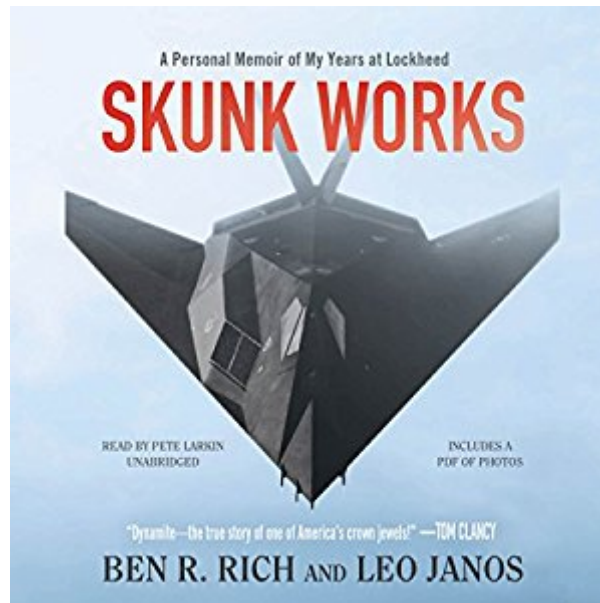




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# Skunk Works: A Personal Memoir Of My Years Of Lockheed



## Synopsis

From the development of the U-2 to the Stealth fighter, the never-before-told story behind America's high-stakes quest to dominate the skies. Skunk Works is the true story of America's most secret and successful aerospace operation. As recounted by Ben Rich, the operation's brilliant boss for nearly two decades, the chronicle of Lockheed's legendary Skunk Works is a drama of Cold War confrontations and Gulf War air combat, of extraordinary feats of engineering and human achievement against fantastic odds. Here are up-close portraits of the maverick band of scientists and engineers who made the Skunk Works so renowned. Filled with telling personal anecdotes and high adventure, with narratives from the CIA and from air force pilots who flew the many classified, risky missions, this book is a riveting portrait of the most spectacular aviation triumphs of the 20th century.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is a phenomenal book, and I want to stress that the few criticisms I'm going to offer should not dissuade people from picking this up and reading it. With help from co-writer Leo Janos, Ben Rich has written a fascinating account of one of the most secretive and successful "black projects" outfits in American military history. Lockheed's "Skunk Works" was responsible for developing the P-38, but its real fame began to build as it concentrated on spy planes during the Cold War, specifically the U2 and the SR-71 Blackbird. Rich's account of the conception, construction and deployment of these two iconic aircraft is absolutely ... well, pun intended here ... RIVETING. The narrative is exciting; how could it not be? Here you had a secretive division of a major aeronautical contractor

working on planes that would change the course of world history, and this division was facing deadlines, problems with materials, difficulties in coming up with new construction methods, and on and on. The Blackbird's use of titanium alone proved a major engineering hurdle, given how difficult that metal is to work with, but Skunk Works pulled it off...and the Blackbird remains the FASTEST air-breathing aircraft ever constructed, years after its retirement! Two brief criticisms: One, the "other voices" interludes sometimes break up the narrative flow a bit too much. But Rich being what he was -- the second leader of a highly complex organization -- would naturally feel drawn to this kind of structure, in which value is placed on multiple viewpoints. Two, and I can't believe I'm writing this: Most books, if length is a problem, suffer from being too long. With "Skunk Works," I was hoping it would last even longer. Again, though, the book's concision is indicative of its author's personality; Rich was a "get it done" kind of guy who belied the image of a greedy contractor stretching out a project for as long as possible. Skunk Works prided itself on making or even beating deadlines, and thus Rich the author wasn't going to write a bloated book. This is just a terrific read, especially for anyone interested in how successful organizations of any kind work, how America truly did win the Cold War, and how complexity challenges people with creative minds.

This book is absolutely AMAZING!! I'm kicking myself in the teeth for not having read it when it first came out. The hard copy was given to me as a gift when it was released and I refused to break the binding on it because I knew it would be a good book, perhaps a collector even. I had forgotten I had it when I saw it was available on kindle and immediately bought it. This book isn't simply about the amazing work of the Skunk Works up until the declassification of the F-117, this book is about leadership, teamwork and dedication. SIMPLY AMAZING, A MUST READ!

"Skunk Works" is the popular moniker of Lockheed Martin's top, top secret aircraft program for the US government. This book is written by the second director of this program, Ben Rich. The book's primary focus is the U-2, F-117A, and last but not least the SR-71. A ship for the Navy, and a drone program are briefly covered also. Ben Rich is credited for developing and building "stealth" into military assets. Primarily aircraft. After Francis Gary Powers was shot down piloting a U-2 over Soviet Russia, it quickly became apparent that a faster, higher flying and stealthy aircraft was needed. Hence the SR-71. It can travel in the atmosphere at a height of nearly 90,000 feet. It can cruise at well over Mach 3, and has a Radar profile of about a ball-bearing (thus "Stealthy"). This book is fascinating and gives you a first-person account of these extraordinary aircraft. The F-117 flew over the center of Baghdad, without fighter escorts; and dropped 2,000 lb. bombs during the

Iraq war. The U-2 is the only one out of the three that is still flying missions. As a matter of fact, a U-2 just recently crashed in California.

This book is amazing, what the men inside skunk works were able to do with a slide rule and paper is simply awe inspiring. Being an engineer and having a healthy understanding of what it takes to make things fly I was speechless reading about the quick turn around and the minuscule budgets they were able to operate on and still create the most advanced aircraft of all time. Still nothing has topped the SR-71 and they were able to completely design and build a prototype in a matter of months with not a single computer in the building. The end is a bit preachy about money and misappropriation of government funds but it does not over shadow the feats described by Ben Rich and many of the pilots that flew his contraptions.

Fascinating story of some of the most innovative aircraft in history. The story thrills me with the brilliance behind the scenes. I highly recommend this read.

This book is amazing. So much insight and detail into things that were beyond top secret, my favorite work of non fiction yet!

Kelly Johnson decided in 1958 that he wanted to design a Mach 3 plane that flew at 80,000 ft. 4 years later in 1962 the first legendary SR-71 spy-plane was on the runway ready for test flights. Today such a feat seems like magic. This book is a reminder of what a small dedicated team can achieve under an inspired leader. A very enjoyable read, and an insight into the "anything is possible" 60's that culminated in the moon landings.

This book came recommended from an engineer I know. Amazing story, great advice in the last chapter. Shows how good we can be when focused. A good factual account that has technologies that are discussed in fiction books such as space wars.

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