

MEMOIRS OF A HACK MECHANIC

By Rob Siegel

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Review by Tom Miller

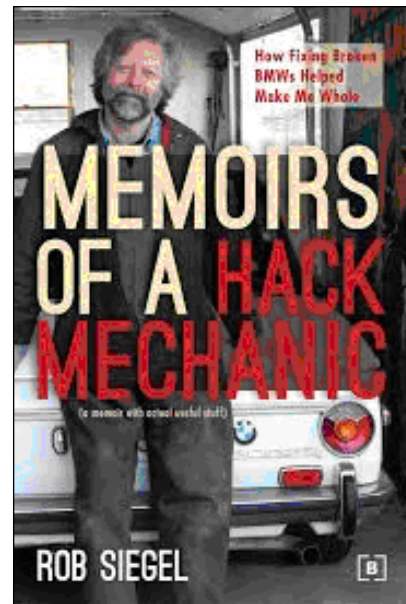
Someone said, "Hey Tom. You're a car guy. This book is being released soon and it's right up your alley, why don't you give it a review?" I said OK and the publisher Fed Ex'ed a copy to me. I dove into it knowing that the release was scheduled within the next couple of weeks and I set myself a deadline to get the book read and the review written as quickly as possible. But as I set about the task at hand, I found that each time I picked up the book I had this sense of resentment. Odd.

It took me a session or two before I realized that what I resented was the fact that I was under a deadline and that I needed to rush. This is not a book to rush through. Not if you are a car guy. If you are a car guy this is a book to stroll through. I don't know how to define exactly what a car guy is, but I know that I am one. And I know that all car guys know what the term means – and their loved ones probably know as well. You know, you recognize the smell of brake fluid and old grease that lingers like cologne when you enter a room. You have barked knuckles and a screw driver in your back pocket. You think about shock absorbers and tune ups and stuff like that.

Anyway, this book is written by a car guy for car guys about car guy experiences. It is part autobiography, part encyclopedia, and part advice column. It is chocked full of useful hints about everything from acquiring a car, repairing a car and even when the sad event is necessary, disposing of a car. It is a lifetime of experience hard won and passed on gladly.

Now I will forgive Rob for focusing on his passion – BMWs – since I am a died in the wool Detroit iron fan of the 50s, 60s, and 70s, (...and newer, ...or older, if a neat car pops up), but as all car guys know, experience generalizes and sound advice is sound advice. And this book is full of sound advice. Rob has written a column for the BMW Car Club of America's magazine Roundel for over twenty-five years, no mean feat in itself. To have accomplished that kind of longevity with what surely must be a group of BMW purists speaks volumes.

Included in the book are some amusing anecdotes as well as some self incurred foibles that get told, all of which adds to its entertainment value. And there are some really neat photos of his passions and his rather unique five car garage – one bay of which is under the deck (why not? Car guys know how to do that kind of stuff).



Wilderness House Literary Review 8/2

This is a book that I will lend out but only grudgingly and to friends who have demonstrated that they are responsible enough to be trusted to not abscond with it. I also will buy copies of it to give to other car guys for birthdays and I most definitely would recommend it for the upcoming Fathers Day. Especially if...your Dad is a car guy!

**** Tom Miller is a retired auto industry executive, and an occasional reviewer for BASPP.