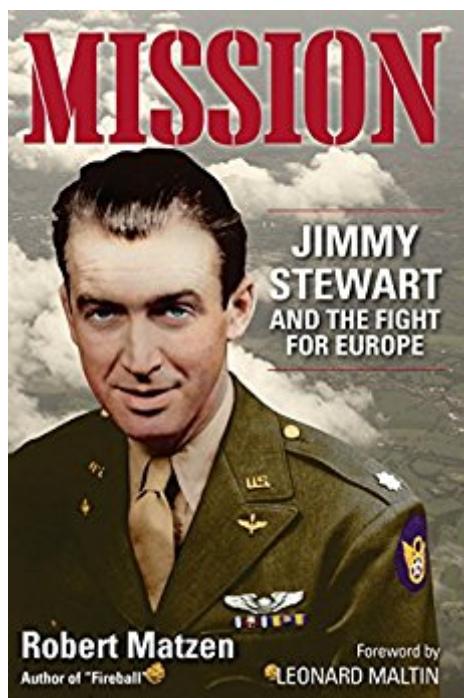


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# Mission: Jimmy Stewart And The Fight For Europe



## **Synopsis**

In March 1941, Jimmy Stewart, America's boy next door and recent Academy Award winner, left fame and fortune behind and joined the United States Army Air Corps to fulfill his family mission and serve his country. He rose from private to colonel and participated in 20 often-brutal World War II combat missions over Germany and France. In mere months the war took away his boyish looks as he faced near-death experiences and the loss of men under his command. The war finally won, he returned home with millions of other veterans to face an uncertain future, suffering what we now know as PTSD. Younger stars like Gregory Peck were now getting roles that might have been Stewart's, and he didn't know if he would ever work in Hollywood again. Then came *It's a Wonderful Life*. For the next half century, Stewart refused to discuss his combat experiences and took the story of his service to the grave. *Mission* presents the first in-depth look at Stewart's life as a Squadron Commander in the skies over Germany, and, his return to Hollywood the changed man who embarked on production of America's most beloved holiday classic. Author Robert Matzen sifted through thousands of Air Force combat reports and the Stewart personnel files; interviewed surviving aviators who flew with Stewart; visited the James Stewart Papers at Brigham Young University; flew in the cockpits of the B-17 Flying Fortress and B-24 Liberator; and walked the earth of air bases in England used by Stewart in his combat missions of 1943-45. What emerges in *Mission* is the story of a Jimmy Stewart you never knew until now, a story more fantastic than any he brought to the screen.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Jimmy Stewart was a major motion picture star, having been in many films during the years before World War II. But Jim had another passion besides acting: flying. By the time the war broke out, Jim was an accomplished pilot. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps nine months before the attack on Pearl Harbor and by 1943, he was a member of the Eighth Air Force. In this fine book, author Robert Matzen describes Jim's life in pictures as well as the pilot of a B-24 Liberator flying missions over Germany. Over the course of some sixteen-plus months in combat, Jim flew numerous missions over Germany, including trips to Brunswick and Berlin. He saw many of the boys he trained shot out of the sky. Others became prisoners of war. He faced the horrors of attack by German fighters and the nerve-racking flak put up by German anti-aircraft batteries. During his time in Europe, Jim transformed from an actor into a combat-hardened veteran. He suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder from the terrible missions he flew and the loss of so many of his fellow fliers and crewmen. He came home from the war a changed man who refused to talk about his war experiences. But acting was still on his mind. Jim returned to Hollywood and struggled to find work until he met a man named Frank Capra. Frank had an idea for a movie and wanted Jim to be the lead actor. The result was the filming of "It's A Wonderful Life", a film that has been a holiday classic for years and one that re-energized Jim's acting career. Successful roles followed for years after its release. "Mission" is a tremendous book about one of Hollywood's most recognizable actors. Many people know Jimmy Stewart the actor, but few know him as a combat pilot who flew missions over Nazi Germany, battling the best of the Luftwaffe. Author Robert Matzen does a fine job of describing Jim's acting and military lives, while drawing on the memories of actors and military comrades alike. Highly recommended.

No doubt this book is a must read for all you movie fans who ever watched a movie with Jimmy Stewart in it. A lot of veterans of WW2 came home and got in the movies and made their mark

then, after the war, but very few went off to war when they were at their peak in the movie industry. Jimmy Stewart did just that. Threatened with a law suit by MGM if he joined, he went ahead and joined anyway. He was an accomplished pilot before the war which stood him in good stead as a bomber pilot in the European theater. Robert Matzen does an excellent job of portraying Jimmy as a down to earth easy going guy. His ability to fly complex bombers, lead from the front on all his missions, and shun the news reporters who wanted to use his fame as a movie star to bring more attention to him than his fellow fliers who sacrificed just as much if not more than him, told me volumes of what this guy was all about. Loved the book, haven't read a better one in a long, long time.

Loved the book! Jimmy Stewart, movie star, could probably have had a very soft life in the WWII military, as did some other movie stars of the era, but he wanted to be a contributor to the war effort and became a B-24 pilot. He flew more than his share of harrowing missions over Germany and Occupied Europe before the war ended and he was discharged back to an uncertain future in the movie industry he left many years before. If you're a fan of the period, a fan of Jimmy Stewart, then you will more than likely find this book very interesting reading. I certainly know I did!

This is a well-written biography about a man who never forgot who he was. The bomber pilots of World War II were very brave men. Jimmy Stewart was one of the best. Particularly enjoyed the authors portrayal of what must've been going through Stewart's mind when in combat. You want to survive, you want your friends to survive and you want to complete your mission. Quite often, three desires seem mutually exclusive. After reading this biography, perhaps those who haven't been there and done that will understand a little better how brave men and women put mission first.

Every young person should read this book in an effort to understand what our men went thru and what they sacrifice in times of war. There will always be those that do not "want to just get along" and have to be stopped. This shows the effects of PTSD and what it can do.

This book should be a required reading for everyone in America's latest generation. To contrast today's college students who insist on safe spaces to escape the threat of micro-aggressions, to those of the Greatest Generation who fought to enter, remain and win against real world aggressors, is an effort beyond description. I wouldn't bother. I would only insist that this book be read. Bob

This story uses a wide variety of materials both public and private to give an insightful look at a unique human being who chooses to step away from a very successful acting career to serve his country in its hour of greatest need. While this is very commendable in and of itself, the fact that he had to fight because of his celebrity and age to get the opportunity to serve in combat makes his story even more remarkable. Matzen does a great job in giving us an understanding of Mr. Stewart's mindset at the pivotal points in his life. Interspersed in the narrative are the stories of three people who are used to give us other perspectives of what Stewart experiencing in the air war over Germany. Not telling us why he has done this in the prologue, makes these stories confusing to the reader and disruptive of the main narrative. Other than this issue, the story is very well done. What a wonderful life Jimmy Stewart had and we are all the richer for it.

A great biography of Jimmy Stewart focusing on the war years the actor himself rarely spoke about. A reminder that Hollywood used to have some real people working in it.

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