ForeWord Reviews

AUTOBIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

Amelia Earhart: A Biography
Doris L. Rich
Doris L. Rich Susan Van Dusen Narrator
Susan Van Dusen, narrator
Scholarly Audio
978-0-9660180-7-3
(July 2001)

Amelia Earhart was not only a famous aviator and flight record-breaker, she was also a motivational speaker, devoted child, socialite, and feminist. The woman who most people think of as a tragic figure lost in her quest for aviation history comes alive in this fascinating biography well-read by Van Dusen.

Amelia, known as AE to her close friends and family, grew up in the Midwest in a fairly affluent home. Summers were spent with her grandparents, amid wealth and social standing. During her teenage years, however, struggles by her father to cease his heavy drinking led to financial difficulties and embarrassment for Amelia, her mother, and sister. By the time Amelia was in college, the family could barely make ends meet. Her mother, and later Amelia, worked hard to maintain the impression of affluence.

Throughout her adult life Amelia would, like most children of alcoholics, find excuses for her father and attempt to support her mother both emotionally and financially. Her first exposure to flight came as a result of a trip to an airfield in California with her father. From then on she would let nothing stop her from achieving her goals in aviation.

The successes Amelia Earhart achieved in aviation are well-known and documented. What makes this book different is the unknown facts unearthed about her through letters, journals, receipts, and many newspaper and magazine articles. The fact that she was kind and considerate to the children who approached her; that she was soft-spoken and articulate, but did not like to call attention to herself; that she wore well-tailored clothes and silk blouses under her aviator jacket; and managed to find a place for herself in the predominantly male world of aviation as well as “high” society. She spoke for women’s rights, not only in the field of aviation, but in any professional field and, most importantly to her, in the home.

Listening to this book reminds one that the world lost not only a good pilot but a gifted individual on the tragic last flight of Amelia Earhart.

Deborah Jesseman