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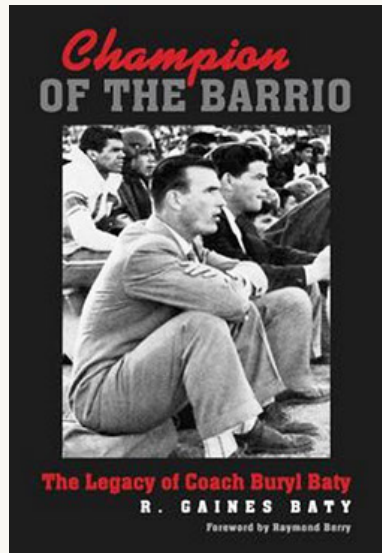
Lone Star Book Reviews

By Michelle Newby, NBCC Contributing Editor



Michelle Newby is contributing editor at Lone Star Literary Life, reviewer for Foreword Reviews, freelance writer, member of the National Book Critics Circle, and blogger at www.TexasBookLover.com. Her reviews appear or are forthcoming in *Pleiades Magazine*, *Rain Taxi*, *World Literature Today*, *South85 Journal*, *The Review Review*, *Concho River Review*, *Monkeybicycle*, *Mosaic Literary Magazine*, *Atticus Review*, and *The Collagist*.

Lone Star Book Reviews of Texas books appear weekly at LoneStarLiterary.com



Biography

Baty, R. Gaines

Champion of the Barrio: The Legacy of Coach Buryl Baty

Texas A&M University Press

978-1-62349-266-3, hardcover, 288 pgs., \$24.95

Feb. 9, 2015

Champion of the Barrio: The Legacy of Coach Buryl Baty by R. Gaines Baty is the latest biography in Texas A&M University Press's Spirit of Sport: A Series of Books Focusing on Sport in Modern Society. The author, older son of Coach Baty, undertook this project as a way to learn more about the father he hardly remembered, to see the man through the eyes of those he touched so deeply before he was taken so tragically and so young.

A member of the Greatest Generation, Buryl Baty grew up during the Great Depression in Paris, Texas. A high school football star, he earned a full ride to play Aggie football. His college career was interrupted by World War II, during which Baty


completed a successful college career, he was drafted by the Detroit Lions but chose instead to dedicate his life to teaching and coaching young people.

Coach Baty accepted his second job in 1950 to coach the Bears of Bowie High in the Segundo Barrio, the poorest section of El Paso, with a 100% Hispanic team. "While the post-WWII era abounded with optimism and opportunities for Anglo-Americans, discrimination soured the times. Shameless acts against people of color, black and brown, were accepted and/or ignored by the Anglo majority. Athletics were mired in this same oppressive state. Buryl Baty did not realize the extent of this phenomenon when he accepted the El Paso job, but his eyes were quickly opened. And he did not like what he saw."

Champion of the Barrio is part gentle pleasure in the sweet details from the diary of Coach Baty's wife when she was a teenager, stories of the high-schooler Baty when they built campfires in locker rooms to keep warm, and traveled to away games wearing coats and ties. The author's depictions of the football games are exciting and suspenseful and it's fun to read about names such as Bear Bryant, Tom Landry, and Frank Broyles before fame and fortune. Occasionally there is humor: "By the end of spring drills, these kids looked pretty good at times. But then, there were the other times."

The other part of *Champion* is breathtaking ignorant ugliness—motel owners who wouldn't let the Bears sleep in their rooms, café owners who wouldn't let the Bears eat in their dining rooms, and schools that wouldn't let them use their locker rooms or restrooms. And this: "Fifteen-yard penalty for speaking Spanish!"

Coach Baty was an advocate for his boys and inspired them to believe in themselves. He coached the Bears to championships on and off the gridiron. The narrative is studded with testimonials from the players and they are most telling. "He was a great man, a gentleman. He inspired me every time he spoke. He taught us to be proud, gave us hope. Buryl Baty was the best coach Bowie High School ever had. He is still with us." —Le Muñoz



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