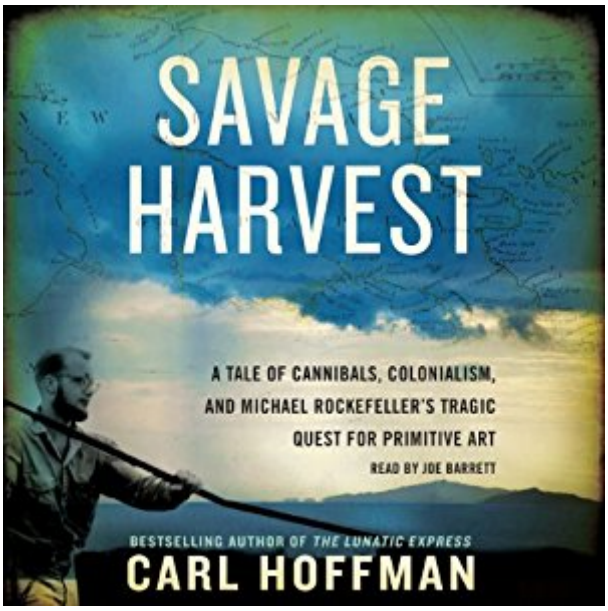
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Savage Harvest: A Tale Of Cannibals, Colonialism, And Michael Rockefeller's Tragic Quest For Primitive Art



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Synopsis

The mysterious disappearance of Michael Rockefeller in remote New Guinea in 1961 has kept the world, and even Michael’s powerful, influential family, guessing for years. Now, Carl Hoffman uncovers startling new evidence that finally tells the full, astonishing story. On November 21, 1961, Michael C. Rockefeller, the 23-year-old son of New York governor Nelson Rockefeller, vanished off the coast of southwest New Guinea when his catamaran capsized while crossing a turbulent river mouth. He was on an expedition to collect art for the Museum of Primitive Art, which his father had founded in 1957, and his expedition partner - who stayed with the boat and was later rescued - shared Michael’s final words as he swam for help: "I think I can make it." Despite exhaustive searches, no trace of Rockefeller was ever found. Soon after his disappearance, rumors surfaced that he’d been killed and ceremonially eaten by the local Asmat - a native tribe of warriors whose complex culture was built around sacred, reciprocal violence, head hunting, and ritual cannibalism. The Dutch government and the Rockefeller family denied the story, and Michael’s death was officially ruled a drowning. Yet doubts lingered. Sensational rumors and stories circulated, fueling speculation and intrigue for decades. The real story has long waited to be told - until now. Retracing Rockefeller’s steps, award-winning journalist Carl Hoffman traveled to the jungles of New Guinea, immersing himself in a world of headhunters and cannibals, secret spirits and customs, and getting to know generations of Asmat. Through exhaustive archival research, he uncovered never-before-seen original documents and located witnesses willing to speak publically after 50 years. In Savage Harvest he finally solves this decades-old mystery and illuminates a culture transformed by years of colonial rule, whose people continue to be shaped by ancient customs and lore. Combining history, art, colonialism, adventure, and ethnography, Savage Harvest is a mesmerizing whodunit, and a fascinating portrait of the clash between two civilizations that resulted in the death of one of America’s richest and most powerful scions.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition
Listening Length: 9 hoursÃ Â andÃ Â 18 minutes
Program Type: Audiobook
Version: Unabridged
Publisher: HarperAudio
Audible.com Release Date: March 18, 2014
Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B00I8PKN4W

Best Sellers Rank: #26 inÃ Â Books > Audible Audiobooks > History > Australia & Oceania #213 inÃ Â Books > History > Australia & Oceania > Oceania #317 inÃ Â Books > Travel > Australia & South Pacific > General

Customer Reviews

Having travelled in and out of Papua New Guinea as a consultant for two years, I was deeply interested in the cultural aspects of the other half of New Guinea. One of the things we learned was that a lack of understanding of the culture and social mores is a critical mistake. Hoffman does a great job of getting to know the people and not imposing his values on them as so many missionaries do. Additionally, his writing style is exceptional. He takes an event that happened over fifty years ago and brings it to life on many levels. My only criticism lies in the statements that cannibalism and head hunting are no longer practiced. They as well as shape shifting, witchcraft, and the spirit world are alive and well today

This is a well written, interesting and convincing investigation into a famous and mysterious death. I had never read about New Guinea and the reasons that some people practiced cannibalism. It is fascinating that it is such a spiritual practice. I'm so glad that I read this book and now will probably read more on the subject. I also feel sadness and sympathy for so many native people who have had their way of life ripped away from them by "civilized" (usually white Europeans) that think the only correct way to live is their way.

I loved this book, it was like participating in author's journey of discovery, then reviewing the events leading up to Michael Rockefeller's disappearance. He does an amazing job of taking you to the Asmat villages, their daily experiences, their daily lives, their need for balance in the world, and their long memories.By the end of the book the author seems to write it off as the triumph of the Western world, but I don't think so. I am unsettled having finished the book, that balance has not yet been restored. I see Michael Rockefeller's killing as a revenge killing, but it wasn't enough to restore balance fir the 4 military leaders killed by Lapre back in 1958. So - I think their unsettled spirit will live on.I was fascinated by the Dutch colonial power, how Christanity entered in, all of this was new territory for me and quite interesting.

One of the better books I've read this year.Some people have criticized this book for the portrayal of Rockefeller as a character out of his depth and not understanding what he was getting into, but I don't think that criticism is accurate. Hoffman does an excellent job dealing with the facts leading up to the disappearance of Rockefeller and the subsequent search for him, as well as his personal account searching for the truth.It also does an excellent job outlining cannibalistic ritual and the role it played in New Guinea in the early 1960s.I highly recommend this book.

For fans of extreme travel narrative and anthropological true crime. Hoffman is an engaging writer and an intrepid traveler, going to great lengths to get the story here and "solve" this historical whodunit. In interspersing his own travels to these remote island civilizations with the real life journey of Michael Rockefeller, he builds suspense throughout the book. His manner of viscerally presenting cultural insights and the clash of civilizations here bring the reader face to face with the taboo topic of cannibalism - yet he does so with nuance and historical clarity making the practice (almost) understandable. That may be the most chilling achievement of this excellent book.

It was hard to stomach the initial descriptions of the tribal rites, at first. Then, the realization of modern factual events intersecting with my own travels in that geographical vicinity made Hoffman's quest more personal. I even had to check my high school yearbook for my Dutch Indonesian boyfriend's picture to "ground" myself into Hoffman's story. Grossly riveting at times, the mystery of Rockefeller's disappearance came to a somewhat satisfying conclusion.

Book Review: Tuesday, March 3, 2015Savage Harvest by Carl HoffmanHistorically, Michael Clark Rockefeller, the youngest child of former Vice-President Nelson Rockefeller, vanished on November 19, 1961. He had been an avid explorer and collector of primitive art, living among the Asmat tribe in a remote region of southwestern Netherlands New Guinea.Rockefeller and a companion, Dutch anthropologist RenÃƒÂ© Wassing had been adrift with their overturned forty foot boat for twenty-four hours. On November 19, 1961 they had drifted to an approximate distance of twelve miles off shore.Michael was twenty-three and a strong swimmer. He managed to convince Wassing that he could make it to shore and return with help. RenÃƒÂ© Wassing would be rescued the next day. Michael Rockefeller was never seen again.Despite a massive air, sea, and land rescue mission mounted by RockefellerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s family, no trace of Michael was ever officially found. He was believed to have become exhausted and died of drowning, exposure, or attack by saltwater crocodile or shark. Finding nothing, the Rockefeller clan had Michael declared dead in 1964. He

would have been almost twenty-six. So much for history.For years there were rumors that Michael actually made it to shore but was murdered and eaten by the cannibalistic natives of the Asmat Tribe. Two missionaries who were in the area at the time gave testimony to this, even naming the specific Native men who were involved in the gruesome act. Although the RockefellerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s official story was that Michael was lost somewhere at sea, a Private Investigator returned from New Guinea with three skulls the Natives claimed were white men. Never once stating that any of these were her son, RockefellerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s mother nevertheless paid the PI $250.000.The recent release of papers concerning Michael Rockefeller sent author Carl Hoffman on an expedition to discover the truth. He would spend a great deal of time pouring over newspapers, press releases, rumors, testimonials, and a map drawn by Dutch Missionary Father Hubertus von Peij. The Priest and other missionaries were the source of the rumors that Michael had been killed, eaten, and his head took as a prize.But there is a difference between reading, and actually investigating. In 2012 Carl found himself living among the same Asmat tribes of Netherlands New Guinea. He took the time to learn their language, to study their customs, and to meet the descendants of the men rumored to be involved with the death and disappearance of Michael Rockefeller.Carl Hoffman doesnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t try to make the reader believe the legend of Michael Rockefeller one way or another. Although he believes Rockefeller was killed and eaten, his skull saved as ahead-hunterÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s prize, he allows the reader to make up his or her own mind.What Carl deals with are the known facts concerning the death of Michael Rockefeller, and his own investigation into the reports and rumors surrounding the young manÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s final days. To say he can prove things one way or the other would be too much. Carl found that there were things nothing could persuade these Natives to divulge. He did learn that there was a story, but to the Asmat it was their private story and telling it to an outsider was forbidden. Only once did he hear RockefellerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s name and that was quick to be denied.The book is great with its delving into this mystery, and Carl Hoffman has gone above and beyond anyone in trying to discover the truth. The questions are still there, of course. This includes when did Rockefeller die, how did he die, what did the family really know, did the PI give the family MichaelÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s remains to bury, and above all, what the great wall of silence in Netherlands New Guinea?As Fox Mulder might say, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“The truth is out there.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• But will it ever be proven to be revealed?I give Mr. Hoffman five stars out of five. No one could have put forth more effort to discover the truth than to put oneÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s self in danger to settle rumors that involve a man long dead and no kin to the author! Mr. Hoffman, the Raven salutes you on a most dedicated endeavor!Quoth the RavenÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦

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