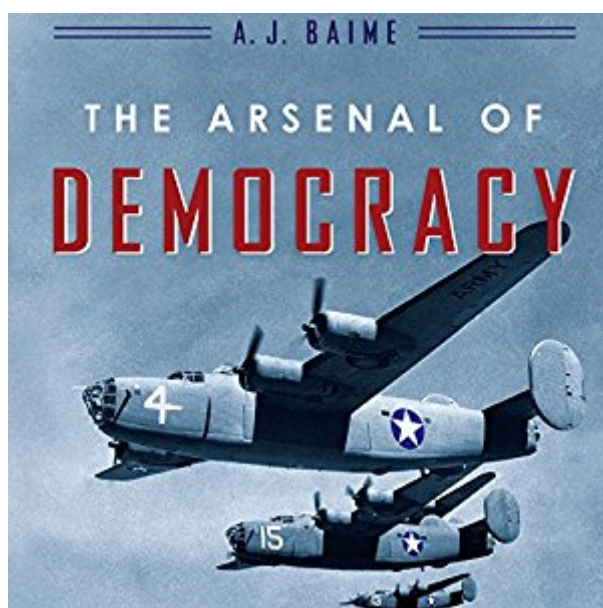


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The Arsenal Of Democracy: FDR, Detroit, And An Epic Quest To Arm An America At War



Synopsis

A New York Times best seller. A dramatic, intimate narrative of how Ford Motor Company went from making automobiles to producing the airplanes that would mean the difference between winning and losing World War II. In 1941, as Hitler's threat loomed ever larger, President Roosevelt realized he needed weaponry to fight the Nazis - most important, airplanes - and he needed them fast. So he turned to Detroit and the auto industry for help. The Arsenal of Democracy tells the incredible story of how Detroit answered the call, centering on Henry Ford and his tortured son Edsel, who, when asked if they could deliver 50,000 airplanes, made an outrageous claim: Ford Motor Company would erect a plant that could yield a "bomber an hour". Critics scoffed: Ford didn't make planes; they made simple, affordable cars. But bucking his father's resistance, Edsel charged ahead. Ford would apply assembly-line production to the American military's largest, fastest, most destructive bomber; they would build a plant vast in size and ambition on a plot of farmland and call it Willow Run; they would bring in tens of thousands of workers from across the country, transforming Detroit, almost overnight, from Motor City to the "great arsenal of democracy." And eventually they would help the Allies win the war. Drawing on exhaustive research from the Ford Archives, the National Archives, and the FDR Library, A. J. Baime has crafted an enthralling, character-driven narrative of American innovation that has never been fully told, leaving readers with a vivid new portrait of America - and Detroit - during the war.

Book Information

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History > United States & Canada

Customer Reviews

Simply OUTSTANDING book about how the US auto industry answered the call to build war armaments for the military. The REAL story behind the facts. The depth of subject covered is amazing. You will become a lifelong fan of Edsel Ford and realize what an important part he played in the continuing democracy of the United States. He gave his life for his country as surely as any US soldier lost in battle. Edsel's interest in the development of airplanes in the 30's helped America with the second world war. You won't be giving credit to Henry any longer.

This is a very interesting book. I grew up in the Detroit area and I was amazed to learn the history of the auto industry there and the critical part it played in World War II. I listened to it as an audio book and then gave the paperback to my son. He is a design engineer and was pleased to see credit given to engineers for the truly amazing developments detailed in the book.

Wow! I never realized the extent of the contribution of American industry to the war effort in the 1940's. The author doesn't just glorify the participants and players. You read about the frailties and inevitable human failures, balanced against the will to overcome and succeed as one. Reading about the patriotism and unity that allowed this country to achieve stratospheric industrial production levels that confounded, humbled and ultimately overcame our enemies across 2 oceans and 3 continents brought forth tears. Tears not just for what we accomplished then, but also for how far we have fallen. Looking at our fractured and dysfunctional political system and self-serving polarization of the masses, I wonder if we could ever again achieve such grandeur, such strength and focus from a unified effort towards a common goal.

It has been a while since I have enjoyed a book so thoroughly and been as captivated as I was by this one. I literally stayed up all night thinking, one more chapter then I'll go to bed and then I just couldn't put it down. I loved the way the author was able to parallel the story of the Ford family dynamics along with the trajectory of the US involvement in the war and the ramping up once we were involved. I am a big fan of nonfiction history and loved that I discovered new tidbits about the war, our government and the automobile industry during an explosive time of growth and opportunity. The good, bad and ugly is all covered well without feeling mired in the detail but providing such great depth of information in a highly readable way. Being born and raised in the Detroit/Dearborn area I was fascinated to learn more about the industry that growing up, I never really learned about, specifically the role the big 3 played in building up the war armaments for WWII. Seeing how depressed Detroit is and how low it has fallen, this book should be a must read

to instill a sense of pride and amazement and what was once accomplished by a city that grew in staggering numbers to meet the demands of the war. The size of Willow Run is mind blowing and the author does such a great job in detailing the sheer scope of the undertaking that Edsel Ford signed on for. If you enjoy a great story, this is it.

Saw this book referenced in one of the car magazines I read so I looked for it on Kindle and found it at a reduced price versus the hard copy. This book is the real deal and especially fascinating to a car guy like myself who worked for Ford in the 70's and spent 37 years in the industry. In my career at Ford I often found myself working in the same building where they built the bombers and the history was overwhelming. I am so glad that someone decided to research this important time in history and the contribution of the auto industry to the war effort (along with the bonus of a well-researched glimpse into the lives and personalities of the executives in the industry in those days). If I could give this book 10 stars I would do so. Well done Mr. Baime! You hit a home run with this book. Anyone who has ever been part of the auto industry should read this and particularly someone like me who worked for "Fords" and visited the places where the work was done. So glad I saw the reference to the book in the magazine. I downloaded it immediately.

This was a very interesting book. I am one of the post-war baby boomer crowd, and this book enlightened me a great deal in many areas. First, you see how dramatically unprepared the United States was for entry into World War II. We lacked manpower and had highly outdated military aircraft and other weaponry. Second, the book charts the process of how FDR and others rallied American industry to convert manufacturing of civilian goods to military items. The process did not always go smoothly, but finally began to flow. Third, the book provides considerable insight into the personality styles and values and conflicts within the Ford Motor Company aristocracy. Edsel Ford has quite a few struggles with his dad, Henry, the founder of the firm, who had many less than admirable qualities as well as some fine ones. Henry was evidently somewhat of a pacifist, and had some philosophies that led Hitler to commend him. Ultimately Ford Motors gets on board to help the U.S. with desperately needed bombers.

Never realized what it took or the damage that was done to all those involved with the process of getting America up and running for war production. What a terrible price all those people had to pay (They literally paid with their lives and they knew it all along that it would kill them in the end) Talk about patriotism !!! WE WILL NEVER EVER SEE THAT KIND OF LOVE FOR GOD AND

COUNTRY AGAIN !!!!! Will have to admit that i shed more than a few tears when i read about Edsel and FDR dying. They knew it would kill them in the end and they still soldiered on.

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