



Big Daddy: Jesse Unruh and the Art of Power Politics

Bill Boyarsky

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Revealing and frank, this highly engaging biography tells the story of an American original, California's Big Daddy, Jesse Unruh (1922-1987), a charismatic man whose power reached far beyond the offices he held. Unruh, who was born into Texas sharecropper poverty, became a larger-than-life figure and a principal architect and builder of modern California—first as an assemblyman, then as assembly speaker, and finally, as state treasurer. He was also a great character: a combination of intelligence, wit, idealism, cynicism, woman-chasing vulgarity, charm, drunken excess, and political skill all wrapped up in one big package. He dominated the California capitol and extended his influence to Washington and Wall Street. He was close to Lyndon Johnson and the Kennedys, but closest to Robert Kennedy, and was in the Ambassador Hotel kitchen when Kennedy was shot. Bill Boyarsky gives a close-up look at this extraordinary political leader, a man who believed that politics was the art of the possible, and his era.

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