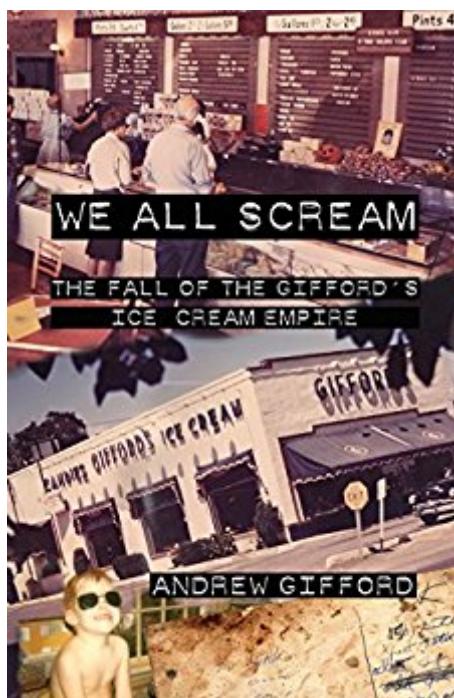


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# We All Scream: The Fall Of The Gifford's Ice Cream Empire



## **Synopsis**

For more than 70 years, Gifford's Ice Cream and Candy Company was associated with nothing but pleasure for native Washingtonians and visitors to the nation's capital. Few knew the dark truth... Behind the iconic business's happy facade lay elaborate schemes, a crushing bankruptcy, two million dollars of missing cash, and a tragic suicide. As the last Gifford heir unfolds his story with remarkable immediacy and candor, he reveals the byzantine betrayals and intrigue rooted in the company from its modest beginnings—dark influences that would ultimately destroy the legendary Gifford business and its troubled founding family.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

If you grew up with mean or distant parents, or have experience within the often crazy situations inside a family business... I can tell you with all confidence that you ain't seen nothin' yet. The abuse, cruelty and psychotic behavior displayed by the parents and grandparents of the author of this gritty memoir went so far beyond my own ideas of dysfunction, that it was almost physically

uncomfortable to read it. The first couple of chapters were so grueling that at first, I thought the book was some kind of well-deserved retribution. Pay back. But that's not it at all. It is the well researched story of the melt-down of a successful multi-generational family business at the hands of truly crazy people. Crazy like evil foxes, that is. That the author survived the ordeal of his childhood and young adulthood became an amazing force, driving me through the results he uncovered once he began asking questions. Mr. Gifford's writing is immediate, intimate and connected with me very early on. Not being familiar with the Washington DC-Area was a blessing for me, as I had no preconceptions regarding the well-known, notorious family business he writes about. While the first two-thirds of the book concentrates more on the effects of the pervasive family madness upon a young boy and teen; eventually, once he delves into the nitty-gritty and soiled laundry of the collapse of the Gifford's Ice Cream brand, the mechanics of how this all happened are as startling as the behavior of the principals. The reality of what occurred, who lost their investments, who tried to disappear, who was connected to all kinds of back-alley characters, etc. has been documented over the years in the media, but this carefully researched memoir goes beneath even the dusty surfaces into a realm of mislaid cash, rot and filth that I can barely describe. If you have the stomach for it, you must read this book. But be warned. If you have happy memories of eating Gifford's Ice Cream in one of their colossal parlors as a child. It might crush your nostalgia completely.

I agree with many of the reviews here. I also found that I could not put this book down. Now, some two weeks later, I am still reflecting on what I read. Andrew has succeeded in displaying superb writing skills that made me feel as though I was almost actually there watching him endure his many struggles within the dysfunctional Gifford family. As a child in the 1950's, I regularly enjoyed Gifford's ice cream. As a former Gifford's employee in the 1960's, I knew a good bit about what was going on behind the scenes at Gifford's, but I wasn't clear about why the Gifford family ran such a good business into the ground. Gifford's demise began before Bob was in charge. He apparently just accelerated the process for reasons different than his mother, Mary Frances. I recommend this book to anyone who knew about Gifford's ice cream as well as to others who might enjoy reading about how a multi-million dollar business with outstanding products any a large and loyal customer base could deteriorate and virtually disappear along with its owner. However, I do warn readers that, while it is a credit to Andrew to have been able to reveal so much about his difficult life, you may find his story to be unbearably dark and tragic.

WE ALL SCREAM was a totally unexpected surprise to me, because it was just so damn GOOD! I

probably shouldn't have been so surprised, given that about all I knew about author Andrew Gifford was that he is the founder of the Santa Fe Writers Project. Here's what the SFWP website says - "The company was founded in 1998 by Andrew Gifford who, one night, at the El Dorado Hotel in Santa Fe, decided to dedicate his life to the preservation of literature. SFWP embraces this mission of artistic preservation, recognizing exciting new authors, and bringing out of print work back to the shelves." Sounds great - and in fact it is. I've had the pleasure of reading three SFWP books, all back from the out-of-print netherworld. They are: Ray Robertson's *MOODY FOOD* and Richard Currey's *FATAL LIGHT* and *WARS OF HEAVEN*. All were excellent. And now here is this totally unexpected and deeply affecting memoir from Andrew Gifford himself - a moving and often shocking story of a deeply disturbed family, an historical document of the Gifford family's "ice cream empire" that is legend in the Washington beltway region, and an unsolved mystery involving the embezzlement of millions of dollars. Less than fifty pages into the book I knew I was going to like it. Gifford was an only child, largely neglected and left to his own devices from an early age. He took refuge in television and books - comic books, sci-fi and fantasy. But he soon realized that television - "... was too repetitive. But books seemed infinite ... At some point, it dawned on me that I would die before I ran out of reading material. In this, I found great comfort. There would always be a new book to explore." Yes. I knew when I read this that little Andrew was my kind of kid, and probably my kind of man: a booklover. Books, it seems, enabled him to survive one of the more horrific childhoods I've read about in recent years. Gifford was the only heir to what was at one time a vast fortune. Gifford's Ice Cream and Candy was a small chain of ice cream parlors and stores that prospered from the 1930s into the late 70s. Founded by the author's grandfather, John Gifford. When John died the chain was taken over by Andrew's father, Bob Gifford, also an only child, and that's when the trouble started and the stores began to go downhill. In 1985 Bob Gifford vanished, along with several million dollars from the family business. Bankruptcy, foreclosures and chaos ensued. Andrew was left to cope with his mentally disturbed, abusive, alcoholic and drug-addled mother, and they lived for a time with his maternal grandparents, the Curreys, who had plenty of secrets and problems of their own. Andrew began to show signs of the abuse, and coped in his own rebellious ways throughout his adolescence. Expelled from Catholic school, he was something of a literary rebel during his HS years in Maryland, working part-time jobs and counting the days until he could leave home. Strings were pulled by his Grandfather Currey to get him into a small private college in West Virginia. He continued to work odd jobs throughout college, knocking heads with administrators, and even dropping out for a year before going back to take a degree in History. During his college years he was stricken with trigeminal neuralgia, an excruciatingly painful and

debilitating condition which went undiagnosed for more than a dozen years. Finally, after fourteen years of being treated with powerful cocktails of drugs, Gifford's condition was alleviated through surgery performed by, of all people, Dr. Ben Carson. Gifford's tale finally becomes a detective story of sorts. Because it is not until after his mother dies - at 47 - that Gifford tries to piece together her tortured life and understand her madness. And that's a whole story in itself. Likewise the shadowy existence of his long-missing father, a man who left no paper trail, who was probably abused by his own father, and remains a troubling mystery to the author. And there are other characters carefully researched here too, his grandfather and his early partners, as well as a shadowy "deep throat" type who knows plenty about Andrew's father's disappearance, but is not very forthcoming. I'm tellin' ya, this is a real page-turner. An embattled and fought-over ice cream empire gone bust, three generations of a deeply disturbed and troubled family, missing people and millions of dollars gone, and myriad unsolved mysteries. Andrew Gifford's life is a kind of living 'potboiler' of a book, a riveting read. Gifford is a very gifted writer. I was mesmerized. Very highly recommended. - Tim Bazzett, author of the memoir, **BOOKLOVER**

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