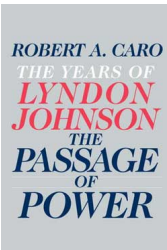


THE PASSAGE OF POWER: Bringing history to life

Written by BY TERRY MATHEWS, NEWS-TELEGRAM ARTS EDITOR
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Robert A. Caro has spent the better part of his professional life chronicling the life and times of Lyndon Baines Johnson.

The Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist's first book, "The Path to Power," was released in 1982, followed by "Means of Ascent" in 1990 and "Master of the Senate" in 2002.

With the publication of the 605-page "The Passage of Power," Caro covers LBJ from 1960 through the State of the Union Address in 1964.

No matter your politics, the story of those four tumultuous years is compelling.

So many stars had to align for Johnson's vice presidency. While John F. Kennedy realized the importance of LBJ – and the South – on the ticket, his brother Robert had a visceral dislike of the man from Texas. The feeling was mutual. Once JFK won the top spot, LBJ was given the cold shoulder. He languished in no man's land until that horrible day in Dallas. Members of the Kennedy administration often referred to LBJ as "Rufus Cornpone."

While LBJ presidency had its own share of problems, if we are to believe what Caro has written, it was the socially awkward Texan who held the nation together in our darkest hour.

While Caro's material is, by its nature dry and fact-laden, he brings Nov. 22, 1963, to life. From the bullets on Elm Street to the oath on Air Force One, Caro puts his readers in the middle of the action, spotlighting the tragedy and Johnson's complete command of the dark days following the unexpected end of one presidency and the unlikely beginning of another.