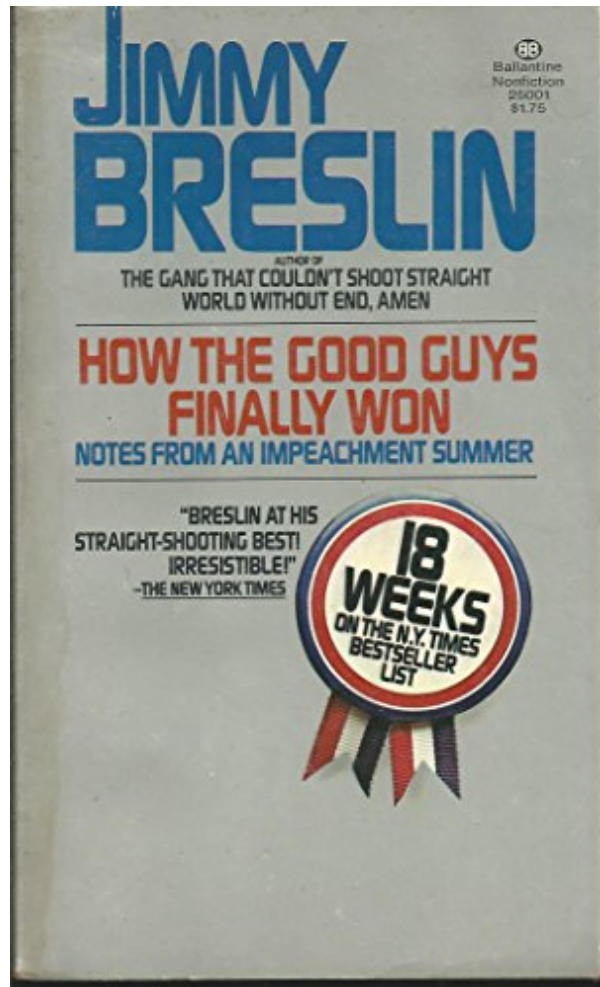


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6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Completely of the Moment

By Hunter

Reading this book is like a mid-'70s immersion program. Breslin captures the backroom dealing and brave decision making that led to the Watergate hearings and ultimately Nixon's resignation. As the title implies, Breslin portrays as heroes Tip O'Neil and the others who brought down a sitting president, but he also shows sympathy for those who believed in their leader and suffered terribly for their fealty. It's not always coherent, and you'll find yourself spending a lot of time on Wikipedia looking up the bit players, but it's all worth it. You'll feel like you're sitting at a kitchen table in Queens circa 1974, following the country's crisis in the Daily News. And yes, that's a good thing.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Actually a Story of Tip O'Neil

By PoliSciJunkie

Breslin was no politico and didn't want to be. Though this book is a nice contribution to the broader Watergate collection. A prolific writer, who famously likes to tell stories from a single individual's view, Breslin makes Tip O'Neil the dragon slayer to Nixon the dragon. That's because the Congress is too intimidated by Nixon and too respectful of the office of the presidency to move forward on impeachment--at first anyway. O'Neil made it happen. He would of course go on to become Speaker, and famously befriend President Reagan, even as the two were political rivals. The story has flashbacks to tell you who Tip is, while keeping it in the context of Watergate. So, Woodward and Bernstein get a ton of credit everywhere, Sam Ervin and Howard Baker are usually credited for unraveling Watergate. Breslin makes Tip the hero for finally ending Nixon's reign of corruption.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

A keen journalist's observations of politics and Tip O'Neill

By Mark Greenbaum

Truth be told, I've known of Jimmy Breslin for most of my life, his name being synonymous with New York City and several of the great city newspapers he's worked for. But prior to picking up "How the Good Guys Finally Won," I had never taken the time to search out and read Breslin's work, whether it be his articles or any of his colorful books. That was a huge mistake. I came away from this book terribly impressed. Breslin

is a superb, smart writer, and his prose is a pleasure to read. When I like to describe the type of writing I aspire to, this is what I am talking about. Breslin has a simple, bright, sarcastic style that makes whatever he's talking about easy to digest and appreciate. No doubt, much of this comes from his lifetime of work as an eagle-eyed city reporter who has seen everything and then some, but his writing is as good and enjoyable to read as any writer I can think of.

For example, take this small passage from page 83 of the soft cover edition: "The candidates were Hugh Carey of New York and Tip O'Neill of Massachusetts. Carey had bitter opposition from Brooklyn Congressman John Rooney, an important man on the major Appropriations Committee. Rooney was from Red Hook and spoke like it. He considered Carey, who lived on Prospect Park West in Brooklyn, as being "Lace Curtain Irish." It was a bitterness that started long before 1970, 150 years before at least, and it damaged Carey's chances."

He came from Red Hook and spoke like it -- what writing!

But Breslin's talent goes beyond his writing, as this book well bears out. I read a great deal of stuff on politics, historical and contemporary, and there are very few folks who have such a clear, incisive understanding of political processes and the players involved. For someone who had never covered the federal legislature from up close, Breslin delved into the subject -- not just the development and investigation of Watergate in the early 1970s, but Congress in general -- with a skill and understanding you will not find from contemporary political writers who have been covering Congress daily for decades.

And the way he tells his story is what makes this little book so readable. His cynical understanding of politics and politicians seems fairly instinctive, and is spot-on. In particular, the book is as much about then-House Majority Leader O'Neill as it is about anything else, and it is obvious that Breslin had a great deal of affection and admiration for the legendary future Speaker. In following O'Neill around and watching him operate Congress's halls so adeptly, Breslin saw a kindred spirit -- a bright, accessible Irishman who liked a good cigar and good drink -- and also a symbol of how the institution works best. Another passage from the book (p.33) where he talks about O'Neill's clout speaks to this:

"The ability to create the illusion of power, to use mirrors and blue smoke, is one found in unusual people. They reach their objectives through overstatement or understatement, through silent agreements and, always, the use of language at the most opportune moments."

There are few better descriptions anywhere of the elusive nature of political power. Breslin felt he had come across a special breed in O'Neill -- and remember, at this point, Tip was not yet the national figure and political folk hero he would become later -- and clearly, his keen eye was right. While this book is almost forty years old, it may as well be a book about contemporary Congress, its underlying knowledge is that sharp.

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