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# A Texan's Long Shadow

## IN HISTORY'S SHADOW

*An American Odyssey*  
By John Connally with Mickey  
Herskowitz  
Hyperion; 386 pages; \$24.95

REVIEWED BY  
ROBERT C. COTTRELL

**B**ig John Connally was a cabinet member of two administrations, one Democratic, one Republican; a three-time governor of the Lone Star State; and a presidential aspirant whose 1980 bid came up woefully short.

Equally important, he was Lyndon Baines Johnson's closest political confidant and the man who was sitting in the presiden-



**Connally: dealer-and-shaker**

tial motorcar on that fateful day in Dallas, Nov. 22, 1963. In his posthumously published autobiography (he died June 15), "In History's Shadow," he discusses his life and times and that of other leading political actors of his generation, including Johnson, John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon.

Tall, dapper and dashing, Connally was imbued with a Texas brand of the can-do spirit with which the Kennedy era is associated. A conservative Democrat who believed in an activist government, he worked mightily to shepherd his state into the modern era, supporting infrastructural improvements, social welfare programs and, above all else, an upgrading of Texas' educational

programs. In fact, Austin's present pre-eminence as a center for high-tech enterprises undoubtedly owes a great deal to the farsightedness of the man Anne Richards referred to as "the Governor."

Later, to the infinite dismay of his mentor, LBJ, Connally, although still a Democrat, joined the ranks of Nixon's cabinet as an all-powerful secretary of the treasury. Eventually, he left the party of his forebears altogether and made an aborted bid for the 1980 presidential nomination of the Republican Party, spending \$12 million and ending up with a single delegate.

But as he tells it, the most intriguing aspects of his life involve his passage from rural poverty to dealer-and-shaker to bankruptcy

and beyond.

While attending law school at the University of Texas, Connally made friends and political allies for life from that "very special class" of the Depression decade, which included the likes of Jake Pickle, Homer Thornberry and Robert Strauss. Very much the young man on the make, Connally soon drew the attention of another Texas go-getter, Congressman Lyndon B. Johnson. Their relationship was sometimes tempestuous — not surprising, given the enormous egos and ambitions of the two men.

In fact, "In History's Shadow" often reads most like a remembrance of LBJ. A sense of reserve remains about Connally, even when discussing the apparent suicide of his beloved eldest daughter. However, he is more forthcoming when analyzing the man whose protege he became. Few knew LBJ better than Connally, who acknowledges that Johnson was "a man of contradictions: generous and selfish; compas-

sionate and cruel; thoughtful and neglectful; charming and crude."

Connally defends Johnson from accusations that he stole the 1948 senatorial race from Coke Stevenson, as Robert Caro has charged. And he suggests that Johnson played a major role in the downfall of Joe McCarthy, insisting as he did that the Army-McCarthy hearings be televised. Connally indicates that he implored Johnson to threaten a full-scale assault on Hanoi, which would have included the deployment of nuclear bombs.

Along with the passages referring to Johnson, those discussing the assassination of John Kennedy are among the most illuminating. Here, Connally gives lie to the notions that he in any way supports the conspiracy theories or that any other than a lone, crazed sociopath felled the president.

Connally continues to subscribe to the three-bullet theory, and most tellingly terms that day in Dallas a national tragedy, for the Kennedys were part of "a new generation come of age" who "represented the best years of our lives." Co-author Mickey Herskowitz reveals that the bullet that wounded Connally led to pulmonary disorders that eventually took his life.

Although "In History's Shadow" allows only a glimpse of this private public man, it is nevertheless a valuable firsthand account of the last of a dying breed of political giants, who ate, slept and drank politics. ■

*Robert C. Cottrell, author of 'Izzy: A Biography of I.F. Stone,' is a member of the history department at California State University at Chico.*