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**5114 Cedar Lake Road, Minneapolis, MN, 55416**

**Contact Norton Stillman (952) 546-6300 / Fax (952) 546-6303**

**nstill4402@aol.com**

# Don Fraser

Minnesota's Quiet Crusader

*Iric Nathanson*

foreword by Norman Ornstein

In these pages historian Iric Nathanson examines the life and career of one of Minnesota's most beloved and influential statesmen. As a Minnesota state senator, U.S. congressman, and Minneapolis mayor, Don Fraser was deeply involved in the key issues of his era, including the civil rights struggle, the war in Viet Nam, and the efforts to combat urban poverty. Through his nearly 40 years in public office, he won the respect of both his constituents, who returned him to office time and again, and also of those who disagreed with his progressive approach to public policy but admired his personal honesty and integrity.

But Fraser's career had its ups and downs. He entered politics in 1954 by ousting an entrenched legislative incumbent, and scored a second upset victory when he defeated a well-known figure for a seat in the U.S. Congress. But sixteen years later Fraser suffered his own unexpected defeat for a U.S. Senate nomination. He rebounded from this loss by returning home to Minneapolis to serve as the city's mayor for 13 years.

The personal side of Fraser's story also holds our interest. It is the story of a man whose modest demeanor masked a strong inner drive and fierce resolve that surprised and often misled those who battled with him in the public arena. The story also involves a loving and mutually supportive marriage of 64 years to a woman whose expansive personality and public persona has, at times, outshone those of her more self-effacing husband. The story offers much food for thought about the value of personal integrity and public service in difficult times, and gives a stirring account of how communities can work together for change.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Iric Nathanson has written more than 30 articles and five books on Minnesota history. His 2010 book, *Minneapolis in the Twentieth Century, the Growth of an American City*, was a finalist for a Minnesota Book Award. Iric's articles have appeared in *Minnesota History*, *Hennepin History*, and the *StarTribune*. He also writes a history feature for the on-line daily MinnPost.

paperback / 242 pages

ISBN: 978-1-947237-02-5 / \$19.95

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