



The Nine of Us: Growing Up Kennedy

Jean Kennedy Smith

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In this evocative and affectionate memoir, Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith, the last surviving child of Joe and Rose Kennedy, offers an intimate and illuminating look at a time long ago when she and her siblings, guided by their parents, laughed and learned a great deal under one roof.

Prompted by interesting tidbits in the newspaper, Rose and Joe Kennedy would pose questions to their nine children at the dinner table. "Where could Amelia Earhart have gone?" "How would you address this horrible drought?" "What would you do about the troop movements in Europe?" It was a nightly custom that helped shape the Kennedys into who they would become.

Before Joe and Rose's children emerged as leaders on the world stage, they were a loving circle of brothers and sisters who played football, swam, read, and pursued their interests. They were children inspired by parents who instilled in them a strong work ethic, deep love of country, and intense appreciation for the sacrifices their ancestors made to come to America. "No whining in this house!" was their father's regular refrain. It was his way of reminding them not to complain, to be grateful for what they had, and to give back.

In her remarkable memoir, Kennedy Smith—the last surviving sibling—revisits this singular time in their lives. Filled with fascinating anecdotes and vignettes, and illustrated with dozens of family pictures, *The Nine of Us* vividly depicts this large, close-knit family during a different time in American history. Kennedy Smith offers indelible, elegantly rendered portraits of her larger-than-life siblings and her parents. "They knew how to cure our hurts, bind our wounds, listen to our woes, and help us enjoy life," she writes. "We were lucky children indeed."

The Nine of Us: Growing Up Kennedy Details

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Nancy Prins says

This book focuses on the childhoods of all the Kennedy children. It was a very flowery, "our family was/is perfect" presentation of the Kennedy family by the lone surviving child, Jean Kennedy Smith. I did gain respect for how Rose Kennedy raised her family and the values they tried to instill in their children. I am unsure if Jean was unaware of all the Kennedy scandals or just chose to only focus on the achievements of the family. It was an easy, quick read, but one that left me wanting more, or at least some semblance of the truth.

Chrissie says

This book is exceedingly short. The little information that is given is repeated! It has nothing new. What you get are a few nostalgically told family stories that are scarcely memorable.

I would classify this as a hagiography.

Read these instead:

The Patriarch: The Remarkable Life and Turbulent Times of Joseph P. Kennedy

Bobby Kennedy: The Making of a Liberal Icon

Rosemary: The Hidden Kennedy Daughter

I listened to the audiobook read by Lorna Raver. The narration is clear and easy to follow.

Jean Brown says

4 Stars...Jean the last of the original Kennedy family shares memories mostly happy ones. A sweet book and a nice look back at times no more.

Myrna says

Light memoir written by the last surviving Kennedy sibling. In this bio, Kennedy Smith focuses mainly on anecdotes and memories of growing up in the Kennedy clan. The tragedies that befell her family are lightly touched or glossed over. The love and respect she has for her parents shines through in this one.

Susan says

I found a treasure recently at a nearby Little Free Library that I frequent on bike rides: a new copy of The Nine of Us by Jean Kennedy Smith.

I brought it home, and since I liked its historical promise and it was short as well (250 small pages with wide margins and lots of photos), I decided it would be a book I'd read to those at home after dinner.

Jean Kennedy Smith reminds us that she is now the last living member of her immediate family, which must be a very lonely feeling. She wrote this book last year, when she was 88.

"Does she talk about Chappaquiddick?" asked a family member. Well, NO. Think about it: if you were reminiscing about your early days of growing up with your family, wouldn't you want to remember the good parts? Would you want to throw any family member, now departed, under the bus? Probably not, and so you won't find any bombshell confessions or salacious gossip in this book. It's an idyllic look into Jean's memories growing up in the famous Kennedy family.

I also enjoyed the book as a look back to a time past. The Kennedys were definitely well-to-do: Jean mentions delicious meals prepared by cooks, an audience with the Pope, a mother who had a driver to take her here and there. And sometimes the prose is a bit cloying (she says of Teddy, "He preferred loving to hating and laughing to crying."). But I blinked back tears when she described some of her siblings' deaths, and when she described sister Rosemary's struggles. I absolutely loved the many vintage photos -- most of which I'd never seen before.

If you're an admirer of the Kennedys, or if you enjoy history, I think you'd like The Nine of Us.

Jan C says

Enjoyable read.

More of a reminiscence of the one remaining Kennedy than a biography of a family. Includes many family pictures.

Sandy T says

If all parents took child-rearing as seriously as Joe and Rose Kennedy did, the world would be a much better place. That being said, if all parents had a nanny, a cook, a maid and a chauffeur, they would have much more time to focus on their children's development... But I found Rose Kennedy fascinating--supremely organized and disciplined, she dedicated herself to motherhood as it was a career. Lots of advice and insight from her sprinkled throughout the book.

I enjoyed this remembrance of the early years from the only living Kennedy sibling, before the family was plagued by sorrow and scandal.

Kara says

I have read a number of Kennedy books, but Jean Kennedy Smith's perspective made this book unique and

extremely personal. Her childhood anecdotes were humorous and poignant; the losses she experienced were emotional to read even though readers are already aware that she has outlived all of her siblings. The book is short and easy-to-read. The focus is on family life, with world history in the background. One of the few books that I laughed out loud in one chapter and blinked away tears in the next. The book also serves as a wonderful reminder to keep a journal and written correspondence. Added to my favorites shelf!

Linda says

A slim listen about the Kennedys by the lone survivor of JFK and RFK's siblings. Jean Kennedy Smith was the eighth of the nine children of Joe and Rose Kennedy. There are vignettes of the entire family eating a meal and being quizzed by their mother, but, with the addition of 3 cousins who became orphans, there were too many to sit at one table. So, there was one table for "adults" and one for the younger children. Jean's stories include more about Teddy, Bobby, Eunice, and Pat since the first four were more than a decade older. Easy read.

Nada says

I've read countless books on the Kennedys and I dare to say this one is the memoir I was waiting for. An enchanting tale that I couldn't get enough of.

Christopher Lawson says

Mother And Dad Were Destined To Have A Gaggle Of Children

THE NINE OF US is a story about a family--and a BIG one, at that. Keep in mind that this is not a book about politics or government--it's a book about a family. Naturally, government service is mentioned, but that's not really the central message of this book. The central theme is the joy and love found within a family--their struggles together, the high points, and the low points.

This is a book mostly about children and how they grew up together. The author has mostly fond memories of her big family. She also credits her parents, Rose and Joe, for their diligence: "I am so grateful to our parents for being so focused in their child rearing" The author explains that she wanted to tell the real story about her family: "I wanted to remember them, and my brothers and sisters, as they really were." THE NINE OF US tells the story of 9 kids and two loving--but sometimes strict, parent. The author notes that she was fortunate to be encouraged to keep a journal; that habit became very useful in telling this story.

The Kennedy household was a busy household. The father set the example: "Even as a child, Dad was never not working." Hard work and diligence was stressed in the Kennedy household. The values from the parents were traditional Yankee values--hard work, diligence, faith: "To whom much is given . . ."

From the earliest age, all the children were required to "use our talents and gifts for the good of others and of our country." The parents made it clear that there was "No Whining in This House." The parents also made it clear that "we were not the center of the universe."

The father emphasized responsibility. During World War II, the father gave this advice to young Bobby: "It is boys of your age who are going to find themselves in a very changed world, and the only way you can hold up your end is to prepare your mind so that you will be able to accept each situation as it comes along. So

THE NINE OF US contains lots of delightful stories about each of the Kennedy children. The stories are mostly light and cheerful, but of course, there was tragedy as well. The first child to be lost was Joe, during WWII: "Fate determined that our family would never be whole again when the news arrived, one hot August day in 1944, that Joe had been lost."

Perhaps the saddest part of THE NINE OF US is the story of befall Rosemary. The parents hoped a surgical procedure would help her, but the results were devastating: "Little could we understand as well the sadness that befall our beloved Rosemary . . . It is still not clear what happened. Rather than finding relief through the procedure, Rosemary lost most of her ability to walk and communicate. We had been so hopeful, and were devastated." The patriarch of the family "remained heartbroken over the outcome of her surgery for the rest of his life."

All in all, I found THE NINE OF US to be a tender story--but also a bittersweet story. Having grown up in a large family myself, I appreciate all the wonderful things that a big family offers. The author sums up this story nicely:

"Mother and Dad taught us to be thankful to those who came before us and to give back to our fellow man and country. They taught us to never take anyone or anything for granted. I wanted to remember them, and my brothers and sisters, as they really were, and I am grateful to all those who helped make that possible.

Advance Review Copy courtesy of Edelweiss.
For more views like this, see: <https://www.bassocantor.com>

Lisa says

I wish Jean Kennedy Smith had written this book 20 years ago, when I was raising my son. Nine of Us: Growing up Kennedy is like nothing I've read about the Kennedy family before. And yet exactly like I would've expected. Each chapter contains immensely valuable parenting words of wisdom from Joe or Rose Kennedy. This just could be the best guide for raising smart, thankful and devoted kids!

Jane Kennedy Smith grew up thinking her childhood was unexceptional. Her brothers and sisters were all her playmates. They played, and laughed and argued over the last piece of chocolate cake. She had no clue they would turn out the way they did. The family was distinctive perhaps because they were so large, and their parents influence was profound but subtle.

As grandchildren of Irish immigrants, Rose and Joe wanted to make sure their children appreciated how much they had to be thankful for. They wanted to make them understand that they had an important obligation to give back. And that the gift of being in this world is a responsibility. The nine children were compelled to do their best and complaining was strictly forbidden. Joe's rule of "No whining in this house" are words that we could all raise our families on today.

The book gives us an intimate look into each of the nine siblings. Smith details what each were like, what

they liked to do, their special interests and even the times they got into trouble. Can you imagine Teddy sitting in his mom's closet surrounded by her dresses, shoes and hats, for "time out" for breaking a window. Or what about Bobby in a typing class.

How fun it sounds to have a grown-up as a Kennedy, with the dinner table as the family hub and discussions of current events as the main course. How fun to have played tennis with Eunice or sailed with Jack or rescued animals with Bobby.

Growing up Kennedy is a delightful look into the young lives of the family who, each in their own way, has had a profound impact on this country. The values Rose and Joe instilled and the often unique way in which they instilled them, continues to be relevant. A great read for anyone raising a family today!

Koren says

The Kennedy memoirs I have read have dealt more with the political side. This is just about their growing up years and how their parents raised them. It is light and upbeat and mostly positive. The sad times are only touched upon briefly. She makes it sound like a fairly tale. I wish I had read this when I had little ones. Who knows, maybe they would have grown up to president of the United States. It was a little sad at the end when she talks about how she is the last surviving child of Joe and Rose. Only Teddy was younger and the author is 90 years old now. There is lots of pics in this book and when I read it on Kindle I was able to enlarge the pictures. I wish there would have been a recent pic of the author but I was unable to find one even with google.

Sue says

So much about a life of service, love, and graciousness can be learned from this book. I know that Goodreads is not a political forum but I can't help but say that I would like each family member of a certain President-elect's family to read this.

Kelly says

This is a very rose colored glasses look at the Kennedy family written by the last remaining sibling of John F Kennedy. My heart breaks for her having to go through the loss of every one of her immediate family. For that reason I completely understand her need to focus on only the most positive aspects of her life with her family.
