

I'll Be There

Vignettes of an Intrepid Traveller

Caroline Kennedy

Reading Caroline's autobiography there were times when I needed to take a rest. Some of her chapters are so rivetingly interesting and stirring that they take time to absorb. As an experienced writer she gets your attention and then starts you thinking. You know how it is when you read a story in a newspaper and cannot wait to discuss it with someone? Not only did she give me eyes to look into her own experiences, but she prompted me to think about my own. She tells her story but also helps us make sense of events both historical and personal.

How did you feel when for the first time you travelled to another country on your own? What surprised you? What pleased you? What made you anxious? She stimulates such personal questions.

Caroline mixes the mundane with the momentous. For me the best writers bring the same lens to the ordinary events of life that also they bring to stories that you see on front pages. Her experience of political events in the Philippines is told to us just as she tells us about her charity work in Croatia and the bringing up of her children. There is no sign in bold capital letters telling us that what we are about to read next is far more important than what we have just been reading. It isn't because it is all her story, the story of a traveller, not only from place to place but from event to event, big ones, small ones and emotional ones.

I have read and reviewed many autobiographies of politicians. So often they are written in order to establish an official legacy. They shift blame. Caroline's book offers a very different kind of legacy. She tells an honest story that brings smiles and tears. I shall not single out which chapters stimulated those emotions in me, but I am very sure that there will be times when you will weep. I did. And I laughed.

One of her chapters described the writing of her previous book, **How the English Establishment Framed STEPHEN WARD** By Caroline Kennedy & Phillip Knightley I called my review of that book **Valiant For Truth** after a character in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. I see Caroline in that light. She has encountered and challenged untruth, despotism and social injustice. And she has made things happen. Her work with others to raise money for children in Iraq will not have endeared her to Sir Tony Blair whose war crimes she has done so much to draw to our attention.

WH Auden told us that a review of a book involves both judgment and taste. "This is a bad book, but I like it.", "This is a good book, but I don't like it."

Caroline, this is a good book and I like it.

Cliff Jones, September 2023.

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