



The Real Wallis Simpson: A New History of the American Divorcée Who Became the Duchess of Windsor

Anna Pasternak

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Wallis Simpson is known as the woman at the center of the most scandalous love affair of the 20th century, but in this surprising new biography, bestselling author Anna Pasternak redeems a woman wronged by history with new information revealed by those who were close to the couple—presenting Wallis as a convenient scapegoat to rid England of a king deemed unworthy to rule.

The story that has been told repeatedly is this: The handsome, charismatic, and popular Prince Edward was expected to marry a well-bred virgin who would one day become Queen of England when he ascended the throne. But when the prince was 37 years old, he fell in love with a skinny, divorced American woman—Wallis Simpson. No one thought the affair would last, and when the prince did become king, everyone assumed the affair would end.

But instead the new king announced he wanted to marry the American divorcee, and Wallis was accused of entrapping the prince in a seductive web in order to achieve her audacious ambition to be queen. After declaring that he could not rule without the woman he loved at his side, the king gave up his throne, and his family banished him and his new wife from England. The couple spent the rest of their days in exile, but happy in their devoted love for each other.

Now, Anna Pasternak's *The Real Wallis Simpson* tells a different story: that Wallis was the victim of the abdication, not the villain. Warm, well-mannered, and witty, Wallis was flattered by Prince Edward's attention, but like everyone else, she never expected his infatuation to last. She never wanted to divorce her second husband or marry Edward. She never anticipated his jealous, possessive nature—and his absolute refusal to let her go.

Edward's true dark nature, however, was no secret to the royal family, the church or the Parliament; everyone close to Edward knew that beyond his charming façade, he was immature, self-absorbed, and uneducated—utterly unfit to rule. Wallis begged Edward to stay on the throne and let her go, foreseeing the verdict history would pass on her. Caught in Edward's fierce obsession, she became the perfect scapegoat for those who wished to dethrone the king they feared to rule. On the night Wallis died, Princess Margaret told a friend, "It wasn't her we hated, it was him."

Rejecting the sinister schemer at the center of a dark royal fairytale, Anna Pasternak reveals Wallis Simpson as an intelligent woman, written off by cunning, powerful men and forced into a life she never wanted in a complex, riveting, and tragic true story of manipulation and betrayal.

The Real Wallis Simpson: A New History of the American Divorcée Who Became the Duchess of Windsor Details

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From Reader Review The Real Wallis Simpson: A New History of the American Divorcée Who Became the Duchess of Windsor for online ebook

Juli says

The story of Wallis Simpson's infamous affair with the Prince of Wales in the 1930s that led to Edward VIII abdicating the throne after only 326 days as King of England has been told again and again. Simpson has been portrayed as everything from a gold digger to a whore to even a Nazi spy. Wallis Simpson was not a saint...she was a twice divorced American and an independent woman with a strong personality in a time where that was not fashionable. In *The Real Wallis Simpson*, Anna Pasternak strives to dig past gossip and media spin to get to the real woman. What was Wallis Simpson really like? Why did she get involved with Edward? Was their relationship really the romantic story it has been portrayed to be?

According to Pasternak, Wallis Simpson did not really want to marry the Prince of Wales. The situation got out of control and she was forced into a divorce and marriage she didn't really want. Pasternak, and other historians, now believe that the affair was pushed into marriage by the royal family and others because Edward's immature behavior, reckless spending, and lack of attention to responsibility made him a poor king. Getting him to abdicate and marry Wallis Simpson passed the crown on to his brother, who was a more stable choice. But, it left Wallis Simpson stuck.....she missed the husband she was forced to divorce and was forced into exile with an often moody, immature Edward.

Kinda changes the story a bit doesn't it?

I will admit I believed the decades of gossip. I always believed Simpson was a twice-divorced sex pot who set her eyes on the Prince and wheedled her way into his head til she got what she wanted. But after reading this book, I have to change my mind. I believe Simpson was flattered by the attention and liked the dinners, gifts, parties, and social position it gave her to be recognized as a friend/companion of the Prince of Wales. She expected the attention to continue until Edward got tired of her....then he would move on to another interest and she could return to her life and her marriage. But that didn't happen. Edward became obsessed with her....spending more and more money on her, demanding more and more of her time, calling multiple times a day, demanding her attention..... The situation rapidly got out of control, became a public scandal, and then there was no way for Wallis to get out of it. She played a game with very powerful people and she lost. It doesn't change the fact that she was willing to play the game....she was married, but carried on a very public relationship with Edward anyway. She loved the money and the social standing. So, she was no saint. But she wasn't a complete devil woman either. She was portrayed that way because at the time women were not supposed to be strong, intelligent, or independent.

I enjoyed this book. Pasternak definitely did a lot of in-depth research. She quotes news reports, personal letters, interviews with friends of Wallis, Edward and others, letters from government officials, royal letters and documents, etc. At one point she quotes a member of the royal family as saying that it wasn't Simpson they despised, but Edward.

So interesting! I'm going to read it a second time, and then re-watch some documentaries I've seen on the affair and the aftermath, and come out with a much more informed, fair opinion on Edward's abdication. I feel guilty for believing that Simpson was a horrid person who jumped above her class and nearly toppled the monarchy....that was unfair and uninformed. I'm not sure I'm willing to believe that Edward was a

complete weak-willed, narcissistic ninny though until I read more and weigh out the facts. I do realize now that Simpson might have been a pawn in a much bigger game and didn't realize it until it was too late....then she had to follow through.

I'm definitely going to read more by this author. I thoroughly enjoyed this book!

I voluntarily read an advanced readers copy of this book from Atria Books via NetGalley. All opinions expressed are entirely my own.

Stella says

"The Real Wallis Simpson" is an absolutely fascinating book. Anna Pasternak does a beautiful job portraying the love affair of Wallis and her King, both before and after the abdication. What an incredible story. I've always been fascinated by the story out Edward and Wallis, and we've all heard the beautifully poignant and utterly genuine abdication speech. But getting to know the details of their story through the many interviews and letters the author shared in the text was a privilege. I've never been so taken by a biography. And although biographies are one of my favorite types of books to read, I find they nearly always leave me feeling sad. The lives of "real people", even like Wallis and Edward, don't always end in happily ever afters. So, although somewhat tragic, the richness of the story, the detailed accounts of what they went through, and the proof of their unflinching devotion to one another made for an absolutely beautiful read. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in British history, anyone who has even a mild fascination with the British royal family, and any reader who enjoys a love story. Because ultimately, "The Real Wallis Simpson" is a story of true love, however flawed it might have been.

Great thanks to the publisher, who provided me with an electronic copy free of charge via Netgalley. I was not required to write a review of any kind. These opinions are my own.

Tammy Buchli says

A couple of months ago I listened to a great History Chicks podcast about Wallis Simpson that really piqued my interest, although I've always been on Team George VI, myself. One of the History Chicks' great strengths is that — although always very thorough — they are never catty about their subjects, always sympathetic and empathetic. So, when NetGalley offered me an opportunity to read an ARC copy and review this bio, I was very eager to do so. The first thing to know about this book is that it is in no way, shape, or form an unbiased account. Pasternak is unabashedly Team Wallis & David from the very first page. This put me in the unusual position of mentally 'answering back' when Pasternak threw softballs at the duo. Wallis or David would do something rotten, then Pasternak would spend a couple sentences explaining exactly why they did it — because Wallis was under such a terrible strain, or because David just loved Wallis so darned much. I'm obviously not as empathetic or sympathetic as the History Chicks — I found Wallis & David to be a rather unlikeable pair. Pasternak conveys enough of their personalities to convince me why people who knew them really liked them. And she certainly managed to put to bed most of the really scurrilous rumors (which I never really believed anyway). But they just weren't estimable people, no matter how she tried to spin them. Charm is not the same as goodness. Wallis & David were charming, not good. They were self centered and greedy and, when given the chance to be useful, they almost always chose not to be. All that said, it was a heck of a fun, dishy read and I really enjoyed it. I'd certainly recommend it to

anyone who enjoys this sort of thing.

Charlsa says

I enjoyed this book. Pasternak' extensively researched her subject. She quotes personal letters, interviews with close friends of Wallis and Edward, news reports, letters from government officials, royal letters, documents, etc.. I came away with a better sense of who they were both individually and as a couple as well as their underlying motivations for their actions.

Pasternak did not convince me that Wallis Simpson was a victim or that she was forced to marry Edward as she contends in the book. I now view Edward as more of a victim of his parents and the monarchy than I did previously. If you have an interest in British or royal history, and how these events changed the history of England, you will enjoy this book.

Thank you to NetGalley and Atria books for the ARC of this book in exchange for my honest review.

eyes.2c says

Farce or Tragedy?

Prince Edward and Wallis Simpson. Either a Shakespearean farce or a tragedy from beginning to end. I have always held some skepticism and admittedly a few prejudices towards Wallis and Edward and their so called fairytale romance. The man who gave up his kingship for the woman he loved.

Pasternak paints a different picture from what I was used to and I must admit to being touched, particularly at Wallis' last days and the pettiness of the court in not letting her be referred to as HRH in those latter years. Embattled on all sides, determined to marry Wallis, Edward steamed ahead and to some extent his bluff was called. I did shed some tears at the end struck by the misery that Wallis, a perfectionist was forced to endure. And I did admire that Edward refused a morganatic marriage. He wanted to be honest with his subjects and true to his idea of marriage. Pasternak won me a tad more to Edward's side with that revelation.

The abdication seems to entail a complexity of situations, missed opportunities, and misjudgement on all sides. As it's told, Baldwin didn't want Edward to be king and the intelligence community also had their doubts about him. Winston Churchill wanted him to hang in there. The royal courtiers are blamed as are the Queen Mother and Queen Elizabeth for the continued angst and pettiness towards the couple. I understand why the Royal Elizabeth's were cross enough to cut Edward off the Christmas list, and why Wallis was obviously 'that woman.'

So Pasternak had me examining my feelings towards Wallis and Edward, and even the idea of them being Nazi sympathizers was questioned, although being self absorbed was not! From Pasternak 's point of view they were just being used. And yet they were close friends of Diana Mosley and the Mitford sisters, met with Hitler and some of his henchman. In fact Edward delighted in the way he and Wallis were treated royally on their visit to Germany. And it seems Edward really only wanted to speak German. He admired them and apparently even after the generosity of the French Government towards the couple, Edward still mostly spoke in German. Edward just doesn't come across as being empathetic to the times and occasions. Self absorption is a way of life.

However the normal man in the street loved him. They felt understood by him. The reports of his meetings with the workers paint an admirable picture.

I still maintain that if Wallis was as canny as indicated, she would have known what was going on, or did Wallis and Edward live too much in their own little cocooned world with its secretive language and endless letters. And oh my, the money Edward spent on jewelry for Wallis!

Wallis however still remains an enigma. Did she really just go along for the ride until she found herself in so deep she couldn't get out?

I must say though I was enthralled by the fashion discussions. Anything cut on the bias always says sleek and stylish to me, and Wallis was definitely a fashion diva.

There's some great reported throwaway lines by the couple.

In this day and age their actions wouldn't have turned a hair. But back in the 1930's they scandalized the rest of the world, and the English nation, when the press finally stopped being gentlemanly.

So where am I? I still don't like them, but I had moments of being sorry for them and the choices they made. Choices that dug them into a hole a little deeper each time.

Am I glad Edward didn't remain as king. Yes, despite Pasternak's well researched presentation. Do I have more sympathy with, and understanding of Wallis Simpson despite still not really liking her, Yes!

An Atria Books ARC provided by the publisher via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Kathleen says

#NetGalley This was a very well researched and impressive book about Wallis Simpson and the former King Edward VIII. I am not exactly sure it was a new history, because most of the facts are known, but probably a somewhat different slant. However you present their affair, marriage, and life together it remains a tragedy and not happy reading.

It was quite comprehensive, perhaps too much so, and offered perhaps new evidence for the rift between the Prince and former king and his brothers. Financial insecurity, the fact that "David's brother did not want to be King and the antipathy of King George's wife led to a lifetime estrangement.

The book was very well done and painstakingly researched. I enjoyed the earlier chapters of Wallis' life prior to coming to England the best. Thanks to the author, publisher and NetGalley for the ARC.

Bethany says

File this one under romantic fiction--or humor!

Alison says

I loved this meticulously researched book. No doubt the author knew the shortcomings of both Edward and Wallis while painting a much more three-dimensional portrayal of the abdication and the behavior of the royal family afterward. If you love British royal history, this one is a must read.

Karen says

I have read multiple books on this subject over the years and did not feel there was anything new to learn. However, after reading this book, I came away with a fresh perspective of both the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, as well as some of the major players involved.

This was a different time in history, and this book left me feeling differently about the Duke's choices.

I recommend this book wholeheartedly.

I voluntarily reviewed an advance reader copy of this book.

Martha Johnson says

I returned this book to the library before finishing it. BTW I didn't know where to input on this site that I returned it without finishing it. I thought it was very slow and way to much detail. It did not keep my attention.

Frances Johnson says

Great book about Wallis Simpson, the American divorcee who the King of England gave up his throne to marry. At that time she was scorned and many falsehoods were told and believed about her. The author interviews many people who knew her or whose parents knew her and tries to set the record straight about this complex woman. Excellent book.

Janilyn Kocher says

A well written biography of Wallis Simpson. The author purports that Wallis wasn't all the nasty things that's have been said about her and that she never really wanted to marry Edward. She did not convince me. Wallis was not innocent and played a role in the demise of her second marriage and her affair with the king. Still, it's an interesting theory, but one I don't agree with. Thanks to Edelweiss for the advance copy.

Terri Wangard says

Wallis Simpson is reviled as the woman who seduced/bewitched/charmed the king of England into marrying her so she could be queen. Nothing could be further from the truth, according to author Anna Pasternak.

Wallis believed she was Edward's flavor of the month. He would soon find someone else and leave her behind. In the meantime, she enjoyed his attention and her fling in high society. Then she would be content to return to a quiet life with her husband, Ernest Simpson.

Edward was captivated by the direct way she spoke to him, and the genuine interest she showed in his life as Prince of Wales. When he insisted on marrying her, and abdicating if that was the only way, she urged him not to. She didn't want to marry him, but he was determined.

Edward was self-absorbed, immature, and reckless. The British establishment had doubts about him being king. Even his father felt his second son, Bertie, had better prospects. Yet when Edward abdicated, they attacked Wallis, a twice-divorced American. She certainly didn't deserve their cruelty.

She wasn't guiltless, though. She was a married woman who had no business fooling around with the king. Her husband was supposed to be okay with it, proud as any husband would be that his wife was singled out by the Prince of Wales. And Wallis divorced Ernest, clearing the way for Edward to marry her. She should have left England.

Edward believed their exile would be short-lived. Within a year, they'd be back in England, living as genteel aristocracy living a leisurely life of house parties and shooting parties. He would take his place alongside his brothers, supporting Bertie as King George VI and performing royal duties. His wife, naturally, would be made Her Royal Highness.

It didn't happen.

Their lives in exile lacked purpose. Had Edward known how useless he'd become, would he have abdicated? His devotion to Wallis never failed. She grew to love him and sought to make him happy. After reading of all their foibles, one word comes to mind: pathetic.

Doreen Prentiss Gabriellini says

The first thing to know about this book is that it is in no way, shape, or form an unbiased account. Pasternak is unabashedly Team Wallis & David from the very first page. I found Wallis & David to be a rather unlikeable pair. There really wasn't anything endearing about either one of them. Pasternak conveys enough of their personalities to convince me why people who knew them really liked them. And she certainly managed to put to bed most of the horrible rumors. To me, they just weren't likeable people, no matter how she tried to spin them. Wallis & David may have been charming but they were not nice or good. Why would a married woman (She was married when she met him) feel she had to 'take care of this spoiled man who always seemed to get his way. Why would she be the future King's flavor of the month and stay. Either she loved her second husband or not. How she actually allowed the King to work her to the point of divorcing her second husband and then marrying him is beyond me. They were self centered and greedy.

The book is extremely well researched and tirelessly quoting from real people about Wallis and the King and their relationship. It seems the amount of research was monumental. The beginning was slightly hard to get through but then it breezed on as the story moved on. It was a heck of a biography with a slant no one up until now has taken. I really enjoyed it.
