FOREWORD

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JOSEPH SPENCER MILLER — OR, BETTER, JUST PLAIN JOE — PRECEDED me at the Seattle *Post-Intelligencer*, Northwest outpost of W. R. Hearst, by a dozen years and damned near as many titles. I worked politics. Joe handled music, drama, literature (book reviews), labor, sports, and politics. Those were the days in Hearst journalism that had this maxim: if you can write sports, you can write anything. Joe was an exemplar.

From Seattle and Hearst, Joe moved to Washington, D.C., and to the other side of political life, from observer to player, first as a campaign strategist and then as a lobbyist, an engineer of political consent—the same fun, he might say, at triple the pay but four times the risk. So doing, he collected the raw material refined into this memoir, which may be the most revealing look at American politics in the last half of the twentieth century that you will ever read. Journalists glimpse in from the outside. If they work hard and care, they may tell a great deal, but never so much as those working the system from the inside—assuming they care and aim to remain honest. Thus, honest Joe.

This is no place for a full roll call of the politicians Miller helped make famous, or at least hold high office. A few familiars: Henry Jackson, Warren Magnuson, Gene McCarthy, Morris and Stewart Udall, William Proxmire, Wayne Morse, Frank Church, Richard Neuberger, Ed Muskie, Phil Hart, Robert Byrd ("Byrd by name/Bird by nature/Let's send Bob Byrd to the legislature" is the way the future Senate leader pitched it in his first run for the

West Virginia legislature. Ugh.), Jack Kennedy ("I remember him with aching fondness—lighthearted, irreverent, endlessly curious." So do I.), "Maximum Leader" Lyndon Johnson, as described by Miller, an imperious populist (forget the contradiction), and Estes Kefauver. Miller might have been labeled a name-dropper, but now we know he has only named those with whom he was up close and personal.

Growing up in West Tennessee, Senator Kefauver was my political hero, a Southern liberal in the strictly segregated South. Teddy White, the great presidential chronicler, would later call Kefauver "the best President we never had." In 1960, Miller had the challenge of getting Estes re-elected in the state's Democratic primary against a much-favored, fire-breathing segregationist, Tip Taylor. Tennessee seemed tired of its liberal anomaly, Senator Kefauver. A John Kraft poll showed Taylor dead even and coming on strong. Miller killed a bottle of whiskey with Judge Frank Gray, Kefauver's life long friend, and was cheered when Gray said: "Ol' Estes hasn't made his move yet." "When he does, ain't no sonofabitch going to beat him."

Estes won almost every county in the state—even my home county, Obion, where it was said by members of the gentry that Kefauver might be lynched should he venture to wage his campaign among Obion's rednecks. I mention this episode because Miller didn't, in a book replete with enough other political stories to keep you survivors of the twentieth century awake all night.

Miller came west from New York—the passage by hitchhiking—after his family went from riches to rags early in the Great Depression. Before the crash, his maternal grandfather was a vice-president of the U.S. Rubber Company (remember Keds, kids?); his paternal grandfather Martin was a Civil War veteran (Yankee, dammit) of the battles of Prairie Grove and Vicksburg. Joe's father was an actor, lawyer, and lecturer; his mother, a school teacher.

A good athlete, only a busted knee ended Miller's football career at the University of Oregon; a few semi-professional prizefights taught him the effects of brain concussions that leave a fighter brain damaged or, as they kiss it off in the sports world, "punch drunk." "Thank heaven for sports," Joe once exulted. "The language of youth that teaches thinking and discipline are essential tools for success."

Having failed in a tryout with my beloved St. Louis Cardinals ("Good field, no hit"), like Miller, I found American journalism as the next best thing.

Where else would one get paid for doing what's fun, meeting interesting people from all walks of life—criminal to saintly—with lots of free drinks, occasional adrenalin, and admiring women? Well, who needed sports? Journalism is the most comfortable place for failed jocks at ease with words.

Jonathan Miller, my friend and classmate at the University of Washington in the early 1950s, told me of his older brother Joe, now gone from Seattle and newspapering to run political election campaigns, initially with home-state heroes Jackson and Magnuson.

"Money," writes Miller, "is the wicked wine of the democratic process. 'Everybody does it' is the truest political maxim of them all." And he should know, having carried envelopes of cash to selected candidates, sometimes on orders from the "Maximum Leader."

In the late 1960s when I knew him best, Miller occasionally came back home to the Northwest to lobby on behalf of small lumber-mill owners, many of whom had been his classmates at the University of Oregon. A collection of vivid personalities, they were entrepreneurs dependent on special set-aside sales of public timber for their raw material. The small mill owners were a contrast in personality, dress and wherewithal to the timber giants—Weyerhaeuser, Crown Zellerbach, and very few others—who cut lumber from trees on land they owned.

This was David versus Goliath: Miller working Congress and various state legislatures on behalf of the small mill owners, against what turned out to be the iron laws on free enterprise economics. In other words, impossible. But it was a good fight, made fascinating by the likes of Bob Spence, Alex Cugini, and Sid Leiken, small mill owners who helped shape the Pacific Northwest before Microsoft, Boeing, and Weyerhaeuser, in their attempt to hang on to their diminishing slice of the timber economy.

Joe did his damnedest as a lobbyist and then captured it as a writer.

"Lobbying," said Miller's sometime partner, the astute Maurice Rosenblatt, "is a natural by-product of democracy."

"It beat hell out of hacking for a living on a Seattle newspaper," said Miller. And no regrets. What follows shows you why, as well as how. So much for peanuts before a full-course meal.