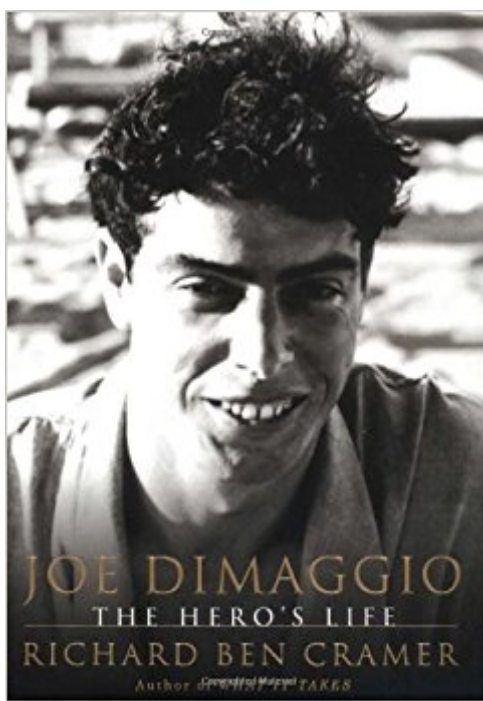


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Joe DiMaggio: The Hero's Life



Synopsis

A groundbreaking, breathtaking biography of one of the Century's great icons, the late Joe DiMaggio, from the acclaimed Pulitzer Prize winning author of the bestseller WHAT IT TAKES. Few celebrities have captivated the sport's world for as long, or with such depth, as Joe DiMaggio. Here, for the first time, is the definitive story of his life, as told by the award-winning journalist Richard Ben Cramer. In Cramer's hands, DiMaggio's complicated life, from the first game with the Yankees in the 1930's, his marriage to Marilyn Monroe and his rise to hero status, becomes a story of the media, the invention of a national celebrity in America, and the ways in which fame can both build and destroy. Using his renowned investigative skills, Cramer has uncovered startling, even shocking, information about DiMaggio's life and presents them with his trademark combination of 'jarring, unsentimental prose' (THE NEW YORK TIMES).

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book has already stirred up controversy over Cramer's portrayal of DiMaggio and no doubt that controversy will continue for quite some time. I have been a lifelong baseball fan and consider DiMaggio to be among the greatest of those who played the game. He combined natural ability in the five key skill areas (ie hitting, fielding, throwing, base running, and bunting) with a style and grace few others have. Also he was a winner, playing on nine world championship Yankee teams during a 13-year period. No one doubts the on-field achievements of "Jolting Joe." The controversy generated by this book is explained, rather, by Cramer's comments about DiMaggio off the field and especially after he retired. According to Cramer, DiMaggio was unapproachable to anyone who could not (one way or another) feed his ego, increase his wealth, enhance his lifestyle, or protect his

carefully crafted self-image. Throughout most of his life, DiMaggio seemed to ask "What's in it for me?" He not only craved but indeed required treatment normally reserved for heads of state. According to Cramer, he had very few close personal relationships (none with family members) and these were sustained only when in full compliance with the terms and conditions he established. DiMaggio trusted very few people, suspecting that anyone who tried to approach him had ulterior, self-serving motives. There is an old saying about "knowing the cost of everything and the value of nothing." DiMaggio knew both. One critic has suggested that Cramer is "hostile" to DiMaggio. Another critic has described this book as a "hatchet job." Cramer indicates no doubt about DiMaggio's greatness as a baseball player. That was one game he played superbly.

When I met Cramer in January 1997, he said "I don't know whether I like [DiMaggio] or not." I was disturbed by that comment for when the biographer refuses to remain objective any research or revelations are suspect since he is prejudiced. This is not to say that icons should not be subject to critical treatments as long as there is balance, so what is written is consequential; not allowing the "flaws" to disproportionately submerge the "strengths" of the individual and vice versa. I loaned Cramer my research (I was working on a DiMaggio book for the University of Nebraska.) When he told The Sporting News he was going "to blow the lid off" The Legend, I knew he would not be the objective observer he led me to believe. I faxed him to express my concerns and asked for a copy of the book. Cramer called back and snorted: "I don't have to answer to anyone, least of all, you!" Space does not permit me to address the book's literally dozens of serious errors. Cramer provides only two footnotes, no page notes, and no apparatus of sourcing, aside from the Acknowledgments, making it impossible to verify his reportage. The men behind Cramer's so-called "hero machine" were not DiMaggio's toadies. "Sport" noted in 12/50 reporters continually "questioned DiMaggio's conduct," citing him for his "childish indifference," and "acting like a spoiled kid." Even pal Ben Epstein in the 8/2/50 New York Mirror wrote DiMaggio "has fallen victim of incredible national worship, and... has 'grown too big for his breeches.'" He says DiMaggio promised a dying boy he'd tie George Sisler's record and when he learned DiMaggio got the hit, he was cured.

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