



Man in the Arena: Never Say Quit

David Michael Semas

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Winding toward the present and giving credit to those who were sources of inspiration along the way, the business memoir Man in the Arena shares its stories with gusto and pride.

Dedicated to his father, entrepreneur David Michael Semas's detailed memoir *Man in the Arena* shows how he was shaped by the ideas of his pioneer heroes and the tough grit he learned as a child in the 1950s.

Reading like a manual to the American Dream, this book covers the personal challenges that such success involves. It starts with the genealogy of Semas's family and the stories of his childhood, then follows the vast business adventures that took him around the world. It emphasizes his business dealings, sharing a bevy of leadership coaching takeaways from years of boom-and-bust projects.

Some notable periods in Semas's life get extra attention, and the book goes into even more detail about his key real estate development projects and the formation of his chemical and finishing business, METALAST. His successes are shared with a sense that they can be replicated with a mix of risk-taking, determination, and perseverance, qualities he attributes to his American upbringing. The book treats these possibilities as though they are available to all. It includes pull quotes and takeaways that add visual interest, as well as complementary photographs and graphics from the projects described for context.

Drawing inspiration from the life of Theodore Roosevelt, whom it renders an idol, the book places Semas's adventures into similar context. They include experiences of hunting, of rodeos, in the military, and of possible covert activities, experienced across seventy-three years of surprises. They are shared with the campfire gusto of a storyteller who's been honing his tales and who knows what he wants to say. Their tone is authoritative and enthusiastic, and they feature short missives of inspiration, original poetry, and an almost uncanny recall of details, dates, and conversations. Semas weaves in his family history throughout as well, which includes multiple marriages, children, and blended families who contributed to his worldview.

But the book moves with too much speed at times and then mires itself in details at other times. It becomes lengthy as it moves toward Semas's most contemporary challenges, with accounts of the first waves of COVID-19. Still, like-minded baby boomers will find many of its turns to be nostalgic and appealing.

Man in the Arena is a businessman's memoir that explores American exceptionalism via tales of personal successes and adventures.

JOSEPH BEYER (August 12, 2022)

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