



In Carrie's Footprints: The Long Walk of Warren Dorsey

Jack McBride White

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In this simple yet inspiring book, Jack White tells the true story of a young black boy's struggles to escape rural poverty and overcome the seemingly insurmountable cultural and financial obstacles standing between his reality and his dreams.

Born in 1920 in a tiny black community wedged between the Patapsco River and the depressed railroad town of Sykesville, Maryland, Warren Dorsey was so poor his mother made his underwear from the sacks their chickenfeed came in.

He was delivered in a rundown farmhouse by his grandmother, a former slave they called Aunt Kitty, and raised, along with 11 other children, by his incredibly resourceful mother, Carrie, in a home without electricity, without running water, and very little in the way of money or worldly goods.

The story follows Warren as he struggles to read in a one-room schoolhouse in Sykesville, eventually walks some 10,000 miles to complete his schooling, then overcomes nearly insurmountable financial difficulties to make it to Morgan College in Baltimore, where his education is derailed by sickness, then threatened by war.

A gifted singer, a natural mathematician, and eventually a scientist, Dorsey served in the army during WW II, had a long career in microbiology, and a career as a teacher and principal in mostly all-white schools in Maryland.

But more than the story of one man's struggles to combat and defeat prejudice and poverty, this is a tribute to a mother, who as Dorsey puts it, "would sacrifice anything for her children."

Carrie never had a chance to go to school. Her gifted, fascinating, but troubled and defeated husband let her down in important ways. She washed clothes for white women. She chewed the food first, then fed it to her babies. She insisted that her children go to school, get educated, and do everything they could to escape Sykesville.

She ran a family. She ran a farm. She raised 12 kids. She saw four finish college. She did it all without money, without complaint, and without failure. It was an amazing and completely unheralded accomplishment, until now.

In Carrie's Footprints is the story of a mother, a son, a family, a town, and an era; a tale of resolute determination, courage, and simple triumph.

It's also a terrific collaboration between a 93-year-old black man and a much younger white man, who spent countless hours talking face to face over computers, became friends, and wrote a book together.

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