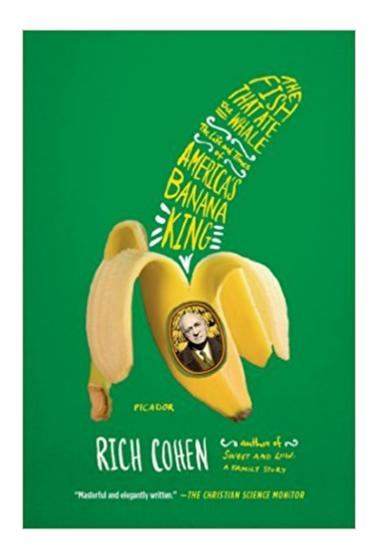


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The Fish That Ate The Whale: The Life And Times Of America's Banana King





Synopsis

Named a Best Book of the Year by the San Francisco Chronicle and The Times-Picayune The fascinating untold tale of Samuel Zemurray, the self-made banana mogul who went from penniless roadside banana peddler to kingmaker and capitalist revolutionaryThe fascinating, untold tale of Samuel Zemurray, the self-made banana mogul who went from penniless roadside banana peddler to kingmaker and capitalist revolutionary When Samuel Zemurray arrived in America in 1891, he was tall, gangly, and penniless. When he died in the grandest house in New Orleans sixty-nine years later, he was among the richest, most powerful men in the world. Working his way up from a roadside fruit peddler to conquering the United Fruit Company, Zemurray became a symbol of the best and worst of the United States: proof that America is the land of opportunity, but also a classic example of the corporate pirate who treats foreign nations as the backdrop for his adventures. Zemurray lived one of the great untold stories of the last hundred years. Starting with nothing but a cart of freckled bananas, he built a sprawling empire of banana cowboys, mercenary soldiers, Honduran peasants, CIA agents, and American statesmen. From hustling on the docks of New Orleans to overthrowing Central American governments and precipitating the bloody thirty-six-year Guatemalan civil war, the Banana Man lived a monumental and sometimes dastardly life. Rich Cohen's brilliant historical profile The Fish That Ate the Whale unveils Zemurray as a hidden power broker, driven by an indomitable will to succeed.

Book Information

Paperback: 288 pages Publisher: Picador; Reprint edition (June 4, 2013) Language: English ISBN-10: 1250033314 ISBN-13: 978-1250033314 Product Dimensions: 6.2 × 0.8 × 207.3 inches Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies) Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 214 customer reviews Best Sellers Rank: #7,595 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #6 inà Â Books > Business & Money > Industries > Restaurant & Food #12 inà Â Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Ethnic & National > Jewish #13 inà Â Books > Business & Money > Industries > Hospitality, Travel & Tourism

Customer Reviews

 \tilde{A} ¢â ¬Å"Rich Cohen books constitute a genre unto themselves: pungent, breezy, vividly written

psychodramas. â⠬• â⠬⠢The New York Times Book Review â⠬œLively and entertaining. ââ \neg • ââ \neg ⠢The Boston Globeââ \neg Å"This biography of the complex and often contradictory figure of Zemurray is Cohen's most engaging and entertaining book to date $\hat{A}\phi\hat{a} - \hat{A}\bullet$ â⠬⠢Chicago Tribune Printers Row Journalââ ¬Å"This is a rollicking but brilliantly researched book about one of the most fascinating characters of the twentieth century. I grew up in New Orleans enthralled by tales of Sam Zemurray, the banana peddler who built United Fruit. This book recounts, with delightful verve, his military and diplomatic maneuvers in Central America and his colorful life and business practices. $\tilde{A}\phi \hat{a} \neg \hat{A} \cdot \tilde{A}\phi \hat{a} \neg \hat{a} \phi$ Walter Isaacson, president and CEO of the Aspen Institute and author of Steve Jobsâ⠬œSam â⠬˜the Banana Man' Zemurray was a larger-than-life character. Rich Cohen is a superb storyteller. Put them together and you have a startling and often hilarious account of one of the forgotten heroes (and villains) of the American empire. ââ \neg • ââ \neg ⠢Zev Chafetsââ \neg Å"In Rich Cohen's masterful and enthralling narrative, one man's character is not simply his fate but also that of a nation. With verve, wit, and page-turning excitement, The Fish That Ate the Whale unfolds as compelling story of bold success coupled with reckless ambition. I loved this book. â⠬• â⠬⠢Howard Blum, author of The Floor of Heaven and American Lightning $\tilde{A}\phi \hat{a} - A^{*}$ if this book were simply the tale of a charismatic and eccentric banana mogul, that would have been enough for me--especially with the masterful Rich Cohen as narrator. But it's not. It is also the story of capitalism, psychology, immigration, public relations, colonialism, food, O. Henry's shady past, and the meaning of excellence. $\tilde{A}\phi \hat{a} - \hat{A}\phi \hat{a} - \hat{a}\phi \hat{a}$, J. Jacobs, author of The Year of Living Biblically $\tilde{A} \not\in a \neg A$ "What a story, and what a story teller! You'll never see a banana--and, for that matter, America--the same way again $\tilde{A}\phi \hat{a} \neg \hat{A} \cdot$ \tilde{A} ¢â ¬â ¢Aleksandar Hemon, author of The Lazarus Project \tilde{A} ¢â ¬Å"There's a lot to learn about the seedier side of the $\tilde{A}c\hat{a} \neg \ddot{E}cosmile$ of nature' in this witty tale of the fruit peddler-turned-mogul. ââ \neg • ââ \neg â ¢ChloÃf« Schama, Smithsonianââ \neg Å"Cohen ... gives us the fascinating tale of $\tilde{A}c\hat{a} - \ddot{E}ceSam$ the Banana Man,' a poor Russian Jew who emigrated to Alabama as a teenager and ended up controlling much of Central America . . . Rich Cohen books constitute a genre unto themselves: pungent, breezy, vividly written psychodramas about rough-edged, tough-minded Jewish machers who vanguish their rivals, and sometimes change the world in the process. Within this specialized context, Cohen's Zemurray biography admirably fills the bill. â⠬• â⠬⠢Mark Lewis, The New York Times Book Reviewâ⠬œCohen's narrative has considerable charm, whether pondering Zemurray's Jewish identity or claiming him as a man \tilde{A} ¢â ¬Ëœbest understood as a last player in the drama of Manifest Destiny.' \tilde{A} ¢â ¬Â• \tilde{A} ¢â ¬â ¢The New Yorkerââ ¬Å"Americans puzzling over the role of today's powerful corporations -- Bain

Capital, Goldman Sachs, Google -- may profit from considering the example of the United Fruit Company . . . A new account of United Fruit and one of its leading figures, Samuel Zemurray . . . The Fish That Ate The Whale . . . usefully reminds us of some of the wonderful things about capitalism, and some of the dangers, too . . . The book recounts all the Washington insiders hired by Zemurray as lobbyists, including Tommy "the Cork" Corcoran. A business that lives by Washington is finally at its mercy, as United Fruit learned when the antitrust cops came after it. It's all something to remember the next time you peel a banana. 碉 ¬Â• Á¢â ¬â ¢Ira Stoll, TimeÁ¢â ¬Å"Masterful and elegantly written $\tilde{A}\phi \hat{a} - \hat{A} | A$ cautionary tale for the ages. $\tilde{A}\phi \hat{a} - \hat{A}\phi \hat{a} - \hat{a}\phi$ The Christian Science Monitorââ ¬Å"[An] engrossing tale of the life of Sam Zemurray . . . With his nimble narrative journalism, Cohen makes a convincing case that the somewhat obscure Sam Zemurray was in fact a major figure in American history. Cohen does so with a prose briskly accented with sights, sounds and smells, and invigorated with offhand wisdom about the human journey through life. What's rarer about Cohen's style is his skill with metaphor. His are apt and concise, but they're also complex . . . There are men of action and there are men of words: The contrast between them is a sort of shadow narrative in The Fish That Ate the Whale . . . At the end of Cohen's story, impetuous doers such as Zemurray not only cede the moral high ground, but also live to witness the terrifying power of the talkers . . . If some level of this book proposes a contest of Cohen vs. Zemurray, then the win goes rather unambiguously to Cohen; to paraphrase Edward Bulwer-Lytton, the pen is mightier than the banana. $\tilde{A}\phi \hat{a} \neg \hat{A} \cdot \tilde{A}\phi \hat{a} \neg \hat{a} \phi$ Austin Ratner, The Forward $\tilde{A}\phi \hat{a} \neg \hat{A}^{*}[A]$ grippingly readable biography . . . Cohen fleshes out the legend [of Samuel Zemurray] in a 270-page account full of novelistic scene setting and speculative flights--the kind of writing that ... puts Cohen firmly in the tradition of non-fiction reportage pioneered by Tom Wolfe and Norman Mailer. Based on scores of interviews, four years of archival research and on-the-spot reporting from Central America and New Orleans, the book carries its details easily, sweeping readers on a narrative flood tide that matches the protean energy of Zemurray himself ... As sketched by Cohen, the big man emerges as a complicated, all-too-human hero, one whose bullish nature sometimes blinded him, but never let him accept defeat. $\tilde{A}\phi \hat{a} \neg \hat{A} \cdot \tilde{A}\phi \hat{a} \neg \hat{a} \phi Chris Waddington, New Orleans$ Times-Picayuneââ \neg Å"Portions of Zemurray's story, after all, are as good an example of the American promise as one could imagine ... On the other hand, as Cohen acknowledges, Zemurray, especially with regard to his Latin American interests, was $\hat{A}\phi\hat{a} - \hat{E}\phi\hat{a}$ conquistador who took without asking.' This duality--and Cohen's immensely readable portrait of it--makes for a captivating character $\tilde{A}\phi\hat{a} \neg \hat{A} \cdot \tilde{A}\phi\hat{a} \neg \hat{a}\phi$ James McAuley, The Washington Postâ⠬œIf you are a fan of pulp fiction, of seamy thrillers, of dank and tawdry noirs, of ashcan

gutter naturalism, of absurdist caper novels, of whatever-it-takes-to-succeed, rags-to-riches sagas, then put away your books by David Goodis, Jim Thompson, Ross Thomas, George Gissing, Chester Himes, James M. Cain, Sinclair Lewis, Theodore Dreiser, and James Hadley Chase, and instead pick up Rich Cohen's vigorous and gripping The Fish That Ate the Whale: The Life and Times of America's Banana King. This history-embedded, anecdote-rich biography of Sam Zemurray, the bigger-than-life figure behind United Fruit Company at its height of power, is a balls-to-the-wall, panoramic, rocket ride through an acid bath, featuring unbelievable-but-true tales of power-grabbing, ambition, folly, passion, commerce, politics, artistry, and savagery: daydream and nightmare together . . . Cohen gives us this awesome story with a novelist's canny eye for details and pacing--he injects learned disguisitions that are easy to digest whenever necessary--and a fair share of reflection and commentary and psychologizing without undue editorializing or finger-pointing. â⠬• â⠬⠢Paul Di Filippo, Barnes and Noble Review ââ ¬Å"Cohen's biography of â⠬˜Banana King' magnate Samuel Zemurray in The Fish That Ate the Whale is really a history of the yellow fruit itself . . . Zemurray exemplified both the best and worst of American capitalism. His saga provides plenty of food for thought next time you grab one off the bunch. â⠬• â⠬⠢Keith Staskiewicz, Entertainment Weeklyââ ¬Å"In The Fish That Ate the Whale Rich Cohen sketches a lively and entertaining portrait of Samuel Zemurray, a banana importer and entrepreneur who rose from immigrant roots to take the helm of the storied United Fruit Co., among other accomplishments . . . Cohen unfurls a rich, colorful history of a man who championed the establishment of the State of Israel by providing arms and ships to the Irgun, the nascent underground army. He gave muscle and capital to Eisenhower's decision to stage Operation PBSuccess, a CIA coup against Jacobo Arbenz's teetering democracy in Guatemala in 1954 . . . Was he a conquistador, pirate, explorer, tycoon, or a man of the people? Cohen's textured history shows that Zemurray played all of these roles, making him the ultimate Zelig-like character of the 20th century. â⠬• â⠬⠢Judy Bolton-Fasman, The Boston Globeâ⠬œAbsorbing, nimble and unapologetically affectionate . . . Mr. Cohen is a wonderfully visceral storyteller . . . it's a magnificent, crazy story, engagingly told. 碉 ¬Â• Á¢â ¬â ¢Aaron Gell, New York Observerââ ¬Å"Eminently readable . . . The banana is lovely in its simplicity, but it turns out the man who ruled the banana kingdom for generations was guite the opposite--part conguistador, part pioneering businessman. Zemurray walked the line, and his interlaced legacies make for a fascinating and entertaining tale. â⠬• â⠬⠢Kevin G. Keane, San Francisco Chronicleâ⠬œLyrical ... This remarkable book . . . is a beautifully written homage to a man whose pioneering life mirrors so much of America's beauty and beastliness. The life of Sam the

Banana Man, in Cohen's eloquent hands, is as nourishing and odd as the bendy vellow berry that made him great. $\tilde{A}\phi \hat{a} - \hat{A}\phi \hat{A}\phi \hat{a} - \hat{a}\phi \hat{A}\phi$ melissa Katsoulis, The Times (London) $\tilde{A}\phi \hat{a} - \hat{A}\phi \hat{A}\phi$ veracity counts for less than the dashing energy of Cohen's characterisation, and the moody atmosphere of the landscapes in which he sets this buccaneering life--New Orleans with its malarial damp, the jungle in Panama where an incomplete, unbuildable highway is $\hat{A}c\hat{a} - \hat{E}content definition of the second second$ nature and walks away muttering'. Best of all is his horrified contemplation of the monstrous banana in its native habitat, with its leaves shaped like elephant ears and $\tilde{A}c\hat{a} - \ddot{E}ccoiled$ like a roll of dollar bills'. After a tropical downpour you can hear the plants stealthily growing at the rate of an inch an hour as the foliage drips: it is the sound of money being made $\tilde{A}\phi \hat{a} - \hat{A}\phi \hat{A}\phi \hat{a} - \hat{a}\phi \hat{A}\phi$ Guardian \tilde{A} ¢ $\hat{a} \neg A$ "Here's what I'm sure about: You've never thought about reading a book about the banana business and/or Sam Zemurray, the guy perhaps most responsible building it. Here's what I'm also sure about: You absolutely should read The Fish That Ate the Whale: The Life and Times of America's Banana King, by Rich Cohen. â⠬• â⠬⠢Mark Bazer, WBEZâ⠬œCohen's piercing portrait is not glossy; it is a gritty, behind-the-scenes look at how Zemurray was able to do what he did. Some of the most moving passages in this fine book are Cohen's own meditations about Zemurray; it feels as if he is always trying to understand what drove him . . . Cohen is a beautifully talented and vibrant writer who seems to effortlessly brings his pages to life. His narrative includes wonderful riffs on the history of bananas and how and where they are grown, the development of the banana trade in Latin America under its various corrupt governments, as well as the state of American politics and business during the early 1900s. Cohen is not an ideologue, and this serves him well as a writer and thinker. He is unafraid to share his gut response with the reader, as well as his uncertainties . . . Cohen's terrifically intuitive biographical portrait of Sam Zemurray allows us to take a very close look. â⠬• â⠬⠢Elaine Margolin, The Jerusalem Postââ \neg Å"This is a great yarn, the events and personalities leaping off the page.ââ \neg • ¢â ¬â ¢Alan Moores, The Seattle Times

Rich Cohen is a New York Times bestselling author as well as a contributing editor at Vanity Fair and Rolling Stone. He has written seven books, including Tough Jews, Israel Is Real, and the widely acclaimed memoir Sweet and Low. His work has appeared in The New Yorker, The Atlantic Monthly, Harper's Magazine, and Best American Essays. He lives in Connecticut with his wife, three sons, and dog.

I loved this book. In fact, Rich Cohen $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ â $-\tilde{A}$ â, $\phi s \tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ â $-\tilde{A}$ Å"The Fish that Ate the

Whale: The Life and Times of America $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}c\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ $\hat{a}_{,c}cs$ Banana King $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}c\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ $\hat{A} \cdot just$ might make it into my non-fiction book Hall of Fame, an honored group of the best, most engaging pieces of history and biography that $I\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ $\hat{a}_{,,\phi}$ ve ever read. Why such high praise? Well, mainly because $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}c\hat{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ \hat{A} "The Fish $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}c\hat{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ \hat{A} • delivered and succeeded on multiple dimensions. First, I love learning about different industries and commodities, how they developed over time, often over millennia, shaping world markets and modern political economies (e.g. cotton, gold, salt, cod, petroleum). Af¢A â ¬A Å"The FishAf¢A â ¬A Å• provides a fascinating introduction to the world of bananas, a fruit that every American today knows and most of who love on their breakfast cereal or as a mid-day, nutritious snack. Only, as I learned, bananas aren $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ $\hat{a}_{,,\phi}$ t actually a fruit and little more than a century ago they were far from common, but rather quite exotic, a true luxury, displayed at the 1876 Centennial Exposition to crowds of gawking onlookers as if it came from another planet. Indeed, according to the author, a banana in 1900 was as unusual to the average American as an African cucumber is today. There $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}\hat{a}\phi$ a lot about the very familiar banana that I never knew. For instance, Cohen explains that the banana tree is actually the world $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ $\hat{a}_{\mu}\phi$ s largest herb, and thus its offspring, the banana, are technically berries and not fruit. Even more fascinating, bananas grow from rhizomes, not seeds. In other words, cut appendages continue to grow, replicating the original. As Cohen describes it: $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ \hat{A} "When you look at a banana, you $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ $\hat{a}_{,,\phi}$ re looking at every banana, an infinite regression. There are no mutts, only the first fruit of a particular species and billions of copies. Every banana is a clone, in other words, a replica of an ur-banana that weighed on its stalk the first morning of man. $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ \hat{A} -Believe it or not, the story of the banana gets even crazier. If you $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ \hat{a} $\neg\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a}_{\mu}\phi$ ve ever wondered why old black-and-white films joked about slipping on a banana peel even though the banana peel that you $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ \hat{a} $\neg\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a}_{,,\phi}$ ve long known doesn $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ $\hat{a}_{,,\phi}$ t feel particularly slippery, that $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ $\hat{a}_{,,\phi}$ s because we have completely different bananas today. In the early nineteenth century, Americans were introduced to the $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ \hat{A} "Big Mike, $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ \hat{A} • a variety of banana that went extinct in 1965. It was bigger, tastier and more robust than the bananas we have today, according to Cohen, and their peels were far more slippery. The bananas we eat today are known as $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ â $\neg\tilde{A}$ Å"Cavendish, $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ â $\neg\tilde{A}$ Å• their primary benefit being immunity to the Panama disease that wiped out the Big Mike. Again, because bananas are all exact genetic copies, they are highly susceptible to rapid eradication from disease. Second, $I\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ $\hat{a}_{,,\phi}\phi$ a sucker for a great rags-to-riches story. The tale of Samuel Zemurray delivers that in spades. He arrived in America in 1891, a penniless Jew from what today is Moldova, and settled in the Deep South. (It

may surprise many Americans but the South was far more hospitable to Jews for most our history. For instance, Jefferson Davis had two Jews in his Cabinet; Lincoln had none.) While still in his teens Zemurray recognized a business opportunity where other only saw trash: the ripe bananas that Boston Fruit discarded along the rail line in Mobile, Alabama before shipping off to Chicago and other northern metropolitan destinations. Zemurray was a natural entrepreneur; he had no particular affinity for bananas, it was just the opportunity at hand. $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A} = \tilde{A} + \tilde{A}$ Chicago, $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ \hat{A} · Cohen writes, $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ \hat{A} "it would have been beef; if Pittsburgh, steel; if L.A., movies. $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ $\hat{A} \cdot Zemurray$ quickly turned one man $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ $\hat{a}_{,,\phi}$ trash into cash, renting a boxcar to carry the castoff bananas along the slow rail route through the South, selling his cargo to local merchants at each Podunk rail stop until either his inventory ran out or spoiled. From such humble beginnings did a great international trading company eventually take root, Cuyamel Fruit, named after the river separating Honduras and Guatemala, the heartland of banana growing By 1925, Cuyamel Fruit Company, the creation of an upstart Jewish immigrant banana jobber, had emerged as a serious threat to United Fruit, the undisputed king of the industry, a company that was led by Boston $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ \hat{a} $\neg\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a}_{\mu}\phi$ s best, the sons of Brahmins. The threat was not because of CuvamelÃf¢Ã â \neg à â..¢s size. In most ways United Fruit still dominated its aggressive rival (i.e. United Fruit was harvesting 40 million bunches a year with 150,000 employees and working capital of \$27m, compared to CuyamelÃf¢Ã â \neg à â,,¢s 8 million bunches, 10,000 employees and \$3m in working capital). The threat was that Cuyamel was a better run business and more innovative, leading the way with selective pruning, drainage, silting, staking and overhead irrigation. $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ \dot{A} "U.F. was a conglomerate, a collection of firms bought up and slapped together, $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ \hat{A} · Cohen writes. Cuyamel, by contrast, was a well-oiled machine, vertically integrated and led from the front by Zemurray, the ultimate

owner-manager-worker.CuyamelÂf¢Ã ⠬à â,,¢s success was certainly no accident. It was the product of hard work, an obsessed owner-operator who understood his business at a visceral level, a skill earned over decades of hard, unglamorous work. Zemurray adhered to his own, classically American immigrant code of conduct: $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}¢\tilde{A}$ ⠬à Å"get up first, work harder, get your hands in the dirt and the blood in your eyes. $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}¢\tilde{A}$ ⠬à Å•Cohen describes his commitment and ultimate advantage this way: $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}¢\tilde{A}$ ⠬à Å"Zemurray worked in the fields beside his engineers, planters, and machete men. He was deep in the muck, sweat covered, swinging a blade. He helped map the plantations, plant the rhizomes, clear the weeds, lay the track $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}¢\tilde{A}$ â ¬ \tilde{A} Å|unlike most of his competitors, he understood every part of the business, from the executive suite where the stock was manipulated to the ripening room where the green fruit turned yellow $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}¢\tilde{A}$ â ¬ \tilde{A} Å|By the time he was forty, he had served in every position from fruit jobber to boss. He worked on the docks, on the ships and railroads, in the fields and warehouses. He had ridden the mules. He had managed the fruit and money, the mercenaries and government men. He understood the meaning of every change in the weather, the significance of every date on the calendar. $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ \hat{a} $\neg\tilde{A}$ $\hat{A}\bullet$ Indeed, dedicated immigrants like Sam Zemurray have made America great. There $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ $\hat{a}_{,,\phi}\phi$ s nothing wrong with doing grunt work. In fact, it $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ $\hat{a}_{,,\phi}\phi$ s essential. United Fruit bought out Cuyamel in the early days of the stock market crash of 1929, when the former had a market share of 54% to the latter $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} - \tilde{A} \hat{a}_{,,\phi}\phi$ s 14%. United Fruit $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ $\hat{a}_{,,\phi}$ profit was some \$45m and its stock price \$108. By 1932, profit was down to \$6m and the stock languished at \$10.25. $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}c\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ Å"The company was caught in a death spiral, $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}c\hat{A}$ $\hat{a} - \tilde{A}$ \hat{A} according to Cohen. By January 1933, Zemurray used his massive stake and proxy votes to take over the company, claiming $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} - \tilde{A}$ $A^{"}I$ realized that the greatest mistake the United Fruit management had made was to assume it could run its activities in many tropical countries from an office on the 10th floor of a Boston office building. $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ \hat{a} $\neg\tilde{A}$ \hat{A} • The immigrant with dirt under his nails and a rumbled jacket knew the business better than the lvy Leaguers with manicures and pinstriped suits. Indeed, the fish (Cuyamel Fruit) was swallowing the whale (United Fruit). Zemurray would run the company until 1951, arguably the most successful years of its history. In 1950, the company cleared \$66m in profit. By 1960, profits would fall to just \$2m. United Fruit collapsed, eventually restricting and reinventing itself as Chiquita Brands, based in Cincinnati. When Zemurray started in the industry at the turn of the century, bananas were curiosities, a sidebar trade, something for the rich. By the time he retired, bananas were part of the daily American fabric, the interests of the industry consistent with that of political leadership in Washington. Indeed, some of the most illustrious and powerful men in government had close connections to United Fruit during the Zemurray era: CIA director Allen Dulles (member of the board of directors), secretary of state John Foster Dulles (U.F. legal counsel at Sullivan & Cromwell), New Deal fixer Tom Corcoran (paid lobbyist), UN Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge (large shareholder), among others. By the 1950s, Cohen writes, $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ Å"it was hard to tell where the government ended and the company began $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}c\tilde{A}\hat{a} - \tilde{A}\hat{A}\cdot At$ its height. Cohen says, United Fruit was $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ Å"as ubiquitous as Google and as feared as Halliburton. $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ \hat{A} •For anyone interested in business history, American politics in Central America or the development of the global fruit industry, $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ \hat{A} "The Fish that Ate the Whale $\tilde{A}f\hat{A}\phi\tilde{A}$ $\hat{a} \neg \tilde{A}$ \hat{A} • is a book to own and savor.

Living in Honduras (but in the south), this book is helpful in understanding one of the legends of the banana empire. He built an empire - and rebuilt another - and financed military efforts that very often served his interests.Mostly, though, I'm left with a sadness - such talent, but used all too often to take away from people what was theirs, to look at the world in terms of profit. What were the effects of the bananification of the north coast of Honduras, the overthrow of a Guatemalan president, and more?There were a number of errors in the book, which other reviewers have noted. But I especially found the author geographically challenged: He states that Guatemala is Honduras' northern border; WRONG, the northern border is the Caribbean; Guatemala is to the west, though in places to the northwest. El Salvador is not to the west of Honduras that has El Salvador to its west; Nicaragua is not to the south of Honduras; it's to the east.My other complaint is the way that he inserts himself into the narrative. I found that disconcerting. I suppose it was often to show that he was consulting primary sources or interviewing important persons.Read it - but with a critical mind.

Chances are, you've never heard of this guy. But if you're not aware of some of the things he's done, you'll never be a big winner on "Jeopardy" or pass an AP test in modern world history. Just for example, he was the guy who engineered the CIA-led coup that overthrew the government of Guatemala in 1954, ushering in an era of intensified hatred for the United States throughout Latin America. He was also pivotal in the early history of Israel -- as Chaim Weizmann's favorite donor in America, as the man who pulled strings to force the release of the ship Exodus from the Port of Philadelphia and send it on its way to Israel, as the source of ocean-going ships that carried tens of thousands of Jewish refugees from displaced-person camps in Europe to Palestine, and as the central figure in persuading President Truman to support the independence of Israel. Oh, and he also helped make the banana America's favorite fruit. His name was Samuel Zemurray. He arrived in the United States in 1891 as a 14-year-old, a penniless Russian Jewish immigrant fresh off his father's wheat farm in present-day Moldova. Within two decades, he was a multimillionaire, only a little past the age of 30. Having stumbled across his first banana before the turn of the century, Sam was a major factor in the banana trade by 1910, a thorn in the side of the United Fruit Company, which commanded 60 percent of the market. Unlike most of his competitors, Sam had taken up residence in Honduras, where he worked the fields alongside his men and went out drinking with them in the evenings, a beloved figure throughout banana country on the Central American isthmus despite his later reputation as the personification of American imperialism and exploitation. Two decades later, exasperated with U.F.'s incompetent, Boston-bound leadership, he engineered a

takeover of the company at a time when it was on the ropes. He led U.F. (known as "The Octopus" or "El Pulpo") back to consistent profits for 25 years, only to founder on the heels of his greatest triumph: the overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz as President of Guatemala, which ironically brought to a close the era of the United Fruit Company as a landowner in Central America.Nonfiction author Rich Cohen writes the extraordinary story of Sam Zemurray with a sure hand, delving into the recesses of the Banana King's soul as deeply as could anyone who never met the man. His intimate, first-person style is engaging, often ironic. The Fish That Ate the Whale is a joy to read.In the end, Cohen offers this judgment of Sam Zemurray: "If he had questioned the workings of [the] machine [he had set in motion and tended so long], he would have been a great man, but he was not a great man; he was a complicated man blessed with great energy and ideas."Zemurray died in his palatial New Orleans home in 1961 at the age of 84. Today, many of his descendants remain involved in Central America, as anthropologists, art experts, and in other academic pursuits. Perhaps they did come to understand the workings of Sam's machine even though he never did.

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