



City in the Sky: The Rise and Fall of the World Trade Center

By James Glanz, Eric Lipton

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City in the Sky: The Rise and Fall of the World Trade Center By James Glanz, Eric Lipton

The definitive biography of the iconic skyscrapers and the ambitions that shaped them—from their dizzying rise to their unforgettable fall

More than a year after the nation began mourning the lives lost in the attacks on the World Trade Center, it became clear that something else was being mourned: the towers themselves. They were the biggest and brashest icons that New York, and possibly America, has ever produced—magnificent giants that became intimately familiar around the globe. Their builders were possessed of a singular determination to create wonders of capitalism as well as engineering, refusing to admit defeat before natural forces, economics, or politics.

No one knows the history of the towers better than *New York Times* reporters James Glanz and Eric Lipton. In a vivid, brilliantly researched narrative, the authors re-create David Rockefeller's ambition to rebuild lower Manhattan, the spirited opposition of local storeowners and powerful politicians, the bold structural innovations that later determined who lived and died, master builder Guy Tozzoli's last desperate view of the towers on September 11, and the charged and chaotic recovery that could have unraveled the secrets of the buildings' collapse but instead has left some enduring mysteries.

Like David McCullough's *The Great Bridge*, *City in the Sky* is a riveting story of New York City itself, of architectural daring, human frailty, and a lost American icon.

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Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This is not a book only about September 11; the towers' collapse begins on number 236 of 337 pages of narrative text. New York Times reporters Glanz (science) and Lipton (metropolitan news) instead deliver a thoroughly absorbing account of how the World Trade Center developed from an embryonic 1939 World's Fair building to "a city in the sky, the likes of which the planet had never seen." In this lively page-turner, intensively researched and meticulously documented, a world of international trade, business history, litigation, architecture, engineering and forensics comes clear—a political and financial melodrama with more wheeling and dealing than *Dallas*, touched lightly with the comedic and haunted by tragedy. The authors move a Robert Altman-sized cast (engineers, architects, iron workers, builders, demolitionists, lawyers, mobsters, mayors, mathematicians, critics, activists, real estate dealers, biochemists, union organizers, an aerialist, an arsonist) through the design, construction, destruction and memorializing. Faceless entities like the Port Authority acquire names, personal histories and diverse agendas. Bureaucratic reports and public hearings, reduced with clarity and balance, become comprehensible, even readable. The authors are remarkably skilled at telling all without telling too much: a "deadening" 44-page speech by Port Authority official Austin Tobin gets short shrift but a fair account. Their descriptions of new technologies (e.g., "artificial creakiness"), fresh experiments (particularly in wind engineering), complicated financial maneuverings and secret studies become clear to the non-specialist reader. While some superlatives might have been avoided ("the biggest and brashest icons that New York ever produced," etc.), Glanz and Lipton tell this compelling story without becoming overwrought, and with graphs and charts (and 16 pages of b&w photos not seen by PW) that contribute immensely to understanding the logistical and technical aspects of the project. This book may be the definitive popular account of the towers.

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review *New York Times* reporters Glanz (science) and Lipton (metropolitan news) briskly and lucidly tell the entire wrenching story of the genesis and destruction of the World Trade Center, once a testament to capitalistic ambition and technical innovation, now a monument to hubris, apocalyptic hate, and the suffering of innocents. The authors begin with engrossing profiles of the men who dreamed up the World Trade Center 40 years ago, most notably David Rockefeller, the Port Authority's feisty Guy Tozzoli, and Japanese American architect Minoru Yamasaki, who was afraid of heights and had never built a skyscraper before. Drawing on fresh and extensive research, Glanz and Lipton chart the contentious and irresponsible design process in which untested structural technologies were deemed safe over the objections of a prescient few who worried about fire and airplane collisions. The authors' highly detailed yet always human and dramatic chronicling of the towers' unprecedented construction, as well as unique insights into how the controversial twin towers finally won the affection of skeptical New Yorkers only to come under siege—first by an arsonist-janitor, then by terrorist bombers in 1993, and, finally, by those who brought them down on that unforgettable September 11—is both fascinating and tragic, encompassing, as it does, the best and worst of human ingenuity. *Donna Seaman*

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Review

"[A] magnificent book." *-The New Republic*

"James Glanz and Eric Lipton's brilliantly reported and profoundly moving but admirably clear-eyed account of the accidental conception, long gestation, difficult birth, brief life and tragic death of the World Trade Center is likely to remain a classic."

-The New York Times

Users Review

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