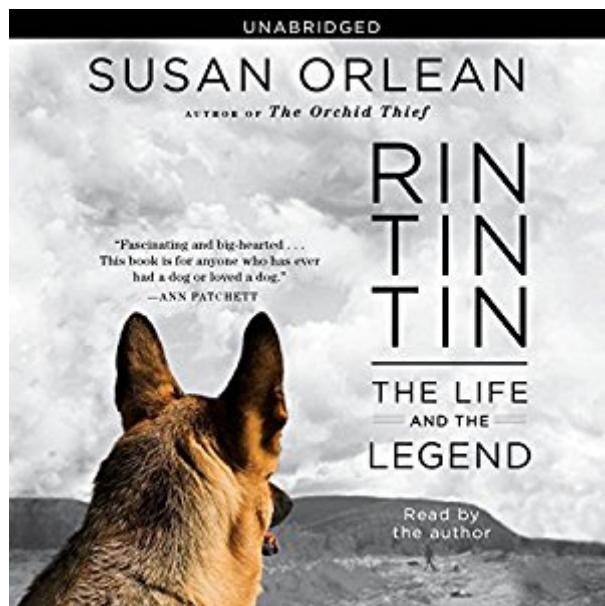


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# Rin Tin Tin: The Life And The Legend



## **Synopsis**

"He believed the dog was immortal." So begins Susan Orlean's sweeping, powerfully moving story of Rin Tin Tin's journey from orphaned puppy to movie star and international icon. From the moment in 1918 when Corporal Lee Duncan discovers Rin Tin Tin on a World War I battlefield, he recognizes something in the pup that he needs to share with the world. Rin Tin Tin's improbable introduction to Hollywood leads to the dog's first blockbuster film and, over time, the many radio programs, movies, and television shows that follow. The canine hero's legacy is cemented by Duncan and a small group of others who devote their lives to keeping him and his descendants alive. At its heart, *Rin Tin Tin* is a poignant exploration of the enduring bond between humans and animals. But it is also a richly textured history of 20th-century entertainment and entrepreneurship and the changing role of dogs in the American family and society. Almost 10 years in the making, Susan Orlean's first original book since *The Orchid Thief* is a tour de force of history, human interest, and masterful storytelling - the ultimate must-listen for anyone who loves great dogs or great yarns.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Length: 352 pages. This is a remarkable, compelling, exhaustive history of possibly the greatest legend ever to exist. I agree with other reviewers that the first third of this book is the most gripping. The writer could have stopped there and had an intensely popular fan book. But, it is probably the second two-thirds that gives this work its greatest value. Initially, I winced when Ms. Orlean's touched

upon such topics as Nazi Germany and the holocaust, or upon the discussion of Bert Leonard and Daphne and so on. But then I realized that had she not included the bits she did (prompted by an entry in Anne Franke's diary about Rin-Tin-Tin), I likely never would have learned of Hitler's crazy contradiction regarding his duplicity in abhoring animal cruelty while murdering human beings. Nor would I have revisited Corriganville, an area between Chatsworth and Simi Valley that was used in so many Western TV series and movies. More importantly, and this was unfortunately not included in this book, a small part of this was used as a base camp by the notorious Manson Family. As the book came to a close I teared up in memory of my lost youth recounting the legend of the one real dog that happened to become the founding member of the greatest animal dynasty ever to rule Hollywood. I'm tempted to write much on my review of this wonderful history not only of the German Shepherd, Lee Duncan, Bert Leonard and Hollywood, but I won't. I will only state this as evidence of just how valuable I find this story: after completing the audiobook (bought from audible.com), I decided to also purchase the \$11.99 Kindle version through .com. If that is crazy, consider me to be eligible to join Susan Orlean, Daphne Hereford, Bert Leonard and Lee Duncan in the Rin Tin Tin fan club. I think my next female dog, regardless of breed, will be named Nannette.

Interesting look at the Rin Tin Tin phenomenon from the silent film to talkies to the tv show. The book explores Rin Tin Tin's original owner, Lee Duncan's life, from at one point being abandoned by his mother in an orphanage to finding the German Shepherd puppies in a bombed out kennel in WWI Germany. Duncan's attachment to the dog is extraordinary, so much so that at one point his first wife named the dog as correspondent in their divorce. Duncan's determination to tell the story of the dog by knocking on doors in Hollywood and finally getting picked up by Warner Brothers is the typical Hollywood star discovery story but in this case, it was true. However, after the success of the films, the stories did not transition as well to the sound era but Duncan never seemed to give up. He continued breeding the dogs, looking for another that had the personality of the first, but never seeming to find it, and eventually died broke. He always wanted to tell the original story of the finding of Rin Tin Tin in that bombed out kennel and Rin Tin Tin's rise to fame but never got to. The story transitions to Herbert Leonard who produced the Rin Tin Tin tv series and always wanted to produce another tv series once the original one was cancelled. Then there is Daphne Hereford, who started with 4 puppies who were descendants of the original Rin Tin Tin and who is continuing the blood line with Rin Tin Tin XII. It is a fascinating story as the author visited many of the locations where Rin Tin Tin and/or Duncan were connected to the small town in France where Duncan found the puppy to the Corriganville ranch where the tv series was shot to the Riverside library where all of

Duncan's papers from his "Memory Room" are stored. Interviews with Duncan's daughter and those involved in the tv series as well as Daphne Hereford gives the book a well-rounded look at the story of Rin Tin Tin from WWI to the present day. I found the initial part on the original Rin Tin Tin the most interesting as well as Duncan's persistent in keeping the legend of Rin Tin Tin alive. Once the book got into the television series, it seemed the people involved were more concerned about making money than preserving the Rin Tin Tin legacy. Additionally the book did wander off into the history of dogs in American homes in the 20th century, some of which had no relation to the Rin Tin Tin story at all and could have been covered in another book. Additionally, I would have liked lots more photographs as they were barely existent in the book. A complete filmography, tv list of all the appearances Rin Tin Tin or dogs called Rin Tin Tin would have also made the book more complete.

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