

John Paul Stevens: An Independent Life

By BILL BARNHART and GENE SCHLICKMAN. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010. Pp. xiii, 311. \$26.95.

When John Paul Stevens stepped down from the Supreme Court in 2010 at the age of ninety, he had earned the distinction of being not only one of the longest serving justices in the history of the Supreme Court but also one of its most influential members in modern time. Yet beyond legal circles, the life and work of this key twentieth-century figure remains largely unknown. Bill Barnhart and Gene Schlickman's timely biography offers the fullest account to date of Stevens's remarkable life and gives an accessible tour of his judicial work. It deserves reading as much as its subject deserves public knowledge.

A CliffsNotes version of Stevens's life might highlight his midwestern upbringing and education in Chicago, his decorated service as a naval intelligence officer during World War II, his record-setting performance at Northwestern Law School, his clerkship for Justice Wiley Rutledge, his successful career as an antitrust lawyer, and his stint as a special counsel whose investigation into corruption at the Illinois Supreme Court led to the resignation of two state court justices and catapulted his own career to the bench. But as historians know, the devil is in the details, and that is where Barnhart and Schlickman's book excels.

This well-researched biography weaves together a trove of existing and original information about Stevens, from articles and speeches that form the standard Stevens canon, to an impressive array of new sources, including private letters, presidential correspondence, and the authors' own interviews with friends, family members, law clerks, colleagues, and the justice himself. What emerges is a panoramic portrait of Stevens's life.

An early chapter gives a glimpse of the future justice's boyhood in Hyde Park, where he played backyard baseball for sodas, malts, and sundaes at the local drugstore. That same chapter also relates, with historical vividness, the spectacular rise of the family hotel business during the Roaring Twenties and its dramatic collapse during the Great Depression. A later chapter on Stevens's naval service conveys the camaraderie in a basement at Pearl Harbor where Stevens led a team that extracted intelligence from intercepted transmissions and the taste of "really lousy coffee" there, which Stevens "eventually came to like" (page 43). Other chapters flesh out Stevens's postwar legal education and career in greater depth and breadth than any extant work. Combined, the biographical chapters of Barnhart and Schlickman's book give readers a good sense not only of the man who would become Justice Stevens but also of the American century in which he lived.

A CliffsNotes version of Stevens's judicial career might also relate his appointment by President Richard M. Nixon to the federal court of appeals in Chicago in 1970, his elevation by President Gerald R. Ford to the Supreme Court in 1975, his early judicial reputation as a moderate and maverick, and his later

reputation as a liberal lion and leader of the Court's left wing in the face of an increasingly conservative Court. It might mention Stevens's most important contributions to American law, including opinions that gave breathing room for the modern administrative state to thrive, affirmed the constitutionality of the death penalty but limited its reach, and upheld the rule of law against assertions of expansive executive power in the war on terror. Discussion likely would extend to Stevens's ringing dissents from the Court's protection of flag burning as free speech and its controversial intervention in the 2000 presidential election, which led Stevens to rue the loss of "the Nation's confidence in the judge as an impartial guardian of the rule of law."

The second half of Barnhart and Schlickman's book largely follows this standard roadmap. For the general reader the authors provide a capable introduction to Stevens's judicial work and legacy, explaining key cases and concepts with clarity. It also makes a closing argument—and a fairly convincing one—for selecting justices with Stevens's characteristic independence and admirable willingness to "learn on the job" (page 272). In addition, for the jaded Court watcher, the authors offer some fresh accounts of the politics behind several important decisions during Stevens's tenure. However, if there is a shortcoming to the book, it is that Barnhart and Schlickman do a better job of *describing* Stevens's work than *evaluating* it. The general reader may come away from the book with a fine sense of Stevens's remarkable life, but with a less-than-complete sense of his enormous legal legacy.

In the end, this first full judicial biography of Stevens performs a valuable public service of introducing him to readers unfamiliar with the man and his work. Given its wealth of historical information, the book also will undoubtedly serve as a foundation for future popular and academic works on Stevens. It will be worth reading and referencing for years to come.

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Give 'Em Soul, Richard! Race, Radio, and Rhythm and Blues in Chicago

By RICHARD E. STAMZ, with PATRICK A. ROBERTS. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010. Pp. xiv, 139. Cloth, \$60. Paper, \$20.

For media historians, oral histories are a mixed blessing. Some scholars, while finding them interesting to read, point out that the information they contain should be greeted with skepticism, because the interviewees may not be typical of the general population at that time or they might magnify their own importance in a way not entirely supported by objective facts. But even when we subject them to critical scrutiny, oral histories can also be beneficial, enhancing what we know