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The Trumps: Three Generations of Builders and a President

By Gwenda Blair



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The Trumps: Three Generations of Builders and a President By Gwenda Blair

The definitive family biography of President Donald Trump.

The revealing story of the Trumps mirrors America's transformation from a land of striving immigrants to a world in which the aura of wealth alone can guarantee a fortune. *The Trumps* begins with a portrait of President Trump's immigrant grandfather, who as a young man built hotels for miners in Alaska during the Klondike gold rush. His son, Fred, took advantage of the New Deal, using government subsidies and loopholes to construct hugely successful housing developments in the 1940s and 1950s. The profits from Fred's enterprises paved the way for President Trump's roller-coaster ride through the 1980s and 1990s into the new century.

With his talent for extravagant exaggeration—he calls it “truthful hyperbole”—President Trump turned the deal-making know-how of his forebears into an art form. By placing this much-publicized life within the context of family, Gwenda Blair adds a new dimension to the larger-than-life figure who ascended to the American Presidency.



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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

As she did in *Almost Golden: Jessica Savitch and the Selling of Television News*, journalist Gwenda Blair examines a historical trend through an individual story--or in this case, three--profiling a trio of very different men who happened to be grandfather, father, and son. Friedrich Trump (1869-1918), a German-born barber who got rich providing lodging, food, and female companionship to Klondike gold miners, founded the family real estate empire in Queens, New York. Fred Trump (1905-99) took advantage of new government programs to build affordable urban housing and make lots of money for himself. Donald, born in 1946, was just as interested in being famous as in being wealthy. His first big coup, the Grand Hyatt hotel, opened in 1980, launching a decade of extravagant acquisitions (including two Atlantic City casinos and the Plaza Hotel) that made "the Donald" a byword for '80s excess. Blair conscientiously covers Donald's flamboyant personal life, from the womanizing through the stormy marriage to Ivana and the notorious romance with Marla Maples. Her sometimes portentous prose suits the pumped-up style of the man who promoted his projects by promoting himself with everything from a ghostwritten autobiography, *The Art of the Deal*, to a board game bearing his name. But the author's main interest, and her book's principal fascination, lies in tracing the evolution of American real estate development over the course of the 20th century, as bare-knuckled individual entrepreneurship gave way to business in partnership with government, which was in turn replaced by high-stakes financial manipulation using image to shape reality. Blair may well be right when she claims that the Trumps' saga constitutes "a singular history of American capitalism itself." --Wendy Smith

From Publishers Weekly

This well-balanced, serious examination of the Trump family business proves its mettle by not mentioning The Donald's love life until it approaches page 300, and even then Blair is more concerned about Ivana's influence on Trump's business sense than on his hormones. While Donald is the star of Blair's work, his father and grandfather emerge as colorful characters in their own right. Arriving from Germany in 1885, Friedrich Trump spent a brief time in New York before striking out for Alaska, where he operated combined saloon-restaurant-brothels in several gold rush towns. When things went sour, Trump returned to New York, where he opened a modest real estate office in Queens that his son, Fred Jr., would greatly expand. Taking advantage of government programs designed to spur construction during the Depression, the middle Trump made his reputation by constructing well-built houses and apartments for the middle class. Following WWII, when the government was eager to find ways to ease the housing shortage, he used his contacts in city government to become a multimillionaire and one of the biggest landlords in Brooklyn and Queens. But his son wasn't interested in the boroughs; Donald used his father's money to make his fortune in Manhattan and then in Atlantic City. Blair documents the painstaking process whereby Trump transformed the Commodore Hotel to the Grand Hyatt and made his first mark in New York. With access to the Trump family and their business associates, Blair (bestselling author of *Almost Gone*) gives a first-rate, firsthand account of Donald Trump's rise, fall and resurrection as a business tycoon, while also exploring the motivation that drove him to risk it all to seek even more fame and fortune. Agent, Gloria Loomis. (Sept.)

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From [Booklist](#)

It is hard to imagine Donald Trump sharing billing with anyone, even if it is his father and grandfather. True, "the Donald" did devote a dozen pages to his father, Fred, in *Trump: The Art of the Deal* (1987) and acknowledge him as the most important influence on his life. In fact, Fred helped bail Donald out of several

financial tight spots. Now Blair provides this first in-depth look at Fred Trump as well as Friedrich Trump, Donald's grandfather. The author had the cooperation of Donald and other members of the Trump family, but her book is extensively researched and surprisingly candid in its assessment of the Trumps' business successes and failures and of their personal lives. The eldest Trump immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 16 in 1885, thrived as a saloonkeeper, and ran a brothel during the Klondike gold rush before moving to New York, where he became wealthy selling real estate. His son, taking advantage of government subsidies, got rich by building "ordinary homes for ordinary people" in Queens and Brooklyn. Donald brought us up to date about himself with *The Art of the Comeback* (1997). But Blair, who is also the author of *Almost Golden: Jessica Savitch and the Selling of Television News* (1988), provides a new and revealing look that takes into account the early influences on his life. There is certain to be demand for this book not only among people interested in business but also among readers who follow the celebrity TV shows and the gossip columns in the print media. *David Rouse*

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Users Review

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