



Everything's Bigger in Texas: The Life and Times of Kinky Friedman

Mary Lou Sullivan

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Kinky Friedman is something of a Texas legend. The satirist has, at various times, made his name as a singer-songwriter, a mystery author, an essayist, a columnist, an animal-rescue crusader, and a political candidate. Mary Lou Sullivan's biography of the Kinkster, *Everything's Bigger in Texas*, thoroughly captures the Jewish cowboy's many careers and tells a story packed with interviews and anecdotes.

Friedman is a master raconteur, always ready with a funny quip, and Sullivan's book reflects that. But she also gets him to open up to a surprising degree, making this his definitive biography. The story covers Friedman's early years at the camp his parents ran in Texas, working for the Peace Corps in Borneo during monsoon season, taking part in civil rights protests, and attending the University of Texas during the sniper attack by Charles Whitman (which inspired one of his most well known songs). Along with Friedman's own recollections, Sullivan includes those of his friends, family, and bandmates, really fleshing out these memories.

Of course, the more well known adventures of Friedman's life also make for fascinating reading: his early tours with his band the Texas Jewboys packed into an old Cadillac, becoming the first Jew to play the Grand Ole Opry, joining Bob Dylan as part of the Rolling Thunder Revue, and partying with John Belushi and appearing on *Saturday Night Live*. His late-career runs for political office are covered well, including the unique challenges of running as an independent and Friedman's frustration with opponents' below-the-belt tactics. The book doesn't shy away from the darker times either, whether they be an era of heavy cocaine use that cost Friedman several close friends, or the career struggles of music-industry executives who did not get Friedman's humor.

As his myriad careers demonstrate, Kinky Friedman is the sum of many unique and interesting parts, and Sullivan assembles them beautifully.

JEFF FLEISCHER (November/December 2017)

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