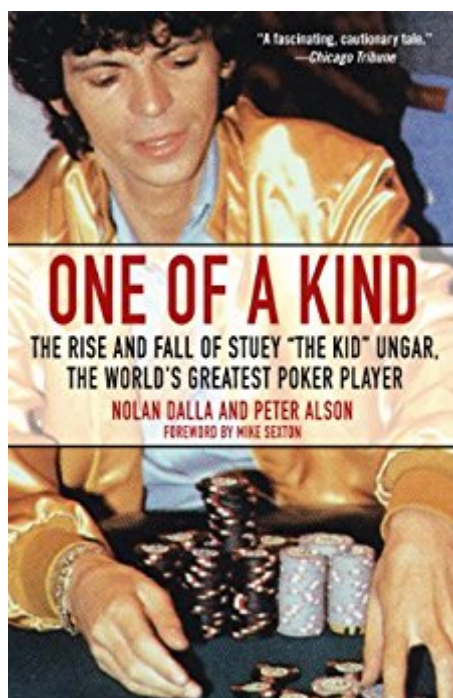


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One Of A Kind: The Rise And Fall Of Stuey 'The Kid', Ungar, The World's Greatest Poker Player



Synopsis

Stuey Ungar, the son of a Lower East Side bookie, grew up in a New York of the 1950s and '60s that was straight out of Damon Runyon. By his early teens, he had dropped out of high school and was spending most of his time in the city's under-ground card rooms. So prodigious was his talent for playing gin rummy that he soon found himself bankrolled by members of the Genovese crime family. After thrashing every top gin player on the East Coast, he was forced to broaden his horizons--traveling around the country to find opponents and also learning other card games, including poker. At twenty-one, he moved to Las Vegas for good and quickly found mentors in poker legends such as Jack "Treetop" Straus, "Amarillo Slim" Preston, Doyle Brunson, and Chip Reese, who embraced the skinny five-foot-five kid with the Rimbaud aura. Soon enough, Ungar was playing in the biggest games at the famous Dunes poker room, learning the finer points of the game at incredible speed. In 1980, competing in his second tournament ever and playing a game--no-limit Texas Hold'em--he'd just learned, he shocked the poker universe by winning the World Series of Poker. He would go on to win the event a record three times. In *One of a Kind*, authors Nolan Dalla and Peter Alson tell the startling tale of a man who managed to win millions of dollars and live the highest of high-roller lives without ever quite understanding or respecting the value of money. Whether tossing away his winnings at the racetrack or on a single roll of the dice, Ungar was notorious for gambling every single dollar in his pocket on a daily basis. The risk that he embodied in his gambling carried over to his personal life. He had no concept of night or day. He didn't own a wristwatch, didn't have a bank account, and for years had no home address or personal possessions. For all his gambling successes, at the end of his life he bounced between hotel rooms, casinos, and crack houses, dependent upon the kindness of friends and strangers. This intimate, authorized biography illuminates the dark genius of poker's most charismatic and mysterious star, who could ruthlessly peer into and read other men's souls but seemed baffled and powerless when confronted with his own.

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Customer Reviews

This is a well told rags to riches to rags story that is the biography of Stu Unger - Gin player and Poker player extraordinaire. This book is based upon interviews with Unger himself, as well as those that knew him best - family, friends, and those that sat across the green felt from this WSOP champ. It is an excellent book, but very depressing - not the fault of the writers, but because they do such an excellent job of making the reader see the turmoil that existed within this exceptional individual

This book about Stuey "The Kid" Ungar is a fast-paced read about a poker prodigy. Before 'Hold 'em hit the scene, Stuey played Gin and became a young expert at card playing. It was said that his memory was photographic. This book shares the story of Stuey who lived life as a hard core gambler. All of life was a gamble to him and he took every opportunity in life to wager. His life experience was so far removed from the regular life that you and I might be living--paying bills and earning an honest wage. Stuey lived hard in all aspects: gambling, sex and drugs. He rubbed shoulders and was mentored by the mob and some of Vegas' biggest names like Doyle Brunson and the Binions. Reading this book will allow you to see the life "The Kid" lived in NYC and Las Vegas. If you love books about Las Vegas and the game of Hold 'em as well as exciting stories about gambling--Stu Ungar's story will not disappoint.

Awesome book. It's not so much about poker as some may think even though it talked in detail

about Unger's poker life too. I absolutely loved the writer's style. I finished it in 3 days and hated putting the book down when I had to go to the bathroom or eat.

Here's the story of a guy who made an estimated thirty million dollars during his life by gambling. He spent his last days mooching money off his associates and died at the age of 45 from health issues related to drug abuse- they took up a collection to pay for his funeral. I give the authors a lot of credit for writing a gripping and compassionate yet honestly told story - you probably won't despise Stuey, but you won't admire him either. Some call this a cautionary tale, but sadly it is bound to be repeated time and again when someone is born with immense natural talent and no common sense.

I recall that Jim Mcmanus, in his book on the World Series of Poker, mentioned that Stu Ungar was someone with a life truly in need of exploring, so I was pleased to find out about the existence of this book. I ordered it the minute it was released. I could not be more pleased with the purchase. Its pages flow like frames in a motion picture. I could not put the biography down. This is a tribute both to the professional writer employed, Peter Alson, and also to the ornate texture of the life it documents. Stu Ungar was a thoroughly compulsive, brilliant man who was given many gifts that he, with unprecedented impatience, smoked away through the tube of a crack pipe. There was no "could have been a champ" with Stuey though. He won The World Series of Poker three times and was victorious in 381 competitions overall. His memory was photographic and his mind a spinning computer, yet it was his ever-present need for instant gratification that finished him. A lack of concern for money was his greatest No Limit characteristic, but it was also his biggest weakness as he blew millions on sports betting, the ponies, and every other proposition put before him. Ungar was a man of total contradictions. He loved being a father and cared intensely for his daughter and stepson, yet he disappeared for weeks at a time and could often not be reached when they needed him. Stuey lived for competition but allowed drugs to cause him to skip the 1998 WSOP and sleep through the last two days of the 1990 one. He could be charming and entertaining but had few social graces. This genius had parts which canceled out his whole. The book succeeds at many levels. We feel tremendous sympathy for the main character, but wonder what more any single person could have done to save him. The finest of the poker players are emotionally non-responsive at the table and possess "alligator blood." However, with Stuey, they brought misery upon themselves in the hopes of diverting him from his inevitable destruction. Doyle Brunson let him move in with his family in El Paso, while Mike Sexton, the same cheeseball who provides color for the World Poker Tour, paid Ungar's hotel bills time and again just so his friend would have a place

to live. Chip Reese had written him off, but, finally, as Ungar sat in a jail cell, he pulled out 55 C notes to secure his release. Stuey Ungar had more talent than practically anyone else on this earth, and being rich should have been a sure thing, but his love of life never equaled his lust for action. He died by his own hand even if the coroner's report said otherwise.

It wouldn't end well. I knew that when I purchased this book. How could a man succeed so well in poker -- a game that requires heart, stamina, incredible focus, uncanny ability to read people, discipline and intense mathematical analysis -- and fail so badly at life? Nolan Dalla captures Unger so well that I felt as if I was another of Unger's friends, watching his life unravel. Dalla skillfully peels away Unger's layers, until beneath all the bravado, genius, and generosity we see not a man, but a little boy; probably a traumatized boy desperately trying to outrun his demons. When he could no longer outrun them by chasing escalating gambling highs, he escapes into drug addiction. Knowing how the book would end, I couldn't help but root for Unger. But Dalla does not stop with Unger, we experience the frustrations, disappointments and horror of Unger's friends and family, whom Dalla thoroughly interviewed. Like any child, Unger is singularly insensitive to the needs of those around him. As exhaustive and painful as this book was proving to be, I couldn't put it down. That's a great credit to Dalla.

One of the all time great poker books which tells the story of probably the greatest card player that ever lived. Sadly, it is also the story of a tortured genius whose life was a continual roller coaster, only to end far too young. One of the best biographies that I have read.

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