new horizons.

I got confused with the names and dates in the first half of the book - may not have given it enough time. I enjoyed the second half a lot more than the first.

So interesting to me - have lived in Texas most of my adult life, and loved reading about early Texas. Our lives in Houston for over 40 years had a lot of connections with the places and some of the people depicted in the book.

Quote of the Day

MAKE NO SMALL PLANS, FOR THEY HAVE NO MAGIC TO STIR MEN'S SOULS.

CAMELOT BOOK CLUB IS GREAT

