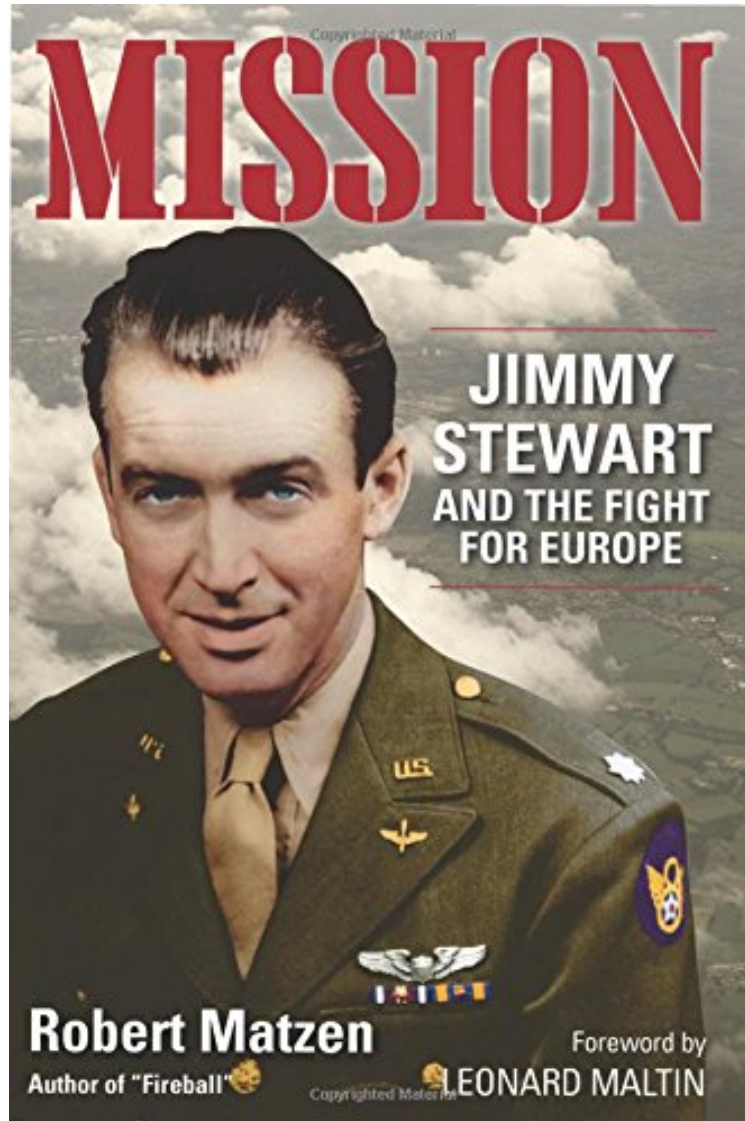


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Robert Matzen

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Robert Matzen : Mission: Jimmy Stewart and the Fight for Europe before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mission: Jimmy Stewart and the Fight for Europe:

41 of 42 people found the following review helpful. A Fine Book About One Of America's Most Beloved Actors And ServicemenBy Jeffrey T. MunsonJimmy 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. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I wish they would make a movie of this. ...By Customer I wish they would make a movie of this. The story takes you from an incredible, fanciful world that was Hollywood in the thirties into air battles fought over Germany in World War II. I bought this because my dad was also in the 8th Air Corp and I wanted to know more about that experience. I knew it was cold in those planes, but had no idea that it got down to 40 below, cold enough for their guns to freeze up. Huge icicles hung from their oxygen masks. The book gives vivid and terrifying descriptions of battles. The details of how men died were tortuous to read. Still, crews continued to fly across the channel knowing that the odds of their coming back were slim. James Stewart could have opted out to make movies to recruit more young men into the corp, but he chose to be a pilot and a leader in action. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I always liked Jimmy Stewart By James Loesch I always liked Jimmy Stewart, the actor, in the movies. This book gave me a lot of insight into Jimmy Stewart the man. I never knew that he was a bomber pilot and Operations leader in WWII flying 20 missions over Nazi occupied territory. And, he didn't do it for the publicity, which he avoided whenever possible, unlike a few other actors during the war. The book is a great read and full of details on bombing missions that Jimmy led or participated in and addresses the effect that it had on him physically and mentally. I highly recommend it.

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.

Even before Hollywood legend Jimmy Stewart went off to war, he was a fighter, working hard to prove his passion for military aviation to the U.S. government. In this meticulously researched book, film historian Matzen (*Fireball: Carole Lombard and the Mystery of Flight 3*) provides the rich, detailed backstory of Stewart's time as a WWII bomber pilot. He delves deep into Stewart's restless spirit, chronicling his family's legacy of war service, his rise to movie stardom, the many women in his life, and his struggles to fly and serve his country. Matzen paints a revealing picture of a man who defied bureaucratic and health obstacles to become a U.S. Army Air Force squadron commander. He depicts the excitement and horror of life in a bomber crew as Stewart commanded a series of missions over Germany, interspersing his story with those of other WWII survivors, such as radio operator Clem Leone and Gertrud Siepmann, who was a young child in Germany during Hitler's rise to power. He also shows that, although considered a war hero, Stewart had difficulty getting reestablished as an actor until Frank Capra cast him in *It's a Wonderful Life*. Military and movie buffs alike will revel in this vivid portrayal of a man who successfully straddled two worlds. Publishers Weekly