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Liberty for All

Lee Iaocca
Peter B. Kaplan
Peter B. Kaplan, photographer
Barbara Grazzini, editor
Miller Publishing (Oct 7, 2002)
Unknown $60.00 (240pp)
978-0-9663337-1-8

In 1982, President Reagan asked the author to lead an effort to restore the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. A total of $87 million was needed, and the overhaul had to be completed by the summer of 1986, in time for the Statue's 100th birthday party.

Begun in 1983, the restoration was recorded in hundreds of photographs by Kaplan, whose work has appeared in numerous magazines and in his book High on New York. "I always experienced an uneasiness as I started to move about the scaffold," he said. "At first I wore a safety belt, but then I realized it hampered me."

Iacocca, former chairman of Chrysler Corporation and the son of an Italian immigrant, begins this book with a history of the Statue, designed by Frederic-Auguste Bartholdi as a tribute to French-American friendship. According to some historians, Bartholdi's emotional attachment to his mother, Charlotte, inspired the use of her stern face as a model for the Statue's face.

In a chapter called "America's Symbol" are photos of various items in the shape of this grandiose monument, such as paperweights, sheet music covers, posters, and even a bottle of Jim Beam whiskey. Most of the book deals with the restoration, both interior and exterior: workers on scaffolding removing and replacing the torch and flame, installing a new elevator, and using copper to patch the tip of the nose and cracks in the eyes.

One photograph shows a grackle bringing food to its young, in a nest under the ribbon on the Statue's right shoulder. Others show the Statue encased in a maze of aluminum awaiting removal of the torch, workers removing the crown's rays, and craftsmen working in thick fog. Seven layers of paint and three coatings of coal tar had to be removed from inside the Statue without damaging the copper underneath. Liquid nitrogen cooled to -325Â° made the paint flake off. As for the tar, forty tons of Arm & Hammer baking soda took it off.

All of Liberty Island underwent a facelift at the same time. Arrowheads and oyster shells were found on the twelve-acre island, which once was fishing grounds for American Indians.

With a resurgence of patriotism after last year's terrorist attacks, the book may be of particular interest to many readers. The dramatic photographs and informative captions document the Statue's historic restoration, creating a poignant tribute to this cherished symbol of our freedom. (Februiary)
GEORGE COHEN (February 13, 2003)

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