

### The Eccentric Billionaire: John D. MacArthur--Empire Builder, Reluctant Philanthropist, Relentless Adversary

Nancy Kriplen

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He was hated, feared, and admired. The country's second-richest man at the time of his death, John D. MacArthur (1897-1978) also became one of its great benefactors. Every year, some two dozen American writers, artists, intellectuals, and scientists receive as much as a half million dollars in grants known as the 'genius awards' from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. But MacArthur was not the benevolent figure you might expect. Stingier than J. Paul Getty, as money-obsessed as Howard Hughes, and as ruthless as Cornelius Vanderbilt, MacArthur was one of the most multi-layered men in business history. Now, in this first full biography of John D. MacArthur as he really was, Nancy Kriplen reveals the man behind the myth - the often vulgar, sometimes unethical, always ambitious rogue who would become one of America's wealthiest men."The Eccentric Billionaire" chronicles how MacArthur amassed his fortune, rising from a poverty-saturated childhood as the son of a fire-and-brimstone preacher to become an insurance and real estate mogul. As sole owner of Bankers Life and Casualty, he also built a real estate empire that spanned the continent.

Based on interviews with members of the MacArthur family as well as previously undiscovered letters and papers, this book reveals MacArthur's tumultuous private life, including his quickie divorce from his first wife and his Mexican marriage to Catherine, his brother's cute, clever teenage secretary who would help him on his climb to riches. The author also explores MacArthur's relationships with his family and friends, including his brother, the playwright Charles MacArthur, and sister-in-law, the great actress Helen Hayes. Extensively researched and beautifully written, "The Eccentric Billionaire" is a revealing look at a man whose influence has extended in ways he never dreamed.



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