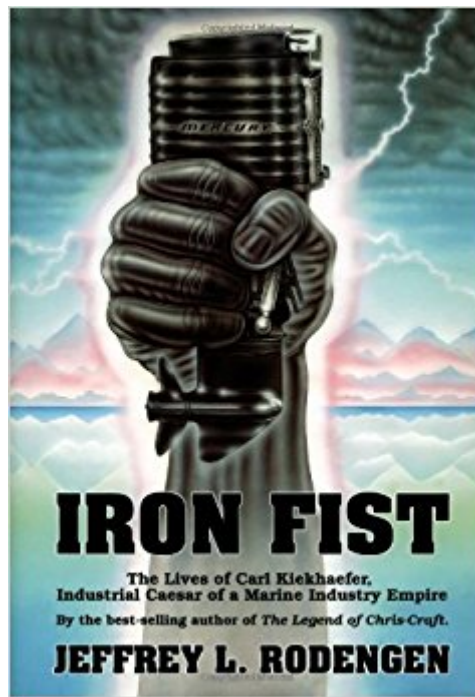


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Iron Fist: The Lives Of Carl Kiekhaefer



Synopsis

Iron Fist: The Lives of Carl Kiekhaefer, reveals the breathtaking life of the indomitable founder of Mercury Marine. Kiekhaefer was a modern-day giant killer, who delighted in spoiling the well-laid plans of competition. To achieve his obsession of making Mercury the largest manufacturer of marine propulsion in the world, he would sacrifice almost anything. Readers of Rodengen's superb book will encounter industrial drama of exhilarating proportions, from first time revelations of a secret multi-billion dollar conspiracy of friendship, to Kiekhaefer's ruthless battle for majority ownership, and the wholesale abandonment of his family and traditions.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As one who grew up on a marina in central Ky., the outboard "wars" of the 1960-70's were a major part of my life. We were Mercury fanatics in Evinrude country. Rodengen's work on the life of Carl Kiekhaefer is mandatory reading for anyone who worshipped at the Mercury altar. It confirms the genius of Kiekhaefer, and the superiority of his product, while at the same time making clear the weaknesses that ultimately led to the loss of his company to Brunswick, and with it the unique "personality" that made Kiekhaefer Mercury the beloved company of its time. The most amazing thing to me was the number of engineering accomplishments and the ultimate dominance of the marine industry by the men in black. For any Mercury devotee, this book will literally cause tears in your eyes. I'm glad it was written.

This book is full of details few imagined about Kiekhaeffer and Mercury Outboards. Many of his

personal triumphs and disasters are explained. Mr. Rodengen has done a very thorough job of researching the story of a very secretive and often confusing character. Serendipity often followed this gentleman through his amazing career. From early on when outboard motors were not his intended focus, to when he sold Mercury to Brunswick (for what turned out to be a less than favorable deal for him, though he remained well off by average standards) to his last adventure with the rejuvenated Kiekhaeffer Aeromarine as an Offshore racing engine and outdrive maker making him another fortune in boating. The story is very interesting, but the source material for the book is Mr. Rodengen's anthology of his own magazine articles about Mercury and Kiekhaeffer. While background information was necessary in each magazine installment a little too much remains in each chapter and story for best clarity. I recommend persevering with the writing style to learn this interesting story that is told nowhere else.

I've never owned a boat, and probably never will. But I love stories of mechanical wizards, and Carl Kiekhaefer was certainly one of the greatest. Mr. Rodengen obviously made this book a labor of love. It may never sell millions of copies, but those of us who've purchased it will undoubtedly rejoice that he took the time and effort. Kiekhaefer was an odd man. It's almost like he loved machinery so much that he wanted to be a machine himself, hence his alienation from his family, and his lack of friends other than a few similarly unusual men. Mr. Rodengen leaves no stone unturned about the man behind Mercury motors. I didn't realize Mercury could have been just as famous for chainsaw manufacturing had it not been for Mr. McCulloch. For those considering the book, but might be put off by the boating/marine dominance of the Kiekhaefer story- don't be. There is plenty here to whet the appetite of any gearhead like myself.

I grew up eating, breathing and sleeping outboards in the sixties. Mercs were always these mysterious, high-performance, scream-like-a-banshee exotics that were fast as hell and required tremendous TLC. The book really digs deep into the mystique, while offering a view of a troubled genius. Highly detailed. Who knew that Carl Kiekhaefer designed and built first-class snowmobile engines? That he raced Chrysler products in the 1950's both here and in Mexico, and won most of the races? That he marinized automotive engines for offshore powerboat racing and took world championships several years in a row? The unfortunate side was that his family rarely saw him as he worked 7 days, including Christmas, and put-in workdays that sometimes lasted for days on end. He faced huge technical and financial obstacles and overcame them. If you're a boating enthusiast you cannot go wrong by buying this book!

I have collected outboards for years. I have always been a collector of Scott-Atwater outboards and Evinrude's. I have always liked Mercury's, but have never really collected them. I bought this book just to learn a little about the man and the company. Of all the books I have ever read, about outboards, this is the best one. Not just a great outboard book but a great book on the early years of outboards. You would have to put Carl Kiekhaefer in the same category as a Henry Ford and a Bill Gates. He built a company and didn't settle for just being in business, he strived for perfection and dominance. When it was all over he had accomplished both

Well, I am half way through the book and so far it has been fantastic! I would recommend it to anyone. In a day where you have companies being ran by bad management, a guy like Carl Kiekhaefer is needed to whip a company back in shape. Carl is one tough cookie to deal with at times in this book, and I am starting to take on his attitude at times as I strive for perfection at work. Where I work, ...we need someone like Carl Kiekhaefer to come in and straightened things out big time! I admire his grit and determination to get stuff done! Carl Kiekhaefer is rubbing off on me through this book!

While growing up in South Florida, boats were part of my life. My dad's first boat had a "white in color", inline Mercury outboard. I was interested in going fast. I remember my dad running our boat WOT, (fast). Mercury motors were the fastest motors and anyone who wanted to go faster bought them. Mercury motors have dominated the racing world all over the world, which made me interested in learning about their history and the man who made it possible from the impossible. This book demonstrates a "nothing can stop you from your dreams" attitude. No obstacles could stop him. WW11 with restrictions on aluminum shut many outboard shops down. Carl K found ways to keep the lights on. He worked 7 days a week, coming home for dinner and returned till midnight. He did risk what being a father was because his drive and competition was too important. Carl K. grew up on a farm and didn't want to follow his families legacy of a being farm worker all of his life as they did. Carl K. just wanted to expand and took many risks, set many insane endurance records and invented many "state of the art", inventions. I had no idea he was even racing in NASCAR! Nothing could stop him. Carl K. was crazy with his employees. If you couldn't work 7 days a week, fired. Weren't living up to his expectations, fired. He thought OMC was spying on him and took great lengths to do counter intelligence on them. Enjoy it as I sure did. Great book, read it in three days. Carl was a legend in his time, yet he didn't know about it while he was alive. Sometimes you have to

stop and smell the coffee. RIP Carl.

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