

Justice Delayed is Not Justice Denied

Award Winning Novel *Dead Weight* and Author's Efforts Bring South Carolina to Consider a Pardon for A Century Old Execution in Charleston

A Second Chance for Justice January 26, 2011

Charleston, SC –January 5, 2011- Daniel Cornelius 'Nealy' Duncan did not go silently to his execution in Charleston a century ago. A young black man of respectable employment on the eve of his wedding Duncan was arrested, tried and executed for the murder of a white merchant. His last words, *"I am an innocent man. I wait to meet you all in Heaven."* In a final note, he forgave those who testified against him and stated, *"Tell my family and friends that I am at rest, because I am innocent, and the Lord knows that I am today. They have taken advantage of me for something that I know nothing about. But that will be all right. I will meet you when the roll is called."*

"There were at least two things that made me want to write this story," according to ***Dead Weight*** author and former journalist Batt Humphreys, "The first was this young man's exceptional sense of grace. The second was the hurricane that followed his execution, still known as the Duncan storm, retribution on Charleston for the death of an innocent man."

On January 26 in Columbia, SC the state Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon will rule on Humphreys' request for a posthumous pardon for Duncan.

"There is legal precedent to pardon Nealy based on testimony, proceedings and an appeal that followed the trial to the SC Supreme Court, but more importantly, there is a moral precedent to correct what is otherwise nothing but another Jim Crow judicial lynching," says Humphreys.

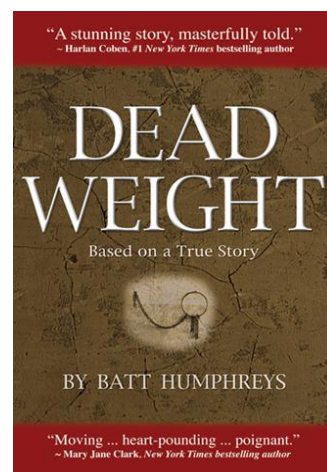
After writing the novel Humphreys petitioned the state for a pardon. "The pardon is a chance to correct an injustice and to restore honor, even if it never connects to his immediate family. For those who believe in the continuity of souls, somewhere he will know and somehow we will have helped restore what was taken from him."

The petition was submitted in the spring of 2008. The process of petition and review has spanned over two years, "It will be time and effort well spent, if the State makes what would be a just and fitting ruling."

Mr. Humphreys is available for interviews.

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About Dead Weight

The novel is based on the true story of the *State vs. Daniel Duncan*. **Dead Weight** details the 1910 trial, conviction and execution of Daniel “Nealy” Duncan, a young black man of respectable employment and manners, arrested for murder on the eve of his wedding. The novel tells of a love story, described by one reviewer as “Shakespearean” in its tragic reality.

In **Dead Weight**, Hal Hinson is a fictional reporter from New York assigned to cover the Duncan trial. Through his narration we see the beauty of Charleston, the ugliness of the racial divide, and a struggle between two lawyers for the life of man accused of murder. The reader also comes to know the real character of the accused through the transcripts of actual court testimony.

History wrote the story’s ending. After the hanging, Charleston was hit by a major hurricane. It dealt another harsh blow to the historic town and the hurricane became known in the community as “The Duncan Storm”.

Dead Weight has earned significant critical acclaim garnering the **IPPY Gold Medal for Best True Crime** novel in 2010 from the Independent Publisher Awards; **First Place Benjamin Franklin Award** for Best Work of Historic fiction; and a top medal from **Foreword Magazine for Best Historic Fiction**. Author Batt Humphreys was the **2010 Recipient of the Palmetto Book Award** bestowed by the South Carolina Center for the Book for excellence in writing. **Dead Weight** was also a finalist for **Best Fiction by the Southern Independent Booksellers Alliance**.

Dead Weight was read in its entirety on National Public Radio last spring. Radio Reader host Dick Estell calls it “a stunning, tragic story.”

“Batt Humphreys brings both a reporter’s gift for research and a novelist’s imagination to his vivid recreation of 1910 Charleston and one of the city’s most shameful episodes of racial injustice.”

- Ron Rash, New York Times best selling author of Serena

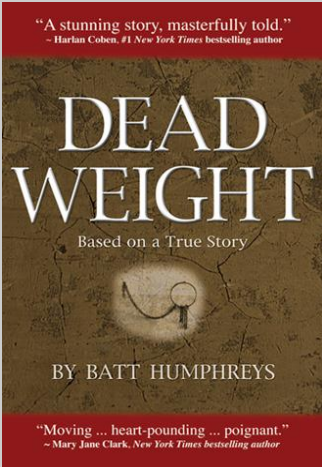
About Batt Humphreys

In 2007 Batt Humphreys left CBS News in New York after a distinguished and eventful career in network news to return to his beloved South. But it wasn’t long until the lure of the story brought him back to a headline. In this case, the headline was a century old.

For over a quarter century his career was dedicated to what colleague Dan Rather described as “following the facts” on the major stories of our generation, from Sarajevo and ‘Sniper’s Alley’, to South Africa and the election of Nelson Mandela, from disasters both man-made and natural to terrorism as a threat, both foreign and domestic. In the early hours of September 11, 2001 during the waning minutes of a morning broadcast under his watch, a jet flew into the World Trade Center at 8:46 a.m. He made the call that began the network’s coverage of the day that the world will never forget.

In 2008, he turned to fiction.

A Southern native, he returned to Charleston, SC, where he began his career in television. There in one of the nation’s most beautiful cities, he found the story of an ugly crime. As noted in the *Charlotte Observer*, “Sometimes, facts are the best source of fiction.”



“A stunning story, masterfully told. This is historical sleuthing with a journalist’s eye: real people and a real tragedy.”

– Harlan Coben,
New York Times
bestselling author



2010 IPPY Gold
Medal Winner
True Crime



2010
Benjamin Franklin
Awards™ Winner



2010 SIBA
award finalist



2010
Foreword Magazine
Book of the Year finalist

