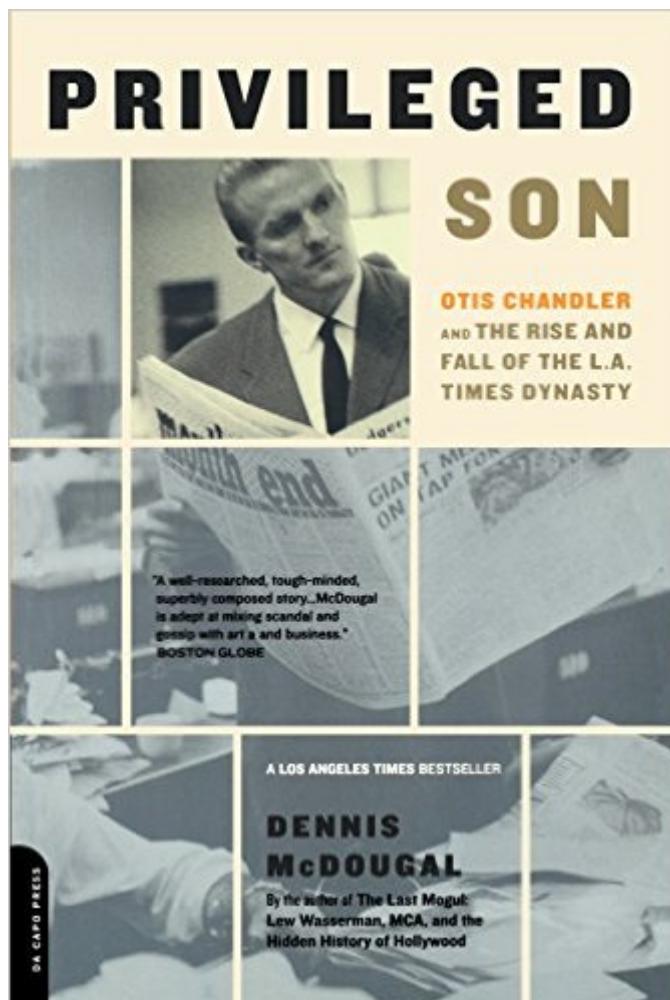


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Privileged Son: Otis Chandler And The Rise And Fall Of The L.a. Times Dynasty



Synopsis

The Boston Globe hailed *Privileged Son* as "a well-researched, tough-minded, superbly composed story" by an author "adept at mixing scandal and gossip with art and business." It's the riveting tale of how a second-rate newspaper rose to greatness only to become a casualty of war; a civil war within the family that owned it. The story, never before told in such hard-edged style, spans the American Century, from 1884, when the Chandler family gained control of the just-born daily, through April 2000, when they sold it to the Tribune Company. With a capriciousness that is seldom seen even in the most dysfunctional media dynasties, the Chandlers, who helped make the national careers of Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and other major political figures, controlled Los Angeles and the Times Mirror Corporation; and *Privileged Son* captures it all.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I really liked this book. As a fan of LA where I travel often for business and pleasure, this book fills in the history of how LA was built and the role played by the driving family of the LA Times. But as interesting as this history is, there are so many subplots to follow that are also fun. For example, as the family is accepted in the Pasadena "blue-blooded" culture, it's interesting how most become so snobbish about accepting anyone in their culture. My favorite stories on this subject are his second wife's training to develop social graces to travel in the Chandler's circles that was somewhat required. Also, when he divorces at 50, his Mom starts investigating which of her friends have unmarried daughters that would be acceptable marriage bait for this 50 year old bachelor. Like he

can't take care of himself. But enough of the small stuff, this book is about the Times and LA and starts with the Otis family and its purchase of the Times. The General and his Son-in-law ran this paper as a Republican tour guide of LA. And it worked. Maybe too good as LA is way too crowded. Along the way is great history of the need for water and the shady ways it was obtained as well as real estate development stories including a foray in Mexico. Harry Chandler's son Norman ran it much the same way but his son Otis Chandler who took over around 1960 was much more liberal and open to debate and other opinions which did not endear him with his pompous family. This break seemed to eventually lead to his ouster in 1985 even though he had grown the earnings strength of the paper. I believe the book did not adequately explain the buildup to his ouster. His Chairman comes in and it's over. Clearly, Otis was partially to blame as his hobbies of hunting, cars and lifting weights took away his attention.

In several of our major metropolitan areas (e.g. Boston, New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles), a daily newspaper played a major role during the 20th century. From my perspective, the area and the paper had a symbiotic relationship which must be understood in all its complexity if we are to understand either the area's culture or the unique role the newspaper has played within that culture. In this book, McDougal functions as a journalist and an historian, of course, but also as an anthropologist. As the book's subtitle indicates, his primary purpose is to examine Otis Chandler during "the rise and fall of the L.A. dynasty." (It is worth noting that the Boston Globe is now owned by the parent company of the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times is now owned by the parent company of the Chicago Tribune. Perhaps McDougal or someone else will examine those recent developments in a book yet to be written. And perhaps examine, also, recent mergers which have created media conglomerates such as AOL Time Warner.) For much of this book, the Times's various publishers dominate the narrative. Specifically, first Harrison Otis, then Harry Chandler, then Harry's son Norman, and finally Norman's son Otis. Of equal interest to me were the roles played by various women, notably Norman's wife Buff and Otis' two wives, Missy and then Bettina. In California throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, the Chandlers established and solidified a "dynasty" but also what McDougal more correctly describes as an "oligarchy." These are among the important questions addressed in this book: 1. How and why did the Los Angeles Times become so influential? 2. How and why did it later lose so much of that influence? 3. Precisely what role did Otis Chandler play throughout that process?

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