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Book Review: When Conscience and Power Meet: A Memoir

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short term event which has the value of clarifying race and other aspects of southern life. Nevertheless this is an important book which should be purchased by all academic and large public libraries.

Roger Hux

Francis Marion University Library

Ziegler, Eugene N. *When Conscience and Power Meet: A Memoir*. Columbia, SC, University of South Carolina Press, 2008. ISBN 978-1-57003-744-3 384 p. \$39.95

Eugene Ziegler has been called a “true renaissance man” and that may be true. In this memoir we follow him from his growing up years in Florence, South Carolina through his studies at the University of the South and law school at Harvard, a stint in the Navy, his law practice and finally into public service in South Carolina. In between, we see his interests in acting, playwriting, teaching, and archeology among other things. And there is an underlying theme of race relations and his dedication to the idea that “all men are created equal.” He has some great stories about some of his black friends as well as others he meets along the way. At times he seems to go off track to tell someone else’s story but eventually comes back to his own. This makes it a slow read since the flow of the story is often interrupted by another, seemingly unrelated, idea.

The title, *When Conscience and Power Meet*, is definitely apropos in this case. Most of his adult life is a battle between what his conscience tells him is right and the powers that exist in politics and even in his own party. It starts in Florence with his fight to get a Fine Arts Council and the Florence Museum initiated. He organized the Big Brothers Association of the Pee Dee and was involved with juvenile offenders and the state prison system. As a reluctant politician, he served in the South Carolina House of Representatives for one year and then moved to the State Senate. This is where his struggle to do what his conscience said was right for his constituents and the power of the existing political system was mostly fought. Although he did not always win, as in his campaign to win the U.S. Senate seat against Strom Thurmond, there were still many victories to fuel his determination. Those interested in the politics of the South will find this memoir interesting since the politics and the thinking of the 1960’s in the south is revealed in Ziegler’s persistence in passing the legislation that is still working for the people of South Carolina today.

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