

The Senator Next Door: A Memoir from the Heartland

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ISSN 0003-4827

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Recommended Citation

Delton, Jennifer. "The Senator Next Door: A Memoir from the Heartland." *The Annals of Iowa* 76 (2017), 462-463.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.12446>

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The Senator Next Door: A Memoir from the Heartland, by Amy Klobuchar. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016 (originally published by Henry Holt in 2015). 355 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$19.95 paperback.

Reviewer Jennifer Delton is professor of history at Skidmore College. She is the author of *Making Minnesota Liberal: Civil Rights and the Transformation of the Democratic Party* (2002).

If, in these polarized times, you need to boost your faith in democratic politics, this is the book for you. Senator Klobuchar writes not as a Democrat or a liberal, but as a midwestern woman, a Minnesotan, whose everyday life was and is imbricated with the history and politics of her region and nation. This highly readable, good-natured, and often funny memoir recounts Klobuchar's childhood in Plymouth, Minnesota, college and law school, legal career, stint as Hennepin County Prosecutor, motherhood, eight years in the U.S. Senate, and at least three election campaigns. Of course, one can't help but be aware that a politician's memoir usually signals an attempt to reach a larger audience, to set the stage for the next campaign. Yet this memoir is so engaging and so genuine that the reader hardly minds, especially if said reader grew up in the Twin Cities in the 1970s and ever went ice fishing, anguished over Vikings Super Bowl losses, or dined at Poppin' Fresh Pies—or, more seriously, had divorced parents, an alcoholic father, or a disabled child. At its heart, this book is about Minnesota, as anyone who appreciates a good Spam joke will recognize.

That said, there are at least two other stories of note here. The first is about being a woman in politics. Klobuchar never played up gender in her campaigns, nor does she dwell on it in the book. But she doesn't have to. It comes out in the anecdotes. There is a story about her three-year-old daughter throwing up on her right before a victory speech, another about her travails rearranging furniture in a new office, and another about explaining girls' swimsuits to her husband on the cell as she is walking into a vote. It is not that these things couldn't happen to men; it is that they wouldn't likely make it into a male politician's memoir. Once in Washington, Klobuchar found comfort and aid in the women's congressional caucus and clearly enjoys the comradery of her female peers; their gender shapes their experiences but does not define them.

The second story is about winning in the so-called heartland and making America bipartisan again. She clearly sees herself as carrying on the legacy of Hubert Humphrey and Paul Wellstone in that regard. Fought on a shoestring budget, Klobuchar's campaigns were family affairs that were about getting out, knocking on doors, and seeking out the optimal lawn sign location. These are some of the best stories in the book

and remind readers how much democracy is still about your neighbors, which is connected to Klobuchar's zeal for bipartisanship. Despite all we hear about polarization, there has been bipartisan cooperation among lawmakers, especially among those from the same region. As Klobuchar shows, midwesterners have stuck together on a variety of regional and other kinds of issues despite party differences. They are neighbors. But so, too, are those seeking to help veterans, to lower medical costs, or to combat sex trafficking. So, too, are those people you get to know by working with them. So, too, are our global trading partners. Throughout the book, Klobuchar pauses to let readers know what she learned from her many experiences, but the overall lesson is the need for cooperation and compromise if lawmakers hope to do their jobs and serve the public.

Wish You Were Here: Love & Longing in an American Heartland, by Zachary Michael Jack. American Midwest Series. Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2016. xi, 256 pp. Illustrations, bibliography. \$15.96 paperback, \$9.99 e-book.

Reviewer Julianne Couch is an adjunct faculty member at Upper Iowa University and the University of Wyoming. She is the author of *The Small-Town Midwest: Resilience and Hope in the Twenty-First Century* (2016).

For Zachary Michael Jack, rural Iowa is a place not just to live and work, but a place to fall in love and to fall in love with. In these collected essays, Jack considers his professional and personal situation as a seventh-generation Iowa farmer who must commute out of state for professional work. He sees his life as an extension of the practices and choices of his ancestors. In turn, readers can see Jack as a proxy for generations of Iowans, and midwesterners, in rural America.

In part one, Jack describes his youth in a small town singled out in the national conversation as an example of how far rural America had fallen. Jack, who has spent time living and studying in distant locations, consciously defied the brain drain trend and as a result feels that he has been viewed as a quaint but mystifying artifact of times past.

Jack considers his Iowa ancestors and their youthful options for courtship and marriage as he reflects on his own. With few young unmarried women nearby in rural Iowa, he says he finds it hard to forge long-lasting romantic relationships. In "Digital Divides," Jack visits online dating sites with mixed results. Even the Internet, with its possibilities for forging human connection across the globe, cannot span rural and urban social divides.

In part two, Jack looks at courtship and other circumstances of his farm-family parents in the 1960s. We learn about their options for meeting