

Herding Cats Synopsis

An unsparingly candid and engaging memoir from one of the dominant political figures in the last half-century

For more than thirty years, Trent Lott of Mississippi has been one of the most powerful figures in all of Washington, D.C.; as a leading figure in the conservative movement, he has been among a select group of people largely responsible for the Republican Party's dramatic shift to majority status in the American political landscape. A student leader at the University of Mississippi in the 1960s, Lott was elected to the House of Representatives in 1972, as part of the Conservative Opportunity Society, a group of young Republicans devoted to changing government and broadening Republican influence, especially in the South. Lott ascended rapidly to the position of Republican Whip, the second-highest position in the GOP hierarchy. In 1988 he successfully ran for the Senate; in 1996 he became the Majority Leader, and that year worked with Newt Gingrich to enact the historic Welfare Reform Act.

After his off-the-cuff remarks at Strom Thurmond's 100th birthday celebration caused a minor scandal in late 2002, Lott resigned his post as majority leader, though he continues to serve as one of the Senate's senior statesmen.

Yet this is more than the average political memoir---far more. Trent Lott's story bridges an extraordinary time in American history and politics: the child of hard-working Southern parents in difficult times, he first entered the national scene in the early 1970s through his fierce defense of Richard Nixon during the Watergate era. In the years that followed Lott came to be virtually the public face of Congress and of the conservative movement, carrying the flag and fighting the battles that led to both the Reagan Revolution and the push for big-defense, smaller-government, family-values conservatism that has only grown in the years since. And in so doing he became a kind of latter-day LBJ, a master of the Senate who knew every back-room deal ever made--every back ever scratched or stabbe--in the halls of Congress during his tumultuous tenure.

And in this book he will pull no punches. Lott's prodigious memory will carry readers within the walls of the House, the Senate, and the administrations of six Presidents---from Richard Nixon to George W. Bush. And he will tell his stories with the straightforward candor of a man who has seen more drama within one building than most of us see in our entire lives---and who has nothing to lose in telling the truth about it. As he recently told one reporter, "On any issue, if I think the administration--or the leadership--is going off in the wrong direction, you'll be hearing from me." With this book, Trent Lott's longtime supporters finally will.