



A Fine Woman

David George Richards

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Countess Helga Burbeck was German, rich, spoilt and as arrogant and bossy as hell. To her, the war was nothing more than an inconvenience on her shopping trips to Berlin. But when she is walking her dogs, Tirpitz and Bismarck, on the far side of her estate, she discovers something that changes her life forever.

Obersturmführer Meyer is an SS officer who works in the camp close to the Burbeck estate. He despises those in his charge and considers them to be no more than animals for the slaughter. But the arrogant Countess with a father who is a General in the Wehrmacht in Berlin was rapidly becoming a bigger nuisance than the smell from the burial pits.

Helga's discovery of Jewish children hiding on her estate leads her to investigate the nearby camp. What she finds there shocks her to the soul. She decides to take the children to France and somehow to safety. It begins as a self-destructive whim borne on the bitterness and anger of her discovery, but slowly and surely Helga is drawn inexorably down the path to smuggling and eventually, spying. She engages Jacob, one of the children, to help in her plans. And soon she is embroiled with the French Resistance. But her continued trips across occupied Europe to the South of France with "children from her estate" soon attract even more attention from Obersturmführer Meyer. It isn't long before both know exactly what the other is doing; it becomes a game, but a game that will lead to final bloodshed in a French forest.

Captain Taylor of the US Army has met Helga only once. But that meeting and everything he learns about her afterwards plants a seed of love that won't stop growing. But Helga isn't easy to find once lost. And when Captain Taylor visits a Convent in the Southern French resort of Antibes in 1948 he soon finds out that the end of the war isn't the end of the story. But what connects a German Countess in the war with a Catholic nun in Cyprus in 1946? And will Captain Taylor finally track her down?

A Fine Woman Details

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M f Kramer says

A fine woman

This book is very well done and I can relate to it through the history and era as it is written.,

Joan says

The story is mainly about Helga Burbeck, a German countess who smuggles Jews (mostly children) out of Germany during WWII. It is also a story about Helga's life and how her haughty lifestyle drastically changes when she realizes the atrocities Hitler is imposing on the Jewish people in the death camps close to her mansion. She feels like an outcast from her own people and also from the Jewish people who hate the Germans because of what was going on at this time. There is a lot to this story that I won't detail because of spoilers. It was a good read, but not a great one. The story line is interesting but the writing is just so-so.

Rachel says

This book was fine, but not special.

I disagree with some of the points that Richards makes in his foreword. For example, he claims that "[t]he British internment camps in Cyprus for Jews intercepted while attempting to reach Palestine are also little remembered today." Perhaps because of my background in Holocaust studies, I am familiar with many sources that detail life in these camps. Exodus, a blockbuster novel by Leon Uris and blockbuster movie starring Paul Newman and other big-name actors, is all about these camps.

I also think that the storyline is a bit naive. I know of no concentration, labor, or death camps that were built in residential areas, i.e., within walking distance to a mansion and its estate. As far as I know, camps were established away from civilians to enable their (the civilians') denial of the crimes against humanity that took place in them. Thus, I'm not sure how plausible the storyline really is, although the idea that a rich German daughter of an SS officer would smuggle Jews to unoccupied France is certainly noble.

I think the book makes an o.k. read, but there are better stories of Righteous among the Nations.

Bette says

A novel of WWII and the atrocities that the German SS committed. A young German woman ashamed of the camps steps in and smuggles Jews from Germany to the Antibes and the French resistance and English intelligence. The price she pays for their help is spying on the German High Command.

In my mind's ear I could hear my girlfriend's mother with heavily accented German-voice. In my mind's eye I could see her brash demeanor and heavy-handed jocular. I liked the voice and presence the author

conveyed, in a different viewpoint or context. Well worth reading.

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Jill says

David George Richards has created a wonderful character in Helga Burbeck, a German countess who risks her life by smuggling Jews out of Germany during WWII. The pace is fast as you are swept into Helga's life and the dire situations she finds herself in. You will also meet Captain Taylor who loves Helga and searches for her after the war. This is a superb and gripping novella. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Alone says

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The book would have been quite a good read for me if I had not set my bars so high. But then, it is not entirely my fault. I was smitten by Countess Helga Burbeck, the bossy aristocratically lady. As the blurb of the book says, to her, the war was nothing more than an inconvenience on her shopping trips to Berlin. Her first introduction to the horrors of the war was skilfully portrayed. She starts smuggling children off to Paris. Everyone knows about it. She makes little attempt to do it in dark.

But the book does precious little in developing the characters. Especially the gold mine called Helga Burbeck. And relations. Between countess and her ward and partner in crime Jacob, a Jewish boy. Between Obersturmführer Meyer, the SS officer and her. Instead book proceeds like it was a commentary of her life. Only events were important. Not emotions.

This treatment gives an odd movie like quality to the book. Fast paced and to the point. This is not the way I like my books. But that does not mean that I did not enjoy the action packed sequences towards the end. And the little bit of drama that is inserted as an anti climax.

Caroline Gerardo says

Helga is a rather spoiled woman. She only worried for herself until she happens upon a group of children who have escaped a Nazi death camp. It might remind you of the Boy in the Striped Pajamas but with different twist and plot line. The story is fictional. The writing is well crafted and heartfelt. I recommend David George Richards writing and look forward to reading more.

Tom says

A rather short story, actually two in one. 1944, A German Countess whose father works in Berlin as a close aide to Adolph Hitler. Her home is next to a death camp. She finds four escaped children and is able to get them into France, to the underground and to safety. She is protected from the German SS due to her fathers

position, and protected from the French by her smuggling information from her fathers office to them.

The second story 1948, an American Captain searching for the Countess, in a convent because he believes her to be there. After relating his story, he tells the mother superior that he is in love with the Countess, she tells him that she is dead. Beaten to death by Jews because she was German. Even though she smuggled Jewish Children out of Germany to England, and then smuggles Jewish people from Cypress to Israel.

Is she dead? Will he find her alive? You won't know until you read the book.

Susan J says

Remembering World War II

I was a child living in Cleveland Ohio during the period of this novel. This book is a window on this period. It reflects the lives of those directly involved and the choices they made.

MC Lang says

Very worthwhile book

A fine woman is the perfect title for David George Richards's novel. Throughout this exciting World War 2 story the reader experiences many new twists and turns. Richards' gift of storytelling makes this book a must-read to add to your list !

Kathryne Morris says

Good read. The characters are well developed and the story very believable.

I would like to read more by this author. The Countess, Helga is a strong, assertive woman. Captain Robert Thomas should have been developed a little better.

Faydra D. Fields says

See my Grid review of "A Fine Woman" by David George Richards on the Independent Author Index:
<http://bit.ly/125W5AQ>

Barbara West says

Excellent read

This work is well done. It is complete with historical facts and features, adventure, intrigue, danger, resolve and humanity at its best and worst. I read this in one sitting because I could not put it down. You will not be disappointed.

Athena says

Meanders and aspires to be much grander and more engaging than it is. I got to the end and really didn't care which of the characters had survived.

Coral says

As a fan of historic fiction, this book kept me on the edge of my seat. This novel is full of suspense, action, and makes you truly admire the characters themselves as well as their development and growth throughout the story. I personally have come back to this book several times as it is one of my favorites.
