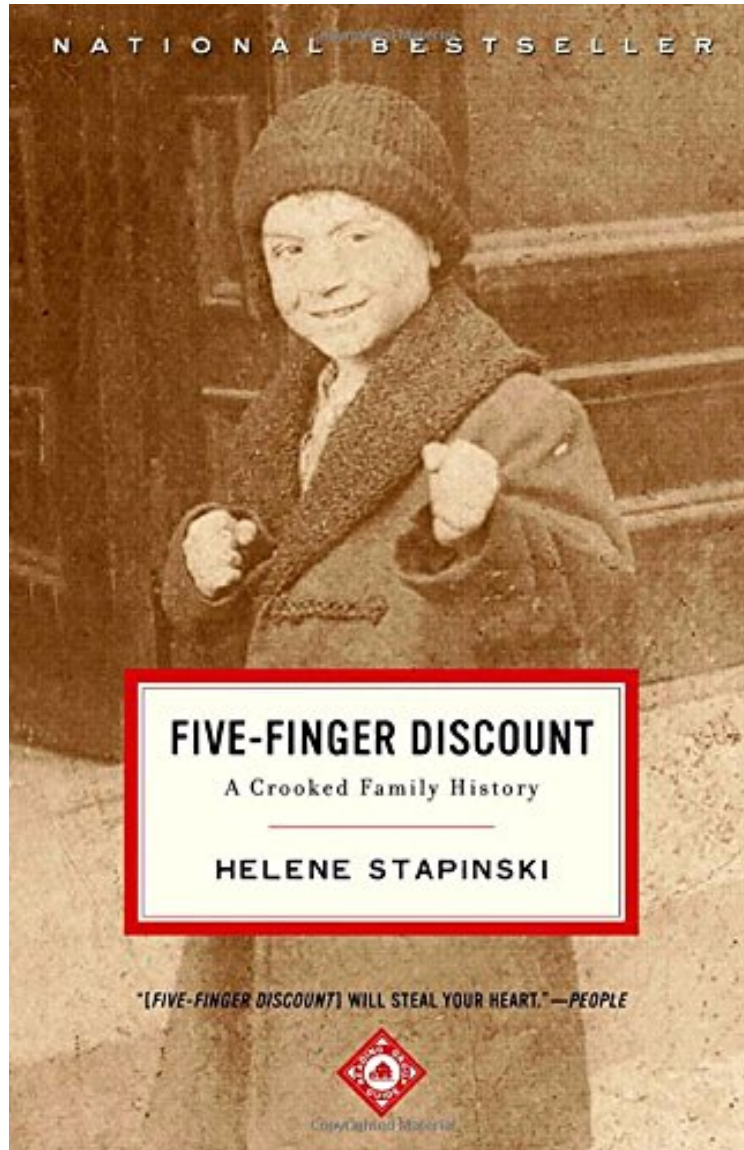


[Mobile book] Five-Finger Discount: A Crooked Family History

Five-Finger Discount: A Crooked Family History

Helene Stapinski

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Helene Stapinski : Five-Finger Discount: A Crooked Family History before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Five-Finger Discount: A Crooked Family History:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Finger Discount By Diane W. Fitzgibbon Five Finger Discount is an entertaining, detailed account of life in Jersey City during a high-crime time. Stapinski writes with candor and flair. She candidly names names and points fingers. It is a twisted trip down memory lane. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Fast-paced journalistic style makes it easy reading, and content is a springboard for

researchers ...By Charles J. Casper
Insightful book in many ways as well as a true history of a time and place that is already becoming smothered in the pages of history. Fast-paced journalistic style makes it easy reading, and content is a springboard for researchers in the social sciences and Jersey City history. It is also a story of the courage of everyday men and women who faced familial and economic challenges. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A gem especially for Jersey citizens. Amusing, informative ...By John Farina
A gem especially for Jersey citizens. Amusing, informative and well written. Captures the real Jersey City in all its ugly history.

Now a PBS documentary, this astonishing memoir of growing up in rough-and-tumble Jersey City will steal your heart (People) With deadpan humor and obvious affection, *Five-Finger Discount* recounts the story of an unforgettable New Jersey family of swindlers, bookies, embezzlers, and mobster-wannabes. In the memoir Mary Karr calls a page-turner, Helene Stapinski ingeniously weaves the checkered history of her hometown of Jersey City a place known for its political corruption and industrial blight with the tales that have swirled around her relatives for decades. Navigating a childhood of toxic waste and tough love, Stapinski tells an extraordinary tale at once heartbreaking and hysterically funny. Praise for *Five-Finger Discount* By turns hilarious and alarming, [Helene Stapinski's] book reads on the surface like something by Damon Runyon and Elmore Leonard, with a dark undertow of real-life pain and disillusion. Michiko Kakutani, *The New York Times* Its a brilliant book, a darling book. It is the blessedly modest chronicle of a magical consciousness that seems to have been born pulling diamonds out of the muck, hearing angels voices in the fiercest thunder. . . . I adored every word of this wondrous book. Get it. Read it. Michael Pakenham, *The Baltimore Sun* In the tradition of . . . Rita Mae Brown and Amy Tan, Ms. Stapinski is an exciting writer, unabashedly candid, and at the same time unashamedly self-contained. *Five-Finger Discount* is a must-read. Victoria Gotti, *The New York Observer* What [Frank] McCourt did for Limerick, Ireland, Helene Stapinski does for Jersey City. The Star-Ledger Hugely entertaining. The Sunday Times (London)

.com Fans of Mary Karr's groundbreaking memoir *The Liars' Club* will relish the similarly funny, tough-minded tone of Helene Stapinski's recollections centering on her family's petty criminal history in the sordid precincts of Jersey City. But Stapinski is nobody's clone; her autobiography has a tart, distinctively urban Northeast flavor that will ring a bell with anyone familiar with America's aging, deteriorating cities. You can practically smell the soap suds from the local Colgate factory and the stink of the bone-rendering plant in nearby Newark; people didn't settle in Jersey City, writes Stapinski, "they settled for Jersey City ... they settled for less." She was 5 years old in 1970 when her Italian American grandfather was arrested for threatening to shoot her whole family, capping a long career that included armed robbery and beating his children. The Polish American relatives on her father's side included a bookie and an epileptic prone to fits of rage who nearly killed a sibling by breaking his back. None of this was a big deal in Jersey City, notes Stapinski, who deftly interweaves her family's story with the rancid saga of Hudson County's corrupt political machine. She fled to college in Manhattan and a career in journalism without ever really escaping the ties of blood and loyalty; her frank rendering of her mixed feelings as Jersey City was slowly upscaled reminds us what is gained and lost through gentrification. Stapinski's salty, savory account conveys the gritty, enduring legacy of Jersey City: "so tough, I was always prepared for what might come my way." --Wendy Smith
From Publishers Weekly "The night my grandfather tried to kill us, I was five years old, the age I stopped believing in Santa Claus, started kindergarten, and made real rather than imaginary friends." This chatty and often engaging memoir of growing up among a rogue's gallery of tough characters may leave readers thinking Stapinski might have been better off with an imaginary family. Reminiscent of Michael Patrick McDonald's highly praised *All Souls: A Family Story from Southie*, but without that book's overwhelming moral force, this is the sad, often funny story of Stapinski's extended family of grifters, con men and women and petty crooks. At its best, it's a vivid portrait of working-class life in Jersey City, N.J. But too often it veers uneasily between disarming anecdotes (Stapinski's grandfather steals books from the public library where he works as a security guard) and terrifying details of lives out of control (her father almost loses his legs because of untreated but obvious diabetes), and doesn't sustain dramatic intensity. Stapinski, who has written for the *New York Times* and *New York* magazine, can be funny as in her descriptions of attending New York University, where she meets Jews, punks and lesbians, and reads the *Village Voice* and even illuminating, as when she describes the Machiavellian, if mundane, workings of the multitude of patronage systems that have corrupted Jersey City politics. Though she has a good eye for the details of family and community life, too often the emotions in this memoir feel imagined, not real. (Mar.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal
The author weaves a fascinating tale of growing up amid the decay and corruption of 1970s-80s Jersey City, NJ. Using her family's story as a mirror for the best and the worst the place has to offer, this journalist goes beyond the family to frame a distinct history and sociological description. She begins with the family legend of the night her grandfather threatened to kill her entire family, then goes on to tell stories of corrupt mayors and bookie uncles, embezzling DMV officials and embezzling cousins, sadistic nuns, and "swag" that fell off the truck and found its way home from work each night. Although Stapinski uncovers family skeleton after family skeleton, her writing never turns maudlin. Just as she couldn't reject her family, she is still connected to her hometown. Her imperfect family comes across as a loving,

tight-knit clan, and Jersey City, while built on toxic wastes, comes across as a compelling place where marvels hide in decay. Of interest especially to sociology/ urban studies collections, this well-written, heavily researched, thoroughly enjoyable read is highly recommended.-DKaren Sandlin Silverman, Ctr. for Applied Research, Philadelphia Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.