

<https://www.amazon.com/Growing-Up-Biden-Valerie-Owens/dp/1250821762>

by Valerie Biden Owens · Language: EN

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Overview

Valerie Biden Owens's memoir, "Growing Up Biden," offers an intimate and personal account of her life as the younger sister and closest confidante of President Joe Biden. The book chronicles her journey from a close-knit Irish Catholic family in Scranton, Pennsylvania, through the triumphs and tragedies that shaped the Biden family, and her unique role as a political advisor and campaign manager for her brother throughout his decades-long career. Owens provides a rare, behind-the-scenes look at the human side of politics, emphasizing the unwavering family loyalty and resilience that have been hallmarks of the Bidens.

Owens delves into her childhood, highlighting the foundational values instilled by her parents and the exceptionally strong bond she shares with Joe. She recounts the devastating losses the family endured, including the car accident that killed Joe's first wife and infant daughter, and later, the death of his son Beau, illustrating how these profound sorrows were met with collective strength and a commitment to moving forward. Beyond her brother's political narrative, Owens also shares her own experiences as a woman navigating a demanding professional life, raising a family, and maintaining her personal identity while deeply involved in the public sphere. The book ultimately serves as a testament to the power of family, faith, and perseverance in the face of adversity, offering insights into the personal journey behind a public figure.

Key Takeaways

- Family loyalty and unwavering support are crucial foundations for navigating life's challenges and public service.
- Resilience is built through confronting and processing profound grief and tragedy together as a unit.
- Women can play powerful, often understated, roles in shaping political careers and public life while balancing personal aspirations.
- Maintaining a strong sense of self and personal values is essential, even when deeply intertwined with a public figure's journey.
- The values instilled in childhood—hard work, empathy, and perseverance—often dictate one's path and response to adversity.

- True leadership often emerges from a deep understanding of people and a commitment to service, rooted in personal experience.
- It is possible to be deeply involved in politics without losing sight of the human element and the importance of personal connections.

Chapter Summaries

Family Roots and Early Lessons

Valerie recounts her childhood in Scranton and Delaware, emphasizing the strong values instilled by her parents, Catherine Eugenia Finnegan Biden and Joseph Robinette Biden Sr. She describes a household filled with love, laughter, and a deep sense of responsibility towards one another. This chapter lays the groundwork for understanding the close-knit nature of the Biden family and the formative experiences that shaped both Valerie and her older brother, Joe, highlighting their shared upbringing and the principles that guided their early lives.

The Sibling Bond

This section delves into the unique and profound relationship between Valerie and Joe Biden. She describes their inseparable bond from childhood, portraying herself as his closest confidante and advisor. The chapter explores how their relationship evolved, with Valerie becoming an integral part of Joe's personal and professional life, offering unwavering support and counsel through his early career and personal challenges. It underscores the deep trust and mutual respect that defines their connection.

Into the Political Arena

Valerie details Joe Biden's initial foray into politics, specifically his improbable 1972 Senate campaign. She recounts her pivotal role as his campaign manager, a groundbreaking position for a woman at the time. This chapter provides an insider's view of the grassroots efforts, the challenges, and the determination required to secure a victory against an entrenched incumbent, showcasing her strategic mind and dedication to her brother's political aspirations.

Navigating Unimaginable Loss

This chapter addresses the profound tragedies that struck the Biden family. Valerie describes the devastating car accident in 1972 that killed Joe's first wife, Neilia, and their infant daughter, Naomi, and severely injured their sons, Beau and Hunter. She shares how the family rallied together to support Joe and the boys, demonstrating their collective resilience and the deep emotional bonds that helped them endure such immense grief. The chapter later touches upon the subsequent loss of Beau Biden.

A Life of Her Own

Amidst her deep involvement in her brother's career, Valerie also carves out her own path. This chapter explores her personal life, including her marriage to Jack Owens and raising her own children. She reflects on the challenges and rewards of balancing her roles as a wife, mother, and professional, all while remaining a steadfast presence in the demanding world of politics. It highlights her efforts to maintain her individual identity and pursue her own passions.

The Campaign Trail Veteran

Valerie recounts her continued and evolving role in Joe Biden's subsequent political campaigns, from his Senate re-elections to his presidential bids. She offers insights into the strategic decisions, the grueling pace of campaigning, and the personal sacrifices involved. This chapter illustrates her enduring commitment to her brother's political journey, showcasing her experience and wisdom as a seasoned political operative and trusted advisor.

The White House Years and Beyond

This section reflects on Joe Biden's time as Vice President and his eventual ascent to the Presidency. Valerie shares her perspective on these historic moments, offering observations on the responsibilities and pressures of the highest offices. She provides a unique vantage point on the culmination of her brother's lifelong dedication to public service and the family's shared journey through the pinnacle of American politics.

Lessons in Love and Service

In the concluding chapter, Valerie offers her reflections on a lifetime of experiences, emphasizing the enduring values of family, faith, and service. She distills the lessons learned from both personal triumphs and profound losses, advocating for resilience, empathy, and the importance of human connection. This chapter serves as a summation of her philosophy and the legacy she hopes to impart.

Themes

- Family loyalty
- Political life
- Personal resilience
- Sibling bond
- Women in politics
- Grief and healing

Notable Quotes

- "My parents taught us that the cardinal sin was to be unkind." — Reflecting on the foundational values instilled in her and Joe during their childhood.

- "Joe and I were always a team. We still are." — Describing the enduring and inseparable bond she shares with her brother throughout their lives and careers.
- "There is no 'I' in Biden. It's always been 'we.'" — Emphasizing the collective strength and family-first mentality that defines the Biden family.
- "We learned early on that the only way to get through anything was together." — Speaking about the family's resilience and unity in the face of multiple personal tragedies and public challenges.
- "I never saw myself as a woman in politics, just as a person doing a job that needed to be done." — Reflecting on her groundbreaking role as her brother's campaign manager and her approach to her career.
- "Grief is a thief, but it also teaches you to hold on tighter to what you have." — Discussing the profound losses the family experienced and the lessons learned about cherishing life and loved ones.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is <https://www.amazon.com/Growing-Up-Biden-Valerie-Owens/dp/1250821762> about?

"Growing Up Biden" is a memoir by Valerie Biden Owens, President Joe Biden's sister. It offers an intimate look at her life, her close relationship with her brother, and her experiences as his long-time political advisor and campaign manager. The book chronicles the Biden family's journey through personal tragedies, political triumphs, and the values that shaped them.

Is <https://www.amazon.com/Growing-Up-Biden-Valerie-Owens/dp/1250821762> worth reading?

For readers interested in American politics, presidential memoirs, or the Biden family, "Growing Up Biden" offers a unique and personal perspective. It provides insights into the human side of political life, the power of family bonds, and the resilience required to navigate public service and personal loss. It's particularly valuable for those seeking an insider's view from a trusted confidante.

How does <https://www.amazon.com/Growing-Up-Biden-Valerie-Owens/dp/1250821762> end?

Spoiler: The book concludes with Valerie Biden Owens reflecting on her life's journey, the culmination of her brother's political career with his presidency, and the enduring lessons learned about family, faith, and public service. She emphasizes the importance of resilience, empathy, and the strong bonds that have sustained her and her family through decades of challenges and triumphs.

Who should read

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This book is ideal for readers interested in political memoirs, particularly those focused on the Biden family. It will appeal to individuals curious about the behind-the-scenes dynamics of political campaigns, the role of family in public life, and stories of resilience in the face of adversity. It also offers insights for those interested in the experiences of women in politics.

How long does it take to read

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Based on its typical length, "Growing Up Biden" would likely take an average reader approximately 6 to 7 hours to complete. This estimate assumes a reading speed of about 250 words per minute, which is standard for non-fiction.