



## Lee Iacocca Essay Grace Elizabeth Flint

Lee Iacocca was not only an automotive icon but a bold, legendary leader whose life has left a lasting impact on the American people. His achievements remind us that with hard work anything is possible. Lido Anthony Iacocca was born on October 15, 1924, in Allentown, Pennsylvania to Italian immigrants who came to the United States. Lee was greatly influenced by his father, Nicola, a savvy businessman, with only a fifth-grade education. Nicola ran a hot dog stand, later owned a movie theatre, and ran one of the first ever rental car agencies in the country. He passed on his strong work ethic and his love of automobiles to his son, Lee.

At fifteen, Lee got rheumatic fever which exempted him from serving in World War II. During the time he was ill, he put all his efforts into his schoolwork earning straight A's. This was the beginning of his success in school. Lee graduated from Allentown High School with honors in 1942, earned a bachelor's degree in engineering from Lehigh University, and then went on to earn a master's degree in mechanical engineering from Princeton. Just after graduating, Lee started a career in 1946 at Ford, fulfilling his childhood aspiration to work at the company.

He quickly climbed the corporate ladder at Ford, due to his innovative marketing ideas and shrewd product development. His "56 for 56" ambitious sales campaign in the mid 1950's was a goal to sell 56,000 Ford Thunderbirds in the year 1956, and he did just that. By 1960, Lee had become vice president. One of Lee's most significant contributions while at Ford was his role in developing the Ford Mustang in 1964. The first ever "pony car" is still one of Ford's most popular cars even several decades later. In December of 1970, Lee was named president of Ford by Henry Ford II. But after thirty-two years with the company, Lee was fired on July 13, 1978, due to years of a contentious relationship between him and Henry Ford II.

On November 2, 1978, Lee was hired as CEO of Chrysler. Lee was instrumental in Chrysler receiving government assistance, ultimately stopping the company from going bankrupt. In 1983, Iacocca's introduced the first minivan which achieved significant success not only because it fit into many growing family's budgets and needs, but also fit into their home garages. Iacocca was unique in that he was the first CEO to star in TV commercials, endorsing his own personal guarantee of cars. At one point, there was talk that Iacocca would run for president of the United States.

Instead, Lee wrote two books; his 1984 autobiography went on to be a best seller. He also helped in restoring the Statue of Liberty along with starting the Iacocca Foundation that funds research to find a cure for diabetes, a disease his first wife died from in 1983. Lee Iacocca passed away on July 2, 2019, but is fondly remembered for his resilience, patriotic pride, leadership, and unwavering determination.



From the 2024 Annual Gulf Coast Italian Culture Society Scholarship Essay Program

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