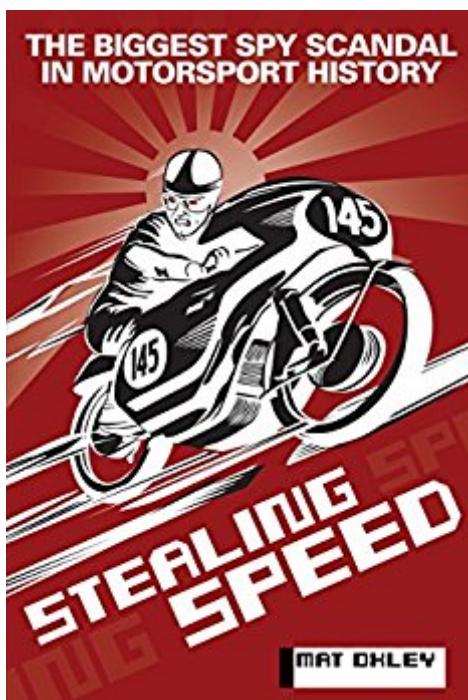


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STEALING SPEED: The Biggest Spy Scandal In Motorsport History



Synopsis

The remarkable true story of how one of Japan's biggest motorcycle manufacturers stole a Nazi rocket scientist's engine secrets from behind the Iron Curtain to win the motorcycle power race and conquer the world. In 1961, with the Cold War at its height, East and West were battling for supremacy on the racetracks of Europe. Using technology from the Nazis' notorious V-1 flying bomb, East German factory MZ built the world's most powerful race bikes. But when MZ rider Ernst Degner was poised to win the world championship he defected and sold MZ's secrets to Suzuki, while his wife and children were drugged and smuggled through the Berlin Wall. Within months Japan was on its way to ruling the world of motorcycling. Branded a traitor by the Communists, Degner suffered horrific injuries in a fiery racing accident and died in mysterious circumstances. Stealing Speed is a breathtaking story of racetrack heroics and Cold War skulduggery.

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Customer Reviews

I grew up during the 50s and 60s. I got my first motorcycle in 1967. I've worked on Suzukis

professionally since 1974 and even worked for American Suzuki as a service rep from 1981 through 1996. I now teach in the Suzuki program at Motorcycle Mechanics Institute in Orlando. Yet, even with all that background. most of this story was new to me. I don't find it surprising as the Japanese are masters of copying, refining and improving ideas. Who knew that the 2-strokes we rode and loved in the 70s had their origin in Hitler's "buzz bombs?" This book is a must for any fan/student of early Japanese motorcycles and GP racing in the 60s. It ranks right up there with the story of Kim Newcombe and the Konig. [...] Definitely a must read for any serious fan of the era. It's not that thick a book, but packs a lot of history into a few pages.

An entertaining historical account of a German rocket scientist who loved and lived motorcycles who through his intellect and perseverance successively created the modern 2 stroke from the principals and technology of the V-1 rockets of WW2. And how the E. German MZ rider Ernst Degner, defected to the west with a suitcase with all the hard won secrets discovered by Walter Kaaden in the most impoverished situation in motor racing allowing Suzuki to leap frog to a world championship. A story of an under dog winning against the high rolling Italians and Japanese. It should be a movie! This true story has it all, The peak of the cold war, the erection of the Berlin wall, a pivotal time in world history . Sometimes the real heroes are on the other side. .

A excellent book! I cannot believe this story is not more well known and written about. The story about Ernst Degner is amazing and full of twist and turns, this book should be made into a movie. I enjoyed the story about Walter Kaaden, it makes me appreciate what a great man he really was and receives so little recognition still to this day for his dedication to the advancement of the 2 stroke engine. This book is a fast moving story that I did not want to put down until I was finished. Matt Oxley is a fine writer and gives insight that only a motorcycle racer could, especially when describing the racing action at the Isle of Mann TT.

It's an interesting read. I found the sample a bit misleading as the book is rather an insight into the world of motorcycle GP racing of 1950's - 70's supported by the "stealing" scandal than the story about post war technology evolution paths. It's not a bad thing though. A must read for a fun of modern era motorcycle racing. Living in a post communist block country, remembering the MZ's of the 80's I found the story of Kaaden and Degner particularly easy to refer to.

Excellent story of how Nazi war technology produced a world championship motorcycle, the MZ on

a shoe string. And how the very talented rider Ernst Degner choose freedom over his homeland and literally allowed the Japanese to build a motorcycle industry on the secrets he brought with him when he defected. Some say stolen technology. What ever you opinion, it make Suzuki a world champion.

I greatly enjoyed this book. It is an easy, entertaining, yet informative read. It is not only a document of classic motorcycle racing events, but it also gives a feel of Cold War history. I think anyone can enjoy reading 'Stealing Speed', although some basic interest in motorcycles or an identification with the presented time period may help. To fully appreciate the content it may be also handy to know the difference between a two stroke and a four stroke. I liked the style of the narrative. It is not a typical journalistic documentary where the author tries overly hard to sell his story by using sensationalist language. What made me feel skeptical, and why I would give it 4.5 stars if I could, is that he misspelled several of the German names and expressions throughout the book. It makes me wonder whether Mr. Oxley's sources were not reliable or if he did his research sloppily. Either way, I hope that doesn't mean the other facts, as presented, aren't also to be taken with a grain of salt.

If you have the slightest interest in motorcycle racing, the Isle of Man, the Cold war or all three then this book will immerse you in the period. The first half of the book is a little slow but necessary to build the full framework for the latter part of the book. The descriptions are lively to the point where I could readily conjure up the roadway, the smells, the sounds and all that goes with the racing scene. Beyond the immediate aspects of the racing, the well handled technical detail and the deals being done, it also strikes a morale chord. The efforts of Walter Kaaden are what gave shape to the modern engine and racing scene and without Ernst Degner it wouldn't have been the same. All that is needed now is for someone (and yes, I am looking at you Ron Howard) to make a film of this story.

Anyone who is a fan of two-stroke motorcycles should read this book, but it would be a very worthwhile read for any motorcyclist. It is very well written and researched, provides an extremely interesting insight into the history, development and roots of the modern two-stroke, but at the same time is a gripping story about passionate, inspirational people who did it hard and lived life on a knife edge. Thoroughly recommended.

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