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Carl Vinson : Patriarch of the Armed Forces

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Carl Vinson, Georgia Congressman, was one of the most important and influential individuals in naval affairs. He not only mastered the traditions, processes, and rules of the House of Representatives where he served for a half century, but also acquired a vast and detailed knowledge of naval matters (and later the armed services in general) and displayed consummate skill in drafting and managing legislation designed to modernize and strengthen the Navy in particular and the armed forces and national defense in general. Known as the “Georgia Swamp Fox” or “the Admiral,” Vinson was an astute and crafty tactician in the political arena with an incredibly acute sense of timing, who knew how to play pork barrel politics and knew when and how to compromise. For most of his tenure in Congress he was either the chairman or the ranking minority member of the Naval Affairs/Armed Services Committee. In time, he came to wield enormous power in shaping naval and military policies. In many respects, he was the principal architect of the nation’s modern defense system. Organized chronologically and written in lean, graceful prose, this work is based upon deep and wide-ranging research in both primary and secondary sources. This study is all the more remarkable in view of the fact that Vinson did not write an autobiography, keep a diary, or preserve his personal papers. This cogent and readable biography of Carl Vinson is also the story of America and the South in a time of transition and change. Vinson once said, "It takes genius to commit the story of a crusty old man like myself into something readable." James F. Cook has achieved this, and Vinson would be impressed.

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