

# Outlook on Lifestyle

## Book review

### Not a bleeding heart feminist

By LISA BALFOUR BOWEN  
Herald Special

Charlotte whitton is best remembered as the pugnacious mayor of Ottawa who served almost uninterruptedly from 1951 to 1964. Her controversial reign as the first female mayor of a Canadian city made Whitton a legend in her lifetime and her irascible, tart-tongued behavior at Ottawa's city hall was recorded in cities as far away as Johannesburg.

Whitton's colorful political career has tended to obscure the fact that, prior to assuming the Ottawa mayoralty, she spent 30 years as a key figure in Canadian social welfare. Not only was this earlier chosen vocation conducted in nine of Canada's 10 provinces, but it provided Whitton with impressive international credentials as well.

The story of this unusual pioneering Canadian professional woman is told with sympathetic objectivity in a new, 243-page biography titled, *No Bleeding Heart: Charlotte Whitton, a Feminist On The Right*. Written by educators P.T. Rooke and R.L. Schnell, the book includes 30 black and white illustrations and has been published, with the help of a Canada Council grant, by the University of British Columbia Press \$26.95.

In clear, no-nonsense prose, the authors quickly established Whitton as an independent-minded woman, motivated by strong personal convictions about public service, but also by an ever increasing egotistical need for popularity and celebrity status. From the mass of published material left by Whitton, they have been able to construct a portrait of a complex, intelligent, hard working individual, who was nonetheless capable of vindictive outbursts, racism, and fear of other women.

#### NATURAL LEADER

The record shows that Whitton was a natural leader and a great achiever in both her welfare and political careers, but she also suffered some devastating disappointments and setbacks. Such periods sometimes sidelined her for years, during which time she became a well known lecturer, broadcaster and columnist. These activities kept her name before the public, brought her much-needed financial income, and fed her need for personal adulation.

Born in 1896 in Renfrew, Ont., Whitton was the eldest of four children in a miss-matched marriage. Educated at Queen's University, she promptly moved into social welfare work upon graduation. Because she was a conscientious and dogged worker with a good brain, she won promotions rapidly.

Although she had male admirers, Whitton eventually chose a life of spinsterhood in order to dedicate herself single mindedly to public service. Rather than marry, she shared a home and her emotional life with a devoted female friend, Margaret Grier, who was also involved in social work. When Whitton died of a heart attack in 1975, she was buried at Renfrew in a plot beside Grier, who had predeceased her by almost 30 years.

Physically, Whitton was barely five feet, 1 1/2 inches tall, with expressive hazel eyes and short cropped dark hair. By the time she was 45, this diminutive dynamo had established her North American

reputation so well that the U.S. press hailed her as a "noted authoress, educator and social worker of commanding brilliance," who had been "decorated by two kings."

Despite such successes, Whitton's distinguished welfare career came to an abrupt end when changing times dictated that specialized social work training - which she lacked despite all her experience - was essential for leadership.

#### TURNED TO ASHES

As a result, on Jan. 1, 1942, in her 46th year, she found herself as a single woman without a salary, without prospects, without definite plans and without a pension. "Whitton was now exhausted and humiliated, with all her dreams and ambitions turned to ashes," said the authors. Although, like the phoenix, she was to rise, it would be almost nine years before she would again enjoy financial security. This "was her most desolate period."

Although Whitton harbored federal ambitions, these too were thwarted and she had to settle for a prolonged career in civic politics. Here, she proved an acknowledged star but, as the years went by, she became the subject of increasing ridicule.

Even so, her biographers point out that "the very conduct that appaled some mesmerized others... Her liveliness, zest, and sense of the absurd fascinated and amused, and Ottawa wanted to revel in her color." Many admired Whitton's brutal honesty, her total zeal, and her boasted frugality. And although her popularity declined over time, her stewardship was, on balance, impressive.

*No Bleeding Heart* should appeal particularly to politicians, social workers, journalists, educators, and feminists. Although the book becomes heavy going in spots, it is nonetheless fascinating when it reveals how a single woman with energy, dedication and brains - but no financial security to fall back on - managed to fight against sexual discrimination and for early feminist causes. In the end, the Whitton story is about a woman who was larger than life.

Lisa Balfour Bowen is a Toronto writer and critic.

- Thomson News Service



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Whatever fashion dictum you adhere to there is real gold jewellery available to complete the total look and reflect your unique personality. It's the ultimate expression of your style.

The unlimited selection of new, unique and beautiful designs allows you to

build a gold jewellery wardrobe as diverse as the Fall fashion trends, as varied as your every mood.

For the sophisticated woman who prefers a head-to-toe monochromatic look, featuring sleek body-hugging skirts and hip length jackets, gold jewellery plays an important role. A collection of chains in many lengths, a stack of cuff bracelets and a pair of classic button earrings punctuate her positively elegant tastes. The newest looking pins in bold geometrics with stone accents are showing up on lapels of every shape.



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#### DIANE'S EVERYTHING SQUARES

Melt 4 tbsp. butter. Combine with 1 cup Graham wafer crumbs.

Combine:

- 1 c. desiccated coconut
- 1 c. semi-sweet choc. chips
- 1/2 c. chopped maraschino cherries
- 1 c. crushed pecans
- 1 c. small marshmallows
- 1 can Eagle Brand milk

Pack melted butter and Graham wafer crumb mixture in bottom of 9" pan. Cover with remaining ingredients. Cook at 350° for 30-35 minutes. Mix nicely browned

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