

Time's Up! A Memoir of the American Century

Robert Cabot

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George Washington and Thomas Jefferson owned slaves and slept around. Whether those not-so-small peccadilloes take away from their role in forming this country is a matter of debate. But the larger point is that no one escapes this life without committing some sin.

In *Time's Up: A Memoir of the American Century*, Robert Cabot begins by fessing up to some egregious behavior from his ancestors. The first Cabot, John, arrived in Salem in 1700 and quickly succeeded as a seafaring merchant. His descendants continued the family trade while branching out “into the very profitable businesses of legalized piracy, the slave trade, the rum trade, the Chinese opium trade, and well-chosen marriages,” he writes, betraying a sincere amount of contrition for the source of his family’s wealth.

Well into his nineties, Cabot recounts his extraordinary years working in the Executive Offices of the Truman administrations, for the State Department in the Marshall Plan years, and then in Bangkok managing a sprawling US aid program after resigning from government service of US foreign policies. His work and subsequent travels found him in Kabul, Kunjerab, Moscow, Andalucia, Peshawar, Chaing Mai, Algiers, L’Ile Rousse, Naples, Bastia, Besancon, Paris, Cambodia, Laos, and many other locales.

A wonderful feat of political and historical storytelling, this project will also be remembered for Cabot’s lamentations about white privilege, colonialism, imperialism, environmental destruction, and the US’s troubling enthusiasm for war.

MATT SUTHERLAND (January/February 2019)

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