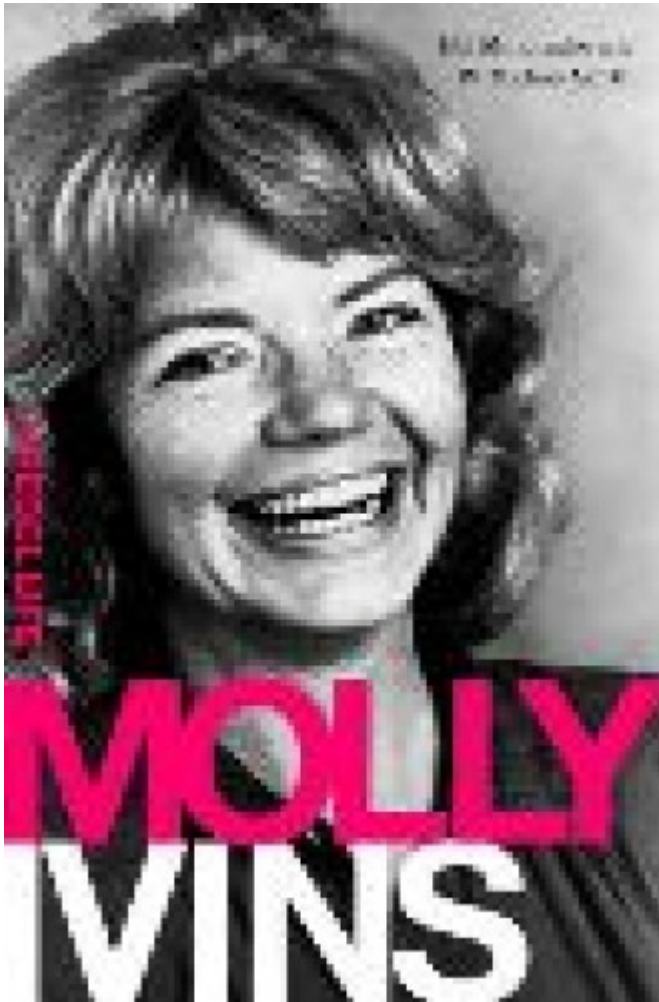


# BookMarks

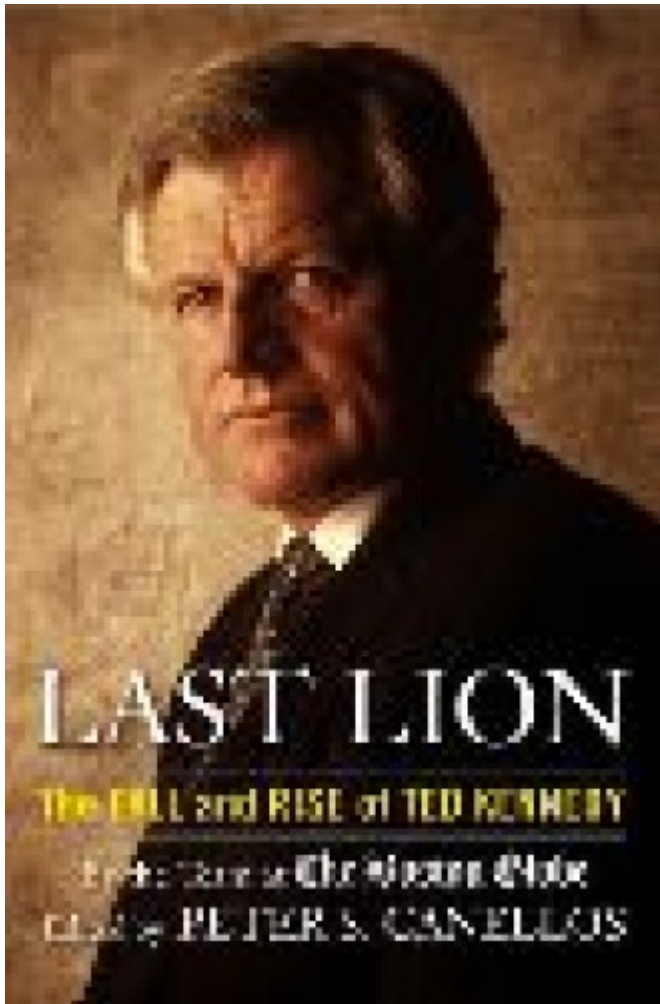
Books in the [December 29, 2009](#) issue

## In Review



### **Molly Ivins: A Rebel Life**

Bill Minutaglio and W. Michael Smith  
PublicAffairs



## **Last Lion: The Fall and Rise of Ted Kennedy**

the Team at *The Boston Globe*; Peter S. Canellos, ed.  
Simon & Schuster

Molly Ivins had the good fortune of growing up in a wealthy oil family in Houston and attending elite schools, just like George W. Bush, to whom her legacy will be forever tied. She became a political journalist in an era in which there were three U.S. presidents from her native Texas. With a national appetite for her insight into Texas politicians like Lyndon Johnson and the two Bush presidents, she landed a job at the *New York Times*. But her irreverent style did not suit the *Times*, which banished her to a Western post in Denver. Eventually she returned to Texas as a syndicated columnist and author. She died of cancer in 2007 at age 62.

While this book was written by a team of reporters who covered Ted Kennedy, it is so skillfully edited that it reads as though it had a single author. The writers are appreciative of the Democratic senator's accomplishments, but they do not cover up

his flaws. The chapter on the Chappaquiddick episode is especially insightful. Ted Kennedy not only rose above his famous family's crises, including the assassination of two of his elder brothers, but in many ways surmounted his own shortcomings. Kennedy's rise in stature came in part from relinquishing his aspiration to become president and accepting his vocation as a U.S. senator. His deeply held Catholic faith and eventually his second marriage to Vicki Reggie also anchored his life. Kennedy dominated the U.S. Senate for nearly half a century, writing nearly 2,500 major bills, of which at least 300 became law, leaving his mark particularly on civil rights, education, health care and immigration. Merely invoking the name of this liberal icon helped Republicans raise money.