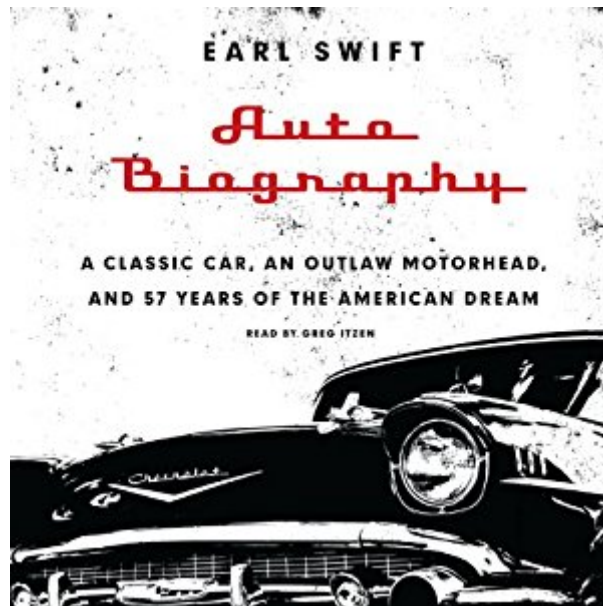


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# Auto Biography: A Classic Car, An Outlaw Motorhead, And 57 Years Of The American Dream



## Synopsis

A brilliant blend of *Shop Class as Soulcraft* and *The Orchid Thief*, Earl Swift's wise, funny, and captivating *Auto Biography* follows an outlaw-genius auto mechanic as he painstakingly attempts to restore a classic 1957 Chevy to its former glory - all while the FBI and local law enforcement close in. To Tommy Arney, the old cars at Moyock Muscle are archeological artifacts, twentieth-century fossils that represent a place and a people utterly devoted to the automobile and transformed by it. But to his rural North Carolina town, they're not history; they're junk. When Tommy acquires a rusted out wreck of an old Chevy and promises to return it to a shiny, chromed work of American art, he sees one last chance to salvage his respect, keep himself out of jail, and save his business. But for this folk hero who is often on the wrong side of the law, the odds of success are long, especially when the FBI, local authorities, and the bank are closing in. Written for motor heads and automotive novices alike, *Auto Biography* interweaves this improbable hero's journey with the story of one iconic car to chart the rise, fall, and rebirth of the American Dream. Told in words and eight pages of photos, this wise, charming, and heartbreaking true story is an indelible portrait of a man, a machine, and a nation on the road from a glorious past into an unknown future.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

*Auto Biography* is about a classic 1957 Chevrolet station wagon that is being rebuilt by the owner of a used car lot (don't dare call it a junkyard), one Tommy Arney, a violent, foul-mouthed, operator who deals in various businesses such as go-go bars and real estate. Author Earl Swift has

managed to trace the ownership of the car in question all the way back to its original owner. He tells the story of the car through the people who have owned the car. It's a crazy idea, and you hope that a half a century of history as told through such a quirky lens will be revealing in some way, that it will be a slice of America. But throughout, it's really the story of Tommy Arney, now in his late fifties, slightly less violent than he used to be, but still as menacing. The first story Swift tells about Arney is Arney's recollection of a long ago sailor bar melee in which he was approached by a cop with a K-9 growling and ready to rumble. Arney warned the cop not to set the dog on him or he would "[m]uck the dog up." The dog attacked, Arney grabbed the dog by the neck, choked it until it passed out, then beat the cop with his own German shepherd. How can a car compete with a character like that? And yet, in Swift's telling, Arney is something of a charmer as well as a Tasmanian devil. Well, I'll have to take Swift's word for that. Arney's business dealings were so corrupt that during the course of the Chevy restoration, the FBI was preparing to indict Arney for bank fraud. Meanwhile, Arney, while not as crazy violent as he once was, still abused his friends, was cheating on his wife throughout their thirty year marriage, neglected his kids when they were children, and when they were adults, got them to co-sign fraudulent bank loans.

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