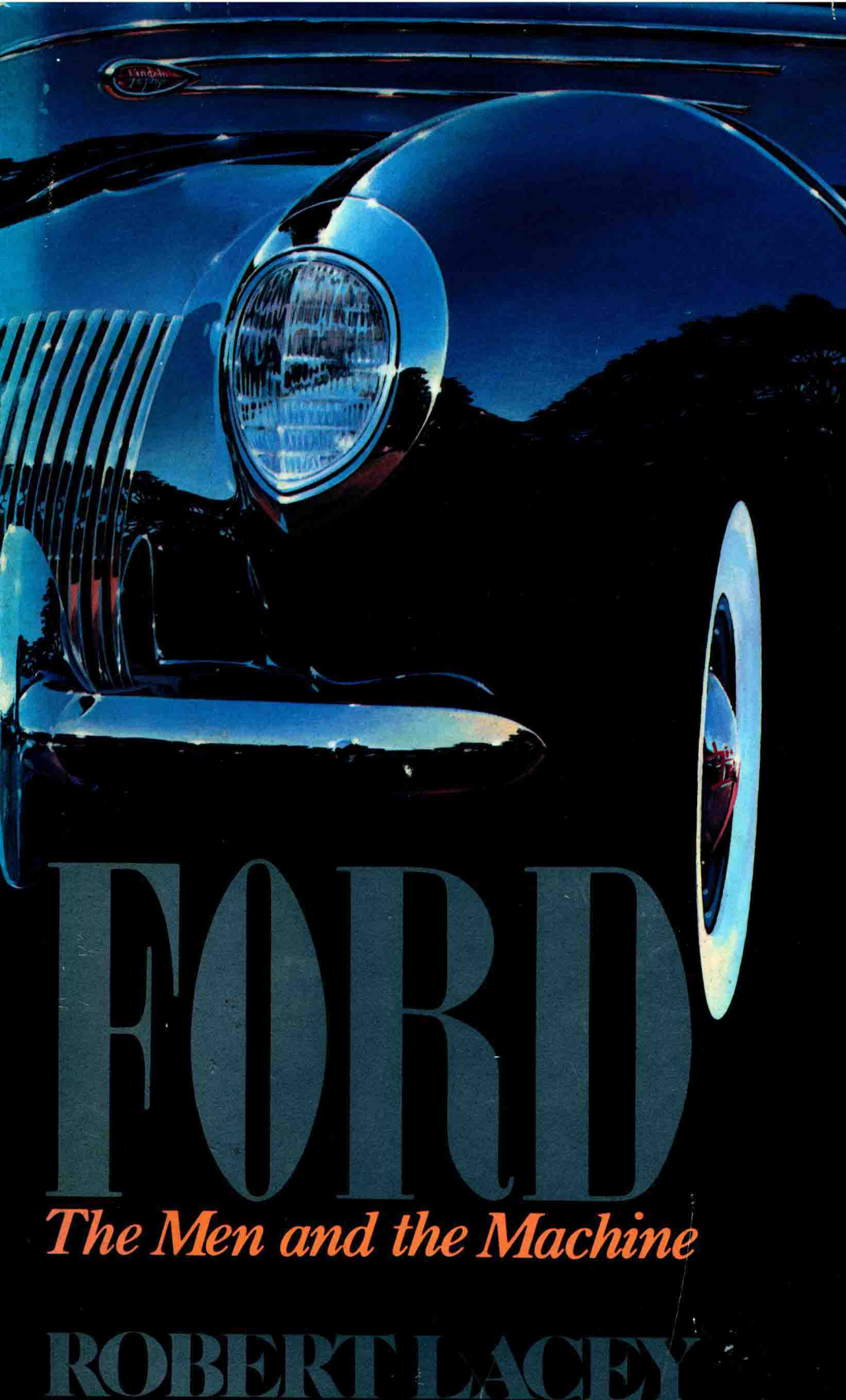

FORD

The Men and the Machine

ROBERT LACEY

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FORD

THE MEN AND THE MACHINE

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Robert, Earl of Essex
Sir Walter Ralegh
Henry VIII
Majesty
The Kingdom
Princess
Aristocrats
Ford

FORD

THE MEN AND THE MACHINE

First Ford. Henry I and his Quadricycle of 1896

FOR
JOHN
CUSHMAN

FORD COUNTRY

TO BLOOMFIELD HILLS AND PONTIAC

TO MOUNT CLEMENS

FARMINGTON

WOODWARD AVE.

Gaukler Point

D E T R O I T

GROSSE POINTE

LAKESHORE RD.

LAKE ST. CLAIR

Rouge River

SCHAEFER RD.

Highland Park

EDSEL FORD FREEWAY

AVE.

Ford World Headquarters

Renaissance Center

DEARBORN

MICHIGAN AVE.

Belle Isle

Fair Lane

JEFFERSON

Rouge Plant

WINDSOR

Greenfield Village

INKSTER

CANADA

TO ANN ARBOR AND CHICAGO

0 2.5 5

miles

N

WYANDOTTE

Detroit River

Grosse Ile

To Lake Erie

CANADA

GREAT LAKES

Upper Peninsula

BOSTON

CHICAGO

MICHIGAN

DETROIT

NEW YORK

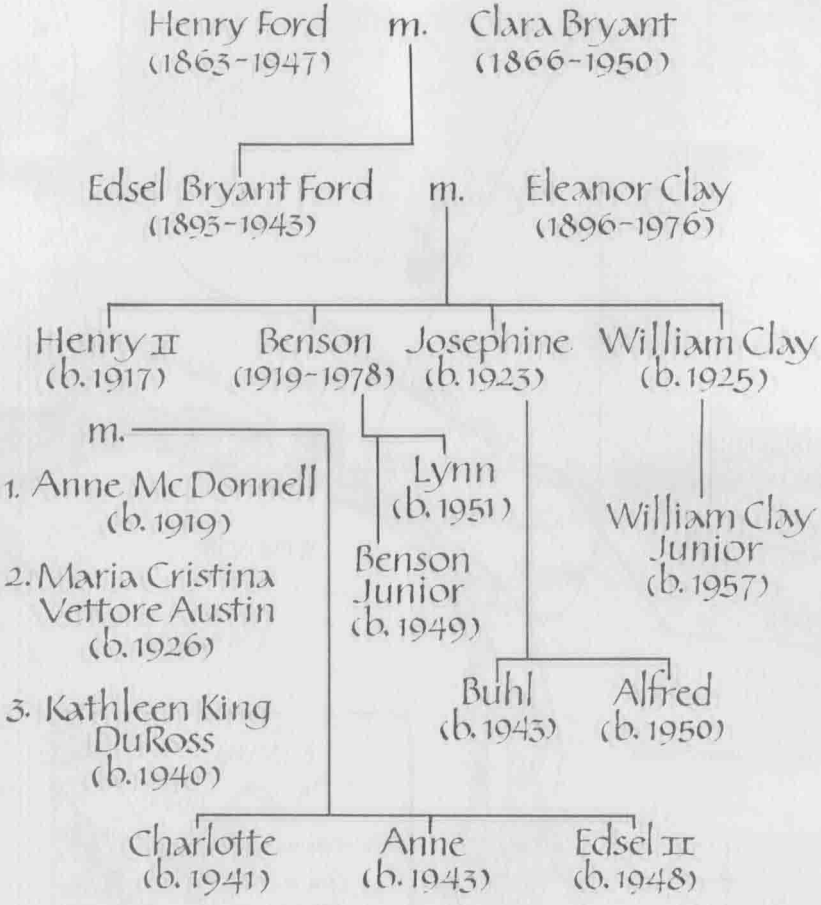
U S A

ATLANTIC OCEAN

d'Art Studio

THE FORD FAMILY

A Simplified Family Tree



This chart shows those Fords mentioned in the text. For a full genealogy of all the descendants of Henry Ford I, see the Appendix, The Ford Family, on page 664.

c·a·m

FORD

THE MEN AND THE MACHINE

THE MEN AND THE MACHINE

One day in November 1975, a few weeks before Henry Ford II left his second wife, Cristina, he felt a sharp pain in the left side of his chest. He was out for a walk when it happened. Some neighbours saw him strolling, a tall, patrician figure with a paunch, and when he went down they ran out to help. They found Henry Ford II sitting on the curb,[1] winded and scarcely able to speak.

It was not quite what it seemed. It was angina, said the doctors, not a heart attack. But it spelt out the same thing: a narrowing of the arteries, a shortage of blood to the heart, an urgent need for some serious medical attention — and most of all, that disquieting tap on the shoulder, a reminder of mortality.

Fords live long and Fords live short. Old Henry Ford I was eighty-three when he died. But his grandson was not yet sixty, and here it was already, that tightening of the chest with a final grip about it. Angina pectoris. It does not have a pleasant ring.

The bad heart ran in the family. Henry's brother Benson had frightened himself with a heart attack while he was still in his thirties. Their mother had lived with angina for years and years.

At Ann Arbor they recommended a bypass, and quickly too. They had Henry's clothes off and the suite ready even as they went through their investigations. The specialists at the Ford Hospital

were more reassuring. They thought that pills would do the trick — and in the end, Henry Ford II listened to no less than six top-level medical opinions before deciding that he would, in fact, do without the bypass. He would keep going on the glyceryl trinitrate pills, and he would also do as the doctors ordered: aim at a change of lifestyle, get more exercise, try to avoid quite so much stress.

By the time he had got the diagnosis, the worst of the stress was behind him. Leaving Cristina had taken care of that. Until the policeman had stopped him in Santa Barbara, he had been living a double life, stealing away on "business trips," working late at the office, encouraging his wife to spend more time away. No wonder he had felt under pressure.

The publicity had been purgatory — an auto king caught driving drunk, and with his mistress too. But with the scandal had come a certain relief. It had brought it all out in the open. It had forced him to make a decision between his two women, and he had opted for the new one. He had packed his bags and moved out of the lakeshore.

But now this had happened — and the message that it carried was very clear. The doctors, the pain, the catheters, the drips — it could only mean one thing for the company. It was almost exactly thirty years since Henry II had taken over at Ford. He had run the company ever since, but now he would have to set about choosing somebody to succeed him, and that brought up the big question, the question that Henry had been trying to postpone — the question of Lee.

As you drive into Detroit from the airport, your eye is caught by a tall sign on your right. It looks like the mileage counter in the middle of a car's speedometer, and as you stare at it for a second or two, the figure on the right-hand end clicks down. It is not a poster. It is the real thing: a massive electronic counter which is keeping the tally, not of miles, but of the automobiles being produced by the car companies of the Motor City.[2]

The counter clicks down every second or so in a good year when the cars are coming off the lines 34,000 a day, 8 million a year — for this is the motor capital of the world. There are motor industries in Japan, Germany, Britain, in every industrialised country, but they are scattered. Nowhere else have the carmakers all congregated in one single, grey, smokey location to build their cars

together — and of all Motown's carmakers, no name has quite the magic of Ford.

It is the four-letter word you cannot escape in Detroit. Ford Hospital, Ford Auditorium, Ford Road — you are even driving on the Edsel Ford Freeway as you come in from the airport. It runs right through Ford country, the flat, pale green Michigan landscape where Henry Ford I grew up. He was born here, the founding father, in Dearborn, the village that became a town and is now a suburb tacked on to the western side of Detroit, and just off the freeway, to your right as you hit the city, is the factory which produced most of his cars, and is still producing them: the Ford Rouge River plant.

It is an awesome sight, the Rouge, a vast looming mass of chimneys and towers and acres of zigzagged, notched roofs. The line started running there in 1918, when America wanted mass-produced warships and turned to Henry Ford, the genius of mass production, to see if his magic could be rubbed from cars onto boats. The line has been running ever since, with a few pauses for retooling, and the Fords have rolled off by the million: the Model T, the Model A, the Thunderbird, the Mustang.

When old Henry Ford built the Rouge, it was the largest industrial complex on earth, a modern wonder of the world, and it retains its power to this day: the blast furnaces, the coking ovens, the slab-sided lake tankers at anchor, unloading the coal and ore which feed the belly of the beast.

He had a vision, Henry Ford. He wanted it all. Other carmakers put the bits together, but he wanted to go right back to the earth, to quarry out the raw materials that made up his cars. So he bought coal mines and iron mines in northern Michigan. He bought a piece of Brazil where he could grow rubber: Fordlandia, a little Ford settlement in a clearing beside the Amazon. He bought whole hillsides of pine forests for his station wagons — and to transport it all back to Dearborn he built his very own Ford fleet.

The boats still sail into the Rouge — the *Henry II,* the *Benson,* the *William Clay,* their prows commemorating Fords dead and living, for this is a family firm. Even the blast furnaces have names, and they are Fords as well.

On the other side of Miller Road are the staff parking lots, where only the insensitive would park a Nissan or Chevrolet, and connecting them to the factory is a steel bridge, the overpass, across

which the workers file night and day. One May afternoon in 1937, when the shifts were changing, Walter Reuther and three other union organisers were beaten up on the overpass in broad daylight by thugs of the Ford Service Department, and it was down below on Miller Road in those years that four hunger marchers who had come to the Rouge gates got Ford's answer. They were shot dead.

This is one of capitalism's altars, a vast, satanic cathedral of private enterprise. All night the Rouge growls, its fires and flares casting flickering shadows, its furnaces glowing dull red around the base of its huge brooding bulk.

Cars will not be fired in crucibles like this for much longer. There are robots in the wings with pincers, men in white coats. But here, for the time being, are the industrial guts of America. Europe has its palaces, but America celebrates her native genius with monuments of a rougher sort.

This is the story of the world's largest family-controlled business and of the family that built it and control it to this day. Run your finger down the Fortune 50, the roll call of the largest industrial corporations on earth, and at number four you come to Ford.* Only General Motors and some oil companies are larger, and they are controlled by the votes of their shareholders. Ford is also controlled by shareholder votes, but some 40 percent of them, the effective working majority, are all in the hands of the Ford family, the present-day descendants of Henry Ford I.

The story is largely a tale of two Henrys — of old Henry Ford, who created the business, and of young Henry Ford, his grandson, who saved it from his grandfather's caprice. In between them came Edsel Ford, young Henry's father, old Henry's son, the lost generation, cruelly smothered in his lifetime by his visionary, tyrannical father, overshadowed in death by his son's achievement — and by the ugly, ill-starred car named in his honour in the late 1950s.

It is a story in which the truth can prove elusive. In 1964 representatives of the Ford Motor Company removed large sections of Edsel Ford's private papers from the Ford Archives in Dearborn, and the whereabouts of those documents today is a mystery.

*In 1985, *Fortune* listed the world's largest industrial corporations as (1) Exxon, (2) Royal Dutch Shell, (3) General Motors, (4) Mobil, (5) Ford, (6) British Petroleum, (7) Texaco, (8) IBM, (9) Dupont, and (10) AT & T.[3] As this book goes to press, *Fortune's* preliminary figures show Ford overtaking Mobil (and General Motors overtaking Royal Dutch Shell and Exxon).

Henry Ford II has personally destroyed the medical records of his father and grandfather. He put them through the paper shredder in his own office, together with most of the documents from his own private and business files,[4] an annihilation for which he remains defiantly unapologetic.

"Why the hell shouldn't I destroy them?" he asks.[5]

Henry Ford II does not like books being written about him, or about his family. "With any luck," he said on first meeting this author, "I'll be dead by the time your book comes out."[6]

He granted polite but cautious cooperation with the preparation of this book — one interview at the outset, and one interview when the book had been completed and was sitting ready to go on press. Lee Iacocca granted no interview at all. But many other people close to both men have been willing to speak, and the source notes following the text list more than 180 on-the-record interviews, including every significant member of the Ford family today.

In order to write this book, the author took his family from London to live for more than two years in Michigan. He drove the freeways, met the car men, and tried briefly working on the assembly line — Henry Ford's own creation — in pursuit of the flavour of the Motor City.

It is a curious place, this motor capital of the world. Dynamic and tedious, cultured and banal, Detroit and its paradoxes have been shaped by the Ford story, and they have given shape of their own to the plot. The climax to the tale, the battle between Henry Ford II and Lee Iacocca, derives much of its bitterness and poignancy from the claustrophobia of life in this very particular corner of southeast Michigan — and it is with a European visitor to Michigan more than 150 years ago that the story can begin.

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