



Louis Philip Doody, his Life, and his Literary Works

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Abstract

Louis Philip Doody (Brandon Philips) is the American writer of action-adventure tales and historical books who is inspired by the accounts of great world explorers like Marco Polo, Captain Cook, and Aurel Stein. Their encounters with people of other cultures provide the material for his writing. Over the years, he has shared his love of world history and foreign languages with his students to promote better understanding between East and West. From the Italian neighborhood of Boston where he grew up, and Honolulu where he received his master's degree from the University of Hawaii, Doody has gone on to explore the Pacific, Europe, and Asia. His extensive travels gave him the material on culture and politics for adaptation in his novels. In his writings, the author takes his readers around the world with his characters in search of treasures. Louis P. Doody lives in Hawaii with his wife and spends time in California and New England with his extended family. In this article, I will focus on his life, his two fiction adventures, and two non-fictional historical books.

Keywords: American Writer Louis P. Doddy, Action-adventure Tales, Historical Works

INTRODUCTION

The Author

Louis Philip Doody was born in 1944 and grew up in an Irish-Italian ghetto in East Boston, Massachusetts, as one of the six children. In his early years, the family lived in East Boston, and later they moved to a town south of Boston. As a young adult, he moved on to explore the wider world. He followed his deep interest in French, Chinese, and Russian languages and history and graduated from Boston College and the University of Hawaii. He majored in Chinese language and History of East Asia with a master's degree in 1968.

Louis's mother was a stay-at-home mother and most of the time she was at home, raising the children. His father was a bookkeeper who had a great interest in history and was very widely read and self-educated.

As a child, Louis was a studious and a quiet person. He loved reading too and was the only one in his family to go to college. Louis told me in one of his interviews:

»I got an interest in history partly from my father and when I went to Boston College, it seemed I had an immediate interest there. My minor was in European history. « (N. Potočnik: *Interview with Louis P. Doody*, August 2013)

Louis graduated from Boston College in 1965 and won a scholarship for a 3-year program for his master's degree in

Asian History at the University of Hawaii and that included a trip to China. He studied in China and stayed in Taipei, with a Chinese family for a year. He learned very quickly to be fluent in mandarin. After his graduation in 1968, and his first job in Boston state government agency, he went to California and married Genie, a girl he knew from the East-West Center in Hawaii.

Later, Louis found a teaching job in Southern California, so he and his wife moved to a place about 90 miles east of Los Angeles. This very dry semi-desert mountainous region was the land of the Cahuilla Indians Louis wrote about. He thought History and French at the junior high school level and history at the high school in Benning. His teaching career lasted for about 31 years before retiring. Genie, his wife was a librarian in Benning. She had severe arthritis, and in their retirement, they spent most of their time at home because they could not travel very much.

»And without the opportunity to travel in retirement, it gets very difficult, you know you could easily settle into a very boring life, so we tried to battle that problem, by each of us taking up little writing. We first started up doing a genealogy of our families and she quickly got very good at that. « (N. Potočnik: *Interview with Louis P. Doody*, August 2013)

Their marriage lasted for 30 years until his wife sadly passed away. They had one son who now lives with his family in California.

With the interest in writing history, working on the extended genealogy project, Louis felt that he could write a book. He started writing books and has so far published two historical action-adventure novels, *Gold of the Khan*, *The Empress Ruby*, and a third commentary on American politics from a religious viewpoint, *Jesus in America, Miracles, and Parables of His Second Coming*, under his pseudonym, Brandon Philips. His two purely historical books, currently used as textbooks, are *Losing Ground: The Displacement of San Geronio Pass Cahuilla People in the 19th Century* and *Glimpses of History* written with co-author Betty Kikumi Meltzer.

Louis now lives in Hawaii with his second wife Dolly and spends time in California and New England with his extended family. He is retired but still very active and interested in travelling, reading, and history and writing books.

His Love for History, Reading, and Writing Literature

In his action-adventure novels *Gold of the Khan* and *The Empress Ruby*, the protagonists confront ruthless ambition and power and fight to restore precious patrimonial treasures to their rightful places.

His first book to research was *Gold of the Khan*, dedicated to his first wife. Her family came from Gorski Kotar, Croatia. He wrote the book in the summer of 2002, but it was published in 2012. In 2003, he copyrighted the book at the U.S. copyright office in Washington DC. He discovered later that an unscrupulous writer made use of his book and he got involved in trying to fight that legally.

Gold of the Khan is a historical – adventurous love story composed of 513 pages, a prologue, 92 chapters, and the afterword. This was the first novel that is quite loaded with historical facts, as the author conveys:

»... for one thing, I had an interest in the travels of Marco Polo and I found a way to put his travels into this piece of fiction. « (N. Potočnik: *Interview with Louis P. Doody*, August 2013)

The fiction involves a story of a tense relationship between a young woman Marya, who is a professor of history at Harvard University, and a young man Liam who is a dealer of very valuable antiquities and is a bit unscrupulous. The woman does not approve of that kind of a behavior. Somehow, they get together, and the relationship is tense. Into that platform, the author used a lot of history of Marco Polo and his travels, the history of Kublai Khan and that of the Adriatic Sea, the predominance of Venice during the medieval period and created a very exciting story. Marya is trying to prove that Marco Polo really did go to China and became an advisor to Kublai Khan. There is some dispute about that because some people say that Marco Polo never went to China but pretended that he went. So, Marya wants to prove that he did go there and that and he did bring back the Golden Tablets of

Command that Kublai Khan gave him to safely return home to Italy from the Mongol Empire. If she could only find those, she would complete her mission in life and show the world that she is right. She manages to do so in the end, but she has many opponents. There is an evil megalomaniac in Mongolia, who has ambitions to restore Western China and the empire of Kublai Khan and in order to achieve the status and prestige, he wants all these golden objects and the support for his claim on the throne of Mongolia. He eventually becomes the professor's main enemy, kidnaps her, and puts her in a remote compound in Central Asia to get her to tell him where the Golden Tablets are. The young man Liam that she dislikes, because she thinks he is just in it for the money, falls in love with her and rushes to Central Asia to rescue her. He manages to bring her safely to Venice. That is not the end of it because her opponent sends his men after her, hoping still to get the treasure. The struggle takes place on the top of the church steeple on the island of Korčula in the Adriatic Sea, the island where people believe Marco Polo was born. At the end of the story *Gold of the Khan*, Marya finds the treasure on the top of the church bell tower and stays with Liam who helped her.

In the story, there is a lot of criticism of American politics in terms of the international policy concerning China and human rights violations there.

The second book, *The Empress Ruby*, published in March 2013 in South Carolina by Create Space, reflects political and social criticism too. It is a historical adventure, dedicated to his wife Dolly and consists of 64 chapters on 382 pages. The fact that the government is not very responsive to the needs of ordinary people is a part of the story. The differences between rich and poor are getting greater and greater, and the government is favoring the upper-class minority and ignoring the needs of other people.

The tense story is about looking for the ruby and involves a young man Mike Morales and a young woman Jackie Knight. Like in the previous book, the main characters do not get along and they dislike each other in the beginning. Mike and Jackie are after the ruby that belonged to Maximilian and Carlotta of the Habsburg's dynasty, who were welcomed in Mexico to become their emperor. The ruby was a gift to them by Maximilian's brother, the Emperor of Austria to get them out of Europe. Therefore, Maximilian and Carlotta went to Mexico. Maximilian was executed there but the jewel stayed in Mexico until 1911 and the dictator Porfirio Dias stole it, loaded it onto a ship to bring it to Europe. The ship never got there but sank in Chesapeake Bay. Mike's great-grandfather, who worked on that ship for a maritime agency, inspected and recognized the jewel as a state property and took it. His intention was to escape and to save it for the people of Mexico, but the jewel was lost, and he was lucky to escape with his wife, the papers, and the story of the ruby. He handed the papers out to his great-grandson Mike Morales who connected the ruby, stolen in the sixteenth century from a cursed Burmese temple, with the collapses of the Spanish Empire, the French Empire, the Mexican Empire of Maximilian and Carlotta, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Third Reich. Mike, as a decorated war hero and Marine

Guard posted at the White House, is now in a position to take on a challenging mission that will affect the fate of the nation. Therefore, he, together with the young woman Jackie, who gradually becomes more convinced that there was a great jewel and that there is something about this story, starts the adventure. The jewel is in the White House, but they do not know it until very late in the story. At the end of the story, they realize that the jewel had a curse, and no wonder they were having so many catastrophes, earthquakes, civil strikes, and political disasters. The secretary bought the jewel for the First Lady for the Royal Ball in a garage sale but had no idea of its terrible power or its history. She knew the jewel was very worthy because she went to the jewelry store to check for its value. In order to make things better again, Mike would have to get this jewel back to Burma. The story ends happily, with Mike and Jackie discovering the jewel, escaping from the White House with the jewel. They bring it back to Mexico to exhibit and receive a very good welcome by the president of Mexico. Mexico becomes a wonderfully democratic country, with the bright future. From there, the couple flies to Burma that has a history of being ruled by corruptions. Now that the jewel is back to Burma and restored to the temple, everybody is happy, and Jackie and Mike go home and stay together. However, the president's reaction, after finding out about the returned jewel, is terrible. He wants to rule as an autocrat. He wants to keep the ruby, is greedy, and makes all these announcements after the royal ball. Mike tries to explain the president about the jewel with a power that makes terrible troubles and that it could destroy the USA, but the president just laughs at it. Mike's father dies after the safe restoration of the ruby at home. At the end, even the president and his wife come out well because the new president is a sole Chinese American who issues a pardon to the president and his wife providing them to perform a public service for 5 years. They turn out to be nice people at the end. The author believes that:

»The idea of an adventure between a young couple, who are antagonists of a struggle but eventually joint forces of the story, is a good way to get people interested in history. Not everything in these books is true, some of it is, and some of it is not.« (N. Potočnik: *Interview with Louis P. Doody*, August 2013)

In Doody's two non-fictional historical books, *Losing Ground* and *Glimpses of History*, the readers get to know some facts about the history of Cahuilla Indians in California.

Losing Ground is a story of the Cahuilla Indians written by Louis Doody, together with Betty Kikumi Metzler. It is about what San Gorgonio Pass in California was like in the 19th century and about a past of the Indians that remained secret. It is the story of a proud but beleaguered people and the Winner of the 2013 Leadership in History Awards Winners presented by the American Association of State and Local History. The book written on 184 pages was published by Malki-Ballena Press in 2012. The heart of the untold story is how the Indians became the indispensable labor force that developed the San Bernardino Valley and the San Gorgonio Pass under Spanish,

Mexican, and American rule. It is about lives of the Indians that were almost completely banished from their homeland. As such, the book is full of information, records, and pictures that bear witness to the Cahuillas' sad history. It contains collected and researched materials of witnesses, court cases, and photos. The Indians had to move from one place to another because of the white people. This it is just maybe one example among thousands across the United States of the actual cruelty and false claims of White settlers that Indian lands were empty and available to them for the taking. The Cahuilla Indians, who had lived in the San Gorgonio Pass for centuries, lost ground to Spanish and Mexican rancheros and later to land-hungry American squatters. Their villages, throughout the Pass from Redlands to Whitewater disappeared one after the other. By 1889, severely reduced in numbers, they had to go to court to defend their last piece of land, the Potrero, from being grabbed by squatters and speculators.

»After a long and thorough research on that topic, it looked as if there was a definite plan of removing the Indians from their old lands and taking the most important things that they needed without compensation. It was easy to keep the Indians in the dark because they did not know how to make claims of the properties they occupied in the white system and at first, very few white people helped them. There were practically no records left on the history of these Indians. Instead, there were various periodical articles, newspaper pieces, found in the libraries, in the microfilms. There were documents that Betty and I tracked at the national archives of records administration in Laguna Niguel, California, which documented the correspondence between the Indian agents in Southern California and the officials of Indian affairs in Washington D.C. It was a lot of work, and we were on a go for 2 years. We even went out to the field with the permission of the government agency. Our goal was to learn as much as possible, to pull together all these different sources, newspapers, magazines, government periodicals, government letters, correspondence, and to create at least a beginning of the history of the Cahuilla people.« (N. Potočnik: *Interview with Louis P. Doody*, August 2013)

The book *Losing Ground* is now used by Professor Richard Gross and his students at the University of Redlands in California.

Glimpses of History, written by [Betty Kikumi Meltzer and Louis Doody](#), is a short version of *Losing Ground* band, published by Malki-Ballena Press in July 2011 and contains 30 pages. As such, it also reflects lives of the Cahuilla people

of Southern California's San Geronio Pass and is appropriate for a quick reading, for either children or high school students and general readers, especially the residents of Southern California, from the Pacific Coast to the Colorado River, who are interested in this topic. The book consists of five brief chapters that highlight Cahuilla leaders and their interactions with the newcomers to the region in the 19th century.

»This work sheds light on three periods that profoundly affected the fate of the Cahuilla people: the short period of time, from 1819 to 1821; the long period of Spanish rule from 1821 to 1848 an era of grand ranchos; and the American period from 1848 to 1892«. (N. Potočnik: *Interview with Louis P. Doody*, August 2013)

The two books, *Losing Ground* and *Glimpses of History* are available on Amazon.

The latest book Doody has written is *Jesus in America Miracles and Parables of His Second Coming*. Written under his pseudonym, Brandon Philips, it was published in 2017. It is dedicated to all those who seek Justice and is a strong political statement compared to his earlier tales of adventure. It reflects the author's fierce opposition to Trump and his Republican followers and raises the question, "What would Jesus do if he came to down to earth today (a second coming) to deal with America's current socio-political turmoil?" (N. Potočnik: *Personal Communication with Louis Philip Doody (E-mail)*, September 2021) The author uses a style that imitates biblical language and literary forms. It is a quick read and its ending forecasts the actual outcome of the last Presidential Election.

Louis Doody's Contribution to World Literature and History

With his tense historical adventures and historical books about the Cahuilla Indians, the writer has contributed not only to world literature but also to the present-day interest in history and multiculturalism. With his vivid descriptions, enthusiastic narrative style, language full of dialogues, and a sense of humor in his historical adventures and historical books, Doody is able to capture on paper the paradoxes of modern life, with its rootless citizens who travel the globe, charmed and perplexed by the unfamiliar customs they encounter on their journeys. He is capable to attract the readers and entertain them, to provide them with historical events and different cultures.

The writer believes that, given current trends of globalization, with the world 'shrinking' in effect, there is a greater need than ever, for people to respect different cultures and to try to comprehend those others may hold values different from their own.

Doody's writing is most valuable as a kind of representation of modern-day multiculturalism, as a plea for the understanding and tolerance of unfamiliar belief systems. In this respect, we could say that his work contributes to the

creation of a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations and cultures.

However, this is not enough to satisfy Doody. He would like to write more:

»I would still like to write more novels, maybe. My attitude toward current developments in the United States has definitely shifted over the last fifteen years to the point that I am more open to assert my views of American politics and society. I look for a way in fiction, especially to promote self-understanding, greater tolerance, and trust of others, and compassion for anyone oppressed and excluded. In a new and dangerous technological environment that presents escalating risks to us all, we need to focus on the good in human nature wherever we are.« (N. Potočnik: *Personal Communication with Louis Philip Doody (Email)*, September 2021)

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