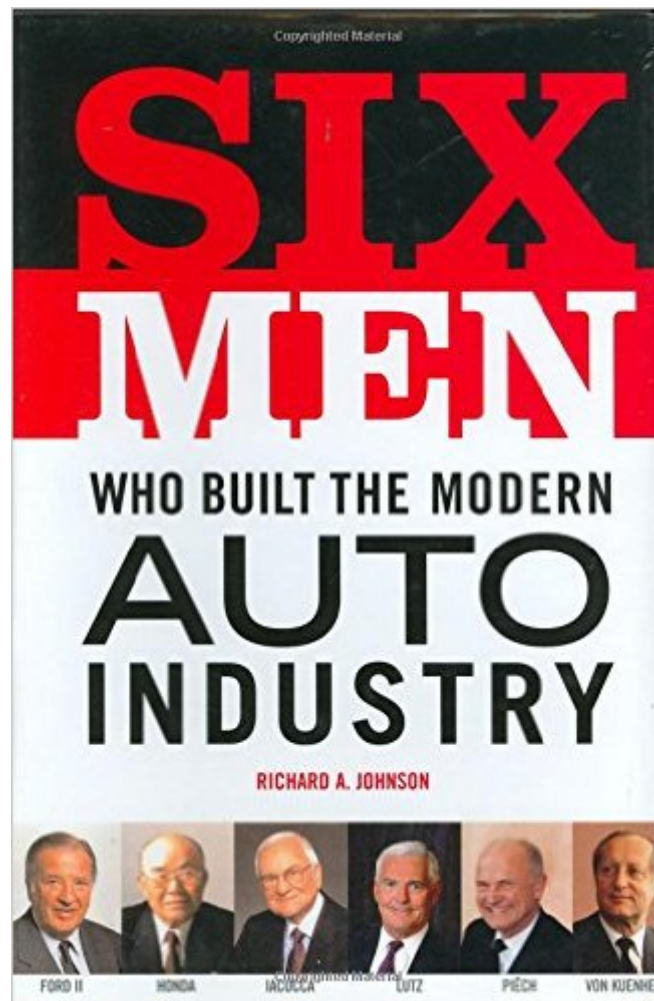


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Six Men Who Built The Modern Auto Industry



Synopsis

This is the story of six extraordinary men who each built something from nothing, redefined the automotive industry after World War II, and redirected its course for the future: Henry Ford II (visionary autocrat with an iron will), Shoichiro Honda (most successful automotive entrepreneur since Henry Ford I), Eberhard von Kuenheim (founder of the modern BMW), Lee Iacocca, Ferdinand Piech (builder of Volkswagen Group) and Robert Lutz (who left retirement at 70 and is still highly influential at General Motors). What made them special was the sheer volume of fundamental change they brought to the largest industry in the history of the world. They not only re-shaped the auto business, the six made a sizable dent in the societies they lived in. To a man they were great cognitive thinkers. Their minds worked with animal speed, even instinct speed. But more than anything these were brave and cantankerous souls who rode the waves of history. Each could see the future. They could just make it out-sometimes imperfectly, but could see it nonetheless. They took a business that had begun to mature and decline by the 1930s and found ways to make it fresh and whole again.- The compelling story of the global car business over the past half-century.- A lively and engaging narrative that recounts some times collaborative, sometimes archly antagonistic interactions among the men- Full of business revelations at the highest level, written by a journalist operating at the heart of the industry- Global appeal that shows how automotive groups in the USA, Europe and Asia have influenced each other- A business story interlaced with personal details that explains why the six were determined to be successful

About the Author
For two decades, Richard Johnson has worked for Crain Communications, publisher of the world's leading automotive business publications. Founding editor of Crain's Automotive News Europe, he has been a reporter and editor for the group in Detroit, Tokyo, Frankfurt and London. He is currently a senior editor with Automotive News in Detroit and regularly talks to the most senior executives in the leading car manufacturing groups.

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Customer Reviews

Just finished this book in a day, it was impossible for me to put down. Johnson takes these six men and outlines their impressive careers and their contributions to the Automotive industry in depth. His insight into their super-sized egos, the struggles they faced as they rose and those they left in their wake is a must read for anyone with a passion for Automotive industry history. Those interested enough to have read the biographies of Ford, Iacocca, and Lutz will appreciate the way Johnson weaves an intriguing story that connects these individuals and their mentors as they either became or didn't become CEO's of their companies in the US, Europe and Japan. Although I work in the automotive industry, this book presented me with my first in-depth knowledge of Piech, and Von Kuenheim and their dominant influence on the global industry. Some may wonder why Kiichiro or Eiji Toyoda didn't make the list of the six men. You'll have to read the book! It's apparent that the previous reviewer had not read the book or she would not have been compelled to ask the question why "Toyota" was not one of the six. If you can't resist the tales of the best and the brightest this book takes you inside boardrooms of the powerhouses of industry over a period of 50 extensively researched years.

I bought this book thinking it would be 6 mini-biographies. Instead, it's 20 random stories that the author threw up in the air, and how they landed, he tried to connect the dots to tie it to these six guys. The chapters were spent intertwining the six men even if the events did not really tie together. Also, there is a lot of repeated data, and not very good convincing of some of the guys. I think Henry Ford II is in the book because he hired good people. I'm sure he was a great exec, but this book doesn't explain that other than he hired the Whiz Kids. I would have preferred the book being: here is person 1, here is why he was important. This is what he did. Here is person 2...etc. Instead it's here's all these events that happened, this one guy was working at this company at that time. But that event is like this other event that happened at a different company at a different time. Very hard to follow. If you want to read the book, borrow a copy, and read the second to last chapter on Iacocca. It's the only decent chapter in the book.

This is one of the best books available about the evolution of the U.S. and European auto industries over the last 65 years. The author clearly believes in the great man theory of history. He writes an insightful history of the industry by analyzing the impact of six men on the companies they worked for and led. He tells both their personal stories and how their presence or absence at key points helped or hurt their companies. The author was an editor at Automotive News in the U.S. and Europe and had an excellent vantage point to watch, interview, and write about the people and events in the book. General Motors appears only very late in the story when Bob Lutz joined GM to try to help Rick Wagner pull it out of a decades long tailspin. This suggests that GM was led by a succession of weak leaders who couldn't overcome a stifling corporate culture that led to its eventual bankruptcy. Toyota is also a fringe player in the story for reasons that are less clear.

Book arrived well packaged in a timely manner. Thank you! This book gives a wonderful overview how how cars evolved the way they did in general and why the big 3 deservedly face stiff competition. It goes into the personalities to the extent that you better understand the thinking of the companies themselves. Although only a brief chapter on Mr. Honda is included, you end up understanding as the book progresses what an impact Honda has on cars today. You may end up thirsting for more details of these men's lives and books written about or by them.

I really enjoyed this book. I've always been a "car guy" and it was nice to hear some of the inside stories. The book was well written and edited with very little redundancy and no annoying or glaring errors. Enjoyable to read.

Well researched. Not all of the business bios were as complete as others... BMW's VonKuenheim bio was comparatively superficial. Written in 2005... Mullaly would be included if written today... not because of a feud or rivalry but because of his no-nonsense approach and strict adherence to a simple strategy... One world/One company.

I'm not entirely convinced that these guys are the ones MOST IMPORTANT to the modern auto industry, but it certainly was interesting reading their stories!! Anyone who is a car buff, or interested in the business will likely love this book. I've already read a great deal about Laccoca, but this book makes me want to find out more . . . and I am already pondering the purchase of books about Honda - what a cool, self made dude!! Anyway, I heartily recommend this . . .

Excellent coverage and integration of key players in the auto industry. I enjoyed reading and learning about each of the principle leaders. I would encourage others to give it a read.

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