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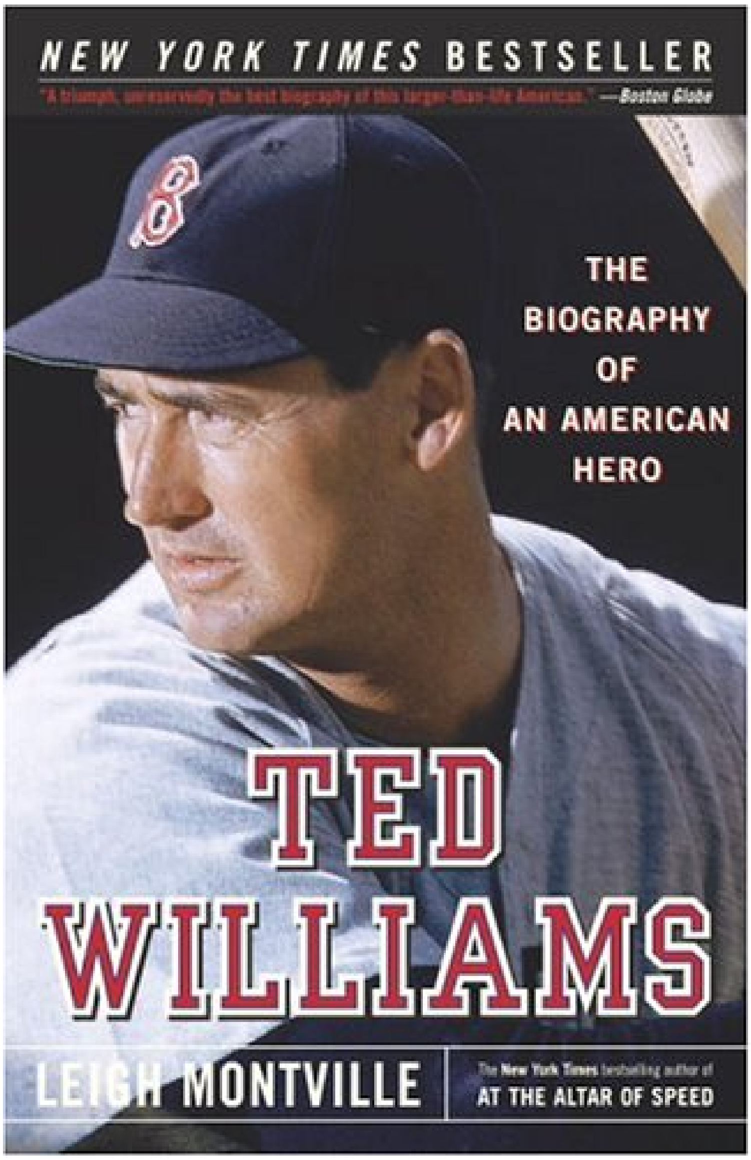
Ted Williams: The Biography of an American Hero


NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
"A triumph, unreservedly the best biography of this larger-than-life American." —Boston Globe
THE BIOGRAPHY OF AN AMERICAN HERO
TED WILLIAMS
LEIGH MONTVILLE
The New York Times bestselling author of AT THE ALTAR OF SPEED

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(Library ebook) Ted Williams: The Biography of an American Hero

Par Leigh Montville : Ted Williams: The Biography of an American Hero before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ted Williams: The Biography of an American Hero:

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe Kid. The Splendid Splinter. Teddy Ballgame. One of the greatest figures of his generation, and arguably the greatest baseball hitter of all time. But what made Ted Williams a legend and a lightning rod for controversy in life and in death? Still a gangly teenager when he stepped into a Boston Red Sox uniform in 1939, Williamss boisterous personality and penchant for towering home runs earned him adoring admirers and venomous critics. In 1941, the entire country followed Williams's stunning .406 season, a record that has not been touched in over six decades. Then at the pinnacle of his prime, Williams left Boston to train and serve as a fighter pilot in World War II, missing three full years of baseball, making his achievements all the more remarkable.Ted Willams's personal life was equally colorful. His attraction to women (and their attraction to him) was a constant. He was married and divorced three times and he fathered two daughters and a son. He was one of corporate America's first modern spokesmen, and he remained, nearly into his eighties, a fiercely devoted fisherman. With his son, John Henry Williams, he devoted his final years to the sports memorabilia business, even as illness overtook him. And in death, controversy and public outcry followed Williams and the disagreements between his children over the decision to have his body preserved for future resuscitation in a cryonics facility--a fate, many argue, Williams never wanted. With unmatched verve and passion, and drawing upon hundreds of interviews, acclaimed best-selling author Leigh Montville brings to life Ted Williams's superb triumphs, lonely tragedies, and intensely colorful personality, in a biography that is fitting of an American hero and legend.ExtraitChapter 1BostonTed Williams of the Boston Red Sox looked as fit as an Indian buck. After a winter out of doors, including a month of lazy fishing at the edge of the Florida Everglades, he was tanned to a light mahogany. His brownish green eyes were clear and sharp, his face lean, the big hands that wrapped around the handle of his 34-oz. Louisville Slugger were calloused and hard. He had 198 pounds, mostly well-trained muscle, tucked away on his six-ft. 3'3/4 in. frame. He expected, he conceded, "to have a pretty good year."But as usual Ted Williams had a number of worries at the back of his mind.Time, April 10, 1950The only other car in the parking lot was a cream-colored Cadillac Coupe DeVille with Minnesota license plates. Jimmy Carroll paid no attention.The sun was coming up, beautiful, over the Atlantic Ocean. Six o'clock in the morning. Jimmy was supposed to meet some people to go out on some rich guy's yacht from Falmouth, Massachusetts, a town located at the fat beginning end of Cape Cod. One of the people, believe it or not, was supposed to be Ellis Kinder, the pitcher for the Boston Red Sox. Jimmy was a baseball fan. He had driven through the dark from Boston, excited, and arrived way too early.The door to the cream-colored Cadillac Coupe DeVille opened. Theodore Samuel Williams stepped out."I didn't know what to do," Jimmy Carroll says, all these years later. "He started walking toward my car. I rolled down the window.""Do you know Ellie Kinder?" Ted Williams asked. "Are you waiting for him?""Yeah," Jimmy blurted."Well, where the hell is he? Hi. I'm Ted Williams.""No kidding!" Jimmy blurted again. "Jimmy Carroll.""The sons of bitches are always late. Do you know a place around here where we can get some breakfast?""Well, yeah," Jimmy blurted yet one more time."Well, come on, let's get some breakfast."There are other moments in his life Jimmy Carroll can describe with meaning and drama--marriage, divorce, births of children--but none are touched with the magic of that 1950s moment. The sun forever sits the same way. The car door always opens. The tall figure--Jesus, good Christ, it's him--unfolds.Ted Williams becomes Jimmy Carroll's friend."We'd take rides," Jimmy says about the relationship that developed long ago. "He loved to take rides. He loved going along the Charles River. We'd make the whole loop, over to Cambridge, out to Newton and back. He'd be talking about all the places we passed, asking questions, making comments. We'd take walks. We'd go down Marlborough Street at night, really quiet and dark, a lot of college kids living there, come back up Beacon Street. Noisier. Cars would stop. People would shout."I took him all over the place. I took him out to Nantasket once, to the amusement park. Mobbed. We could only stay about five minutes. I took him to South Boston. Mobbed. He signed autographs for all these kids at the L Street Bath House. I took him . . . one day we're sitting around, doing nothing, and he says, 'Let's go somewhere. Where can we go?' I said, 'Why don't we go over and visit James Michael Curley, the former mayor of Boston? He's very sick.' Ted said, 'The guy who went to jail because he was taking money to help the little guy?' I said, 'That's the one. He threw out the first pitch on Opening Day a couple times. You know him.'"We go. Ted Williams to see James Michael Curley! We get shown into a bedroom. There's two twin beds. Curley is in one of them. You can see he's close to dying. He's delighted to see Ted, though. He's a fan. Ted gets in the other twin bed! Curls up! They lie there, the two of them. Talked for an hour!"Magic.For the next eight, nine, ten years, there was magic."I'd drive him to the airport, pick him up," Jimmy says. "While he was on the road, he'd let me use the car. I was selling liquor at the time. I'd drive the big Cadillac Coupe DeVille to some place, park it right out front. I'd be having trouble with some clients, maybe the Greeks--they only wanted to buy from a Greek--and I'd point outside. 'You like that car? You know who it belongs to?' "One night Williams let Jimmy use the car for a date. Jimmy took the woman to Hugo's Lighthouse, a restaurant in suburban Cohasset. As he parked the car, a large policeman appeared. The policeman asked if Jimmy was a baseball player. Jimmy laughed and said he wasn't, but why would someone ask? The policeman said, "Because you're driving Ted Williams's car." Jimmy asked how the policeman would know this. The policeman said he just knew, that a lot of people knew what Ted Williams's car looked like. Everybody did."Could I ask you a favor?" the policeman also asked, after all of this business was done."Sure," Jimmy said."While you're eating, while you're in the restaurant, would it be possible for me just to sit in the car? Ted's car?""Sure," Jimmy said.He and his date ate their dinners. They came out of the restaurant. Six policemen--the original one and five of his friends--now were inside the car. Touching Ted's leather upholstery. Twirling Ted's chrome knobs. Trying to breathe Ted's air. Just once.The fame of Ted Williams in Boston and in much of the country during his baseball life was different from the fame of today. There is no analogy to make, really, to the situation of some living, modern famous person. Williams was closer to a figure from mythology or fiction, to a comic strip character, to Spiderman, Superman, Popeye the Sailor Man. Or more."I met him once, when I was around nine years old," William Bulger, former president of the University of Massachusetts, says. "I was with some youth group at a ballgame. He came over to meet us. I looked up and I thought I was looking into the face of God. He spoke to me. He said, 'Are you a boo-er?' I didn't know what a 'boo-er' was. I said nothing. I just stood there."The perpetual leftfielder of the Red Sox was famous in a time when heroes were constructed with the imagination and with words rather than force-fed and sold through a 21-inch or 56-inch color screen. The tape measure of the normal did not exist. He did things once, and you saw them once in person or heard them once on the radio or read about them forever. And they grew.The few pictures at the start of his career in 1939 that came onto the movie screen during the Warner Pathe news before the feature film at the downtown theater were herky-jerky images, black-and-white, Ted Williams obviously posing for his swing before the ballgame began, sometimes not even in the batter's box, perfect lighting, crack, then everything turned grainy and too fast as the hard-to-see ball traveled over a grainy fence and he ran the bases in a speeded-up hurry. Even the pictures at the end on television, 1960, were not much better."I started doing the Red Sox games in 1951," broadcaster Curt Gowdy says. "We used three cameras to cover the entire game. One from first base, one from third, one behind the plate. I went to [owner] Tom Yawkey at the end of the season and said, 'I think we could use a fourth camera from centerfield to show the balls and strikes. I think it would be a great addition.'"Yawkey surprised me. He didn't want it. He said the television coverage would become too good. People would stay home from the ballpark. We didn't get it."For virtually all of Ted Williams's 19 big-league years, the assembled folk at the ballpark had to report to friends and neighbors what they had seen him do. There was no replay. There was no highlights package at 11. How far did that ball go? How mighty was that swing? How mad, exactly, did The Splendid Splinter become? The voices of Gowdy and other broadcasters had to explain. The sets of fingers on the typewriters in the press box--each set lined up in direct competition with all the other sets of fingers in the press box--had to find phrases and sentences, cockamamy analogies, to translate and reconstruct reality for the general public's edification. Word of mouth had to carry the brushfires further.The figure that stepped from all of these words, from all of this thinking--the human being who actually came into a restaurant, sat down, and ordered a malted milkshake--had all the mystery of any unseen divinity. Each swallow, each bite of his sandwich, was an amazement.Hyperbole trailed Ted Williams like a faithful hound."The Red Sox used to come to Harvard to practice in our cage on rainy days," Billy Cleary, 1960 U.S. Olympic hockey player and longtime Harvard athletic director, says. "We had the only indoor facility in the area at the time. I was an undergraduate then, and as soon as we saw it was raining, we'd all go down to watch the Red Sox, to watch Ted."One day there was a bunch of kids around the batting cage, Ted at bat . . . a pitch came in, and he didn't swing. One of the wise-guy college kids shouted, 'Strike!' Ted turned around and said, 'That was not a goddamned strike. What do you know about baseball?' Kids being kids, a bunch of them laughed. Ted was fuming."His turn was done, so he stepped out and somebody else stepped in. You could see Ted was still mad. Fuming. He was muttering about the kids and the pitch, getting madder by the moment. When his turn finally came around again, you could see him squeezing the bat, harder and harder, still muttering. He was grinding his teeth. The pitcher threw the ball, and Ted swung, and he hit it so hard . . . there was a net, you know, inside the building . . . the ball went right through the net, broke the cords, then went straight to the ceiling, where it hit a big light. Broke the light. Sparks. Stuff falling from th...Revue de presseIt is unlikely that any reader could view Ted Williams as just a ballplayer ever again. New York Times Book Exceptional. Montville on Ted Williams is cant-miss, one of Americas best sportswriters weighing in on one of the last centurys most intriguing figures. A great read. Chicago TribuneLeigh Montville reaches a threshold even the mighty Williams could never touch: perfection. The beauty of Montvilles work is that it is not a baseball book, per se, so much as the life and times of an oft perplexing, always fascinating man.

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