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Royal Family: Years Of Transition



Synopsis

Here is a royal book with a difference. It is a family saga showing the monarchy from the death of Queen Victoria to the present day. But rather than just an account of the reign of the five 20th-century monarchs, this is a study of their dynasty; of both its major and minor members. The entire royal family is vividly portrayed with its triumphs and its heartbreaks, its brilliance and its mediocrity, its strengths and its vulnerabilities. The main theme explores the way in which, in over eighty years, the royal family has adapted to changing times in order not only to survive but to enhance its position in national and international life. It is an account of a royal house in the state of continuous transition; of a family deeply concerned with making itself relevant to contemporary life while retaining its essential element of mystique. Many other interesting themes also emerge: the education and upbringing of the royal children, the reconciling of public obligations with private inclinations, the constitutional position of the monarch, the frustrations of heirs-apparent, the varied and often onerous duties of family members, the composition of the royal households, the relationship with the press, the contrasting atmosphere of the different reigns, the marriages, the divorces, and the sometimes disastrous love affairs. Theo Aronson in writing this book has received an exceptional degree of cooperation from the Palace. He has been granted audiences with members of four generations of the royal family: the late Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, the Queen Mother, Princess Margaret and the Prince of Wales. He has also had help from members of the various royal households' secretaries, comptrollers, press secretaries, equerries and ladies-in-waiting. The late C. P. Snow has described Theo Aronson's writing as 'bright with intelligence and human wisdom... very highly recommended'.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book discusses the transitions between acceding monarchs as well as the familial events that take place during each of their reigns. It starts with King Edward VII ascending the throne on his mother's death. From there it goes to George V, Edward VIII, George VI, and the current and longest reigning British monarch, Queen Elizabeth II. First off, this book was published in 1983, so it's a book a bit behind the times but that didn't bother me because I wanted to see how at the time this book was printed, if Theo Aronson would portray the royal family any differently from other books of the time. It does in certain circumstances. While his assessment of Edward VII and George V are fair enough, he is too lenient on Edward VIII and the circumstances of his abdication. Wallis Simpson is treated better in this book than in others, there is very little mention of his sympathy towards Nazi Germany, which is crucial. He depends on Philip Zeigler's biography of Edward VIII too much and isn't critical enough on him. The former king was very insecure, selfish, and a masochist. King George VI is treated right enough, highlighting his insecurities but his dogged determination to overcome obstacles, including his stammer. He was big on duty and passed it on to QEII. The Queen is treated in a much better light although his sycophantic attitude toward Prince Charles (he was still married to Diana at the time and Will had been born.) is hard to take. To me, it's the little stories of the other members of the royal family that keep this book afloat. I learned things about the late Princess Marina of Greece (Duchess of Kent) that shocked me and made me really like her. The late Duchess of Gloucester was a woman of good works and there are other stories about the Queen relations that are neat to read about.

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