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Kyle Longley. *Senator Albert Gore, Sr.: Tennessee Maverick.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004. xv + 350 pp. $39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8071-2980-7.

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The Martyr of Moderation

The political career of Al Gore Sr. has largely been overshadowed by his son, former Vice President and 2000 Democratic Presidential candidate, Al Gore Jr. Kyle Longley sets out to spotlight the elder Gore in his biography *Senator Albert Gore, Sr.: Tennessee Maverick*. This project grew out of a 1994 job interview at Middle Tennessee State University at which Dr. Jim Neal, senior archivist of the Gore papers, pointed out that no book-length monograph had been written on the Senator. Although he eventually took a job at Arizona State, Longley began work on the project in 1997 and has produced a highly readable and balanced story of Gore's life. The Gore family contributed to the project through interviews and access to the archives, and, at one point, feared that Longley was a right-wing partisan out to write a hit-piece on the Senator and subsequently damage the younger Gore's political career. Despite the close involvement of those determined to portray Gore, Sr., in the most positive light possible, Longley's work makes a seemingly wholehearted effort to depict Gore as he really was, warts and all. While at times the work fails to analyze the impact of Gore's decisions and policy stances, it is by no means an overly positive piece. Longley's book emphasizes Gore's role in national policy-making following the Second World War and portrays him as one of the few Southern moderates rallying against the traditional conservatism of the region.

A man of humble upbringing in the Appalachian foothills of Smith County, Tennessee, Gore scraped together a career in education, law, and finally politics mostly through his hard work and dedication. As the middle child of a small farmer, Gore made it his goal at an early age to "get up and out" of the Possum Hollow community in which he was raised. After he took an intensive teacher education course at Middle Tennessee State Teacher's College, he used family connections to gain a teaching position in Smith County. From there, Gore entered politics by running for the Superintendent of Schools. Although he was defeated by the incumbent candidate, Gore eventually got the position after his opponent chose, on his deathbed, to reward Gore with the post for running a clean campaign. To make himself more politically viable, Gore pursued a law degree in nearby Nashville. There, he met his future wife Pauline LaFon, and a bond was forged that would last a lifetime. Longley does not spend an overly large amount of time on Gore's upbringing, but he shows the impact that it had throughout his political career. He points out that his modest roots served as a hindrance to his advancement in the Senate, as he felt out of place in Washington society and with the Ivy League-educated sons of privilege on the Senate floor; Longley casts most of his tenure in the Senate as an effort to overcome this. Longley also illustrates how the independent streak associated with the small farmers of the Appalachians remained with Gore and often caused him to wage losing battles against the business community and the White House throughout his political career.

Gore won his Congressional seat in 1938 and quickly made a name for himself in the House as a maverick. He derived his political philosophy from the populist and progressive traditions, as evidenced by his efforts to create a more-equitable tax system and to promote reciprocal trade agreements for the duration of his tenure in Washington. Woodrow Wilson and fellow Tennessean Cordell Hull influenced his internationalist foreign policy outlook and directly led to his anti-Vietnam position. Longley continually emphasizes that Gore stayed true to these principles despite the political ramifications, highlighting Gore's independent nature. Early in his career, these positions reaped political benefits, and Gore gained election to the Senate in 1952 on the waves of political reform and anti-bossism started by Chattanooga Representative Estes Kefauver. Kefauver was elected to the upper house in 1948 and successfully undercut the stranglehold Memphis-based politico Boss Edward Crump held on the

Democratic Party in the state. Gore put the final nail in the machine's coffin when he defeated eighty-three year old Senator Kenneth McKellar in 1952, largely on the incumbent's record on the Tennessee Valley Authority. Although he made two concerted efforts to gain the Vice-Presidency in the years that followed, Gore had reached his political apex.

Once in the Senate, Gore began a slow climb up the seniority ladder of the Democratic Party. Gore took several public stands on issues such as corporate tax reform, the Israel-Palestine controversy, and the creation of the interstate highway system. He became a prominent public figure and made campaign speeches for senatorial and presidential candidates for the rest of his public career. He never quite made it to the inner circle of the Democratic leadership, however, as many, especially Texan Lyndon B. Johnson, feared Gore's maverick nature and wanted to work with people who could be both trusted and controlled. Gore and Johnson continually butted heads on policy issues and the Tennessean never quite gained Johnson's trust. Their most public controversy came over the Vietnam War. Gore was a prominent member of the "dovish" wing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee alongside J. William Fulbright of Arkansas and Wayne Morse of Oregon. In committee hearings, Gore and his colleagues openly questioned Johnson's escalation of the war and his open interpretation of the Gulf of Tonkin resolution. Through the televising of these proceedings, Gore became one of the most visible anti-war legislators in the country, a position that helped lead to his political demise in 1970. Here, Longley's training as a diplomatic historian shines through, as his foreign policy analysis is some of the strongest in the book.

Through his positions on the prestigious Finance and Foreign Relations Committee, Gore had a hand in several major policy initiatives during the Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations. Longley succeeds in placing Gore and his actions in the Senate in the larger narrative of postwar political and social history. He follows a strict chronological narrative that moves from topic to topic rather quickly. Three paragraphs on Gore's anti-corporate crusades, for example, can be followed up by three pages on his position on the turmoil in the Middle East with little transition in the text. At times, this leads to a somewhat disjointed chapter organization, but Longley proves adept at tracing the broader themes of Gore's career over his thirty-two year tenure in Washington and his post-political career as an executive of the Island Creek Coal Company. These broad topics include Gore's efforts to shift the tax burden from the lower classes to the wealthy, his quest to move beyond the policy of containment towards a more reflective foreign policy, and his goal of moving the South away from its provincial past into the vanguard of the liberal Democratic Party. Although he never succeeded in these and other endeavors, they remained the central points of his political philosophy throughout his career.

The author sets out to cast Gore as a national figure and, in doing so, he somewhat glosses over his ties to Tennessee and the state political situation in general. His popular appeal is rarely discussed in the early chapters of the book, and Longley makes no effort to show whether Gore kept his House seat due to the advantages of incumbency, or whether he was a generally popular candidate. The author brings Gore's constituents into the narrative through occasional quotes from Gore's correspondence files, but for the most part, the activities of the state Democratic Party and local politics remains absent. Even sections on Gore's re-election battles tend to minimize the local flavor of the contests and focus on Gore's folksy, door-to-door campaign style or his rhetorical potshots at rival candidates. Longley's treatment of the 1970 election, in which Gore lost to Republican representative Bill Brock, is the major exception. This chapter is the high point of the book, as it shows how Gore became a victim of the South's growing conservatism and the Republican Party's willingness to more readily embrace Southerners by playing up racially and morally charged issues of crime, gun control, and school prayer. Drawing heavily from Dan T. Carter's work on George Wallace and his impact on the South, Longley reveals that Gore's progressive views on these issues and his past stands on civil rights as well as a perceived weakness on communism led to a victory by the better-funded, highly modernized campaign ran by Brock and his supporters.[1] The Republican challenger contended that Gore had fallen out of touch with his constituents and made this the focal point of his campaign. Gore, therefore, becomes the personification of the South's missed opportunity. The moderately liberal policies of senators such as Gore, Kefauver, and Texan Ralph Yarbrough could not turn the South away from its racist past toward a more egalitarian and progressive way of life. The GOP under Nixon had no qualms about exploiting Gore's weakness, and his loss marked the final shift away from progressivism in Tennessee and the end of Gore's political career. Longley argues that this remains a fact of life in the Volunteer State by noting that Al Gore Jr. failed to carry his home state in the 2000 presidential election.

Longley's book is a must-read for students of both Tennessee and American postwar political history. Civil

Rights scholars will be disappointed, however, as the author adds little new to Gore's position on race relations. The work opens with the oft-cited anecdote of Gore's refusal to sign the Southern Manifesto and the ensuing controversy, but there is little information to add to the historiography of the Civil Rights Movement. Readers interested in the rise of Southern Republicans should be extremely satisfied, as Longley's biography is one of the first works to show the emerging conservatism from the point of view of a progressive and racially moderate Southerner. Finally, Longley sheds light onto the early political career of Al Gore Jr., by detailing the elder Gore's involvement in his House, Senate, and Presidential campaigns. The highly readable style of the book allows Longley to discuss complex political issues in a quick and efficient manner and show the importance of Gore and his political viewpoint in the ebb and flow of politics and policy-making in the tumultuous post-World War II era. While more discussion of the state political situation would have been welcome, the book stands with Carter's *Politics of Rage* as one of the best Southern political biographies to date.

Note

Dan T. Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallce, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995).

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