ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

Son: A Novel of Racial Justice Based on True Events
A.A. Allison
iUniverse
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Three Stars (out of Five)

Based on an event that took place in 1932 this novel reshapes the deadly shooting of a white teenager Michael "Son" Morrison Moss Jr. by a black schoolteacher in Austin Texas. The author chronicles sixty-year-old Charlie Jarrell's subsequent near lynching and trial and the grieving parents' fight against Texas's racist politics to ensure true justice for their son's killer. Allison has turned Charlie's plight into a powerful story of political and judicial intrigue.

A fifth-generation Texan and a former businessman and politician Allison engages his readers with details about backroom politics. He presents intriguing scenes of the wheeling and dealing that must have occurred to get a white lawyer to represent a black man. He pulls no punches in describing the vote-buying and pork barrel tactics involved to ensure that Charlie gets a fair trial. Even Son's parents are involved in the intrigue—Michael Sr. goes so far as to give a public speech that deflates an angry lynch mob where "laughter drunken singing occasional preaching added to the general din." While he saves Charlie and later sees him get the fair trial he argued for the result hits him "as if he had been slammed in the stomach."

The trial like the lynch mob's foment is depicted with dramatic tension as lawyers strive for the hearts and minds of the all-male white jurors with deeply entrenched beliefs. A parallel story of a black youth's conviction for killing Charlie's black boss increases the drama for the proceedings.

Allison's characters are masterfully presented. Charlie is depicted as a good man despite his faults and serious errors of judgement; the Moss family are pillars of decency consistently dedicated to ensuring the rule of law; and Texas Politicians including Lyndon Johnson and Jim and Miriam Ferguson play the roles Allison assigns them. Other memorable characters include a political fixer who converses with crows and the Moss family's elderly black maid who dances robustly with "her matchstick legs rising out of old unlaced men's shoes."

Despite an unfortunate number of typos grammatical flubs and at least one error in chronology *Son* is a rewarding and informative read.

M. Wayne Cunningham