



Sonic Wind: The Story of John Paul Stapp and How a Renegade Doctor Became the Fastest Man on Earth

Craig Ryan

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Sixty years ago, cars and airplanes were still deathtraps waiting to happen. Today, both are safer than ever, thanks in part to one pioneering air force doctor's research on seatbelts and ejection seats. The exploits of John Paul Stapp (1910–1999) come to thrilling life in this biography of a Renaissance man who was once blasted—faster than a .45 caliber bullet—across the desert in his Sonic Wind rocket sled, only to be slammed to a stop in barely a second. The experiment put him on the cover of *Time* magazine and allowed his swashbuckling team to gather the data needed to revolutionize automobile and aircraft design. But Stapp didn't stop there. From the legendary high-altitude balloon tests that ensued to the ferocious battles for car safety legislation, Craig Ryan's book is as much a history of America's transition into the Jet Age as it is a biography of the man who got us there safely.

Sonic Wind: The Story of John Paul Stapp and How a Renegade Doctor Became the Fastest Man on Earth Details

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From Reader Review Sonic Wind: The Story of John Paul Stapp and How a Renegade Doctor Became the Fastest Man on Earth for online ebook

Neil Wigner says

Fantastic! Wonderful history of much of aerospace and medical research.

Paul says

I expected to read about a guy riding a rocket sled, and instead got an entire Zelig story about Stapp. Some of it is hearsay and conjecture, but that doesn't stop it from being a good read. There's a lot more here than just "Stapp rode a rocket sled to test the effects of acceleration on the human body". I'm not quite done with the book yet (about 85% through it), but I'm really going to miss it when I'm done.

Rebecca Smith says

Col. John Paul Stapp was a genius in many areas and a determined scientist. He was a pioneer in the space program and was the catalyst in automotive safety and pilot safety.

Kristen says

Sonic Wind: The Story of John Paul Stapp and How a Renegade Doctor Became the Fastest Man on Earth is the story of a pioneer in aviation and automotive safety.

In the early military jet era, and even in WW II propeller planes, there wasn't a lot of thought given to pilot safety because it was thought that the human body could not withstand the G forces that are encountered in the sudden, violent deceleration of a crash. Col. Dr. John Paul Stapp proved that the human body could be subjected to astounding G forces through a series of rocket sled tests in which he was the test subject.

Full disclosure: I won a free copy of an ARC of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Rose says

I received a free copy of this book through Goodreads Giveaways.

This a very thorough, well-researched, and well-written biography of a fascinating man. The book covers his childhood and family and then launches into all the details of his work and how his interests, research, and experiments evolved. Anyone interested in his life or experiments should read this.

George Poppenwimer says

I received this book for free as a Goodreads Giveaway.

As an Air Force veteran and aviation buff, I knew a little about the nuts and bolts of John Stapp's record breaking rocket sled rides. But I found this to be an engaging story not only about his life but his other achievements in other areas such as automotive safety.

It was detailed but very readable and seemed to be very well researched. For anyone wanting to know more about the pioneering days of jet aviation, this really is well worth reading.

Frederic says

At one time people thought that traveling at faster than 20 mph on a train would cause women's organs to rupture. Before J P Stapp experiments it was thought that death from auto crashes was not preventable. The forces of deceleration would kill even if the passenger was belted in. He proved that properly restrained you could survive crashes at incredible speeds.

His work saved thousands of military pilots and personnel. And when his results were used in the automobile millions were saved. But it took years of work to development the technology and then convince the auto makers to use it.

J.R. Stewart says

Craig Ryan has woven the true story of an American hero through the rollicking history of the late Twentieth Century. Dr. John Paul Stapp proved that human beings were capable of enduring massive G-forces by strapping himself into a rocket sled and undergoing incredible acceleration and deceleration. He and his team used the data collected during these runs to improve the safety of pilots everywhere. He designed the escape system that modern jet pilots still employ.

Arguably, Dr. Stapp saved more lives than any man who ever lived. Without him, seat belts would not be standard equipment in automobiles. Ryan chronicles Stapp's campaign to make that happen, fighting the American auto industry at every turn.

Ryan tells the story in an easy matter-of-fact voice and a flair that keeps pages turning effortlessly. His research is impeccable and thoroughly documented. "Sonic Wind: The Story of John Paul Stapp and How a Renegade Doctor Became the Fastest Man on Earth," is a must-read for aviation history buffs and anyone who is interested in how we arrived in 2015 with safer air and ground travel. It is a quintessential American story. With this book, Craig Ryan has cemented his stature as the preeminent Aviation History writer of his generation.

Susan Csoke says

Charles Franklin Stapp was twenty eight years old in January of 1910 when he left his hometown of Burnet in the Texas Hill Country. His wife Mary Louise was pregnant with their first child. They were both Missionary Baptists. It took them two weeks to travel. First by train to New York to board a ship to South America, where they would begin their lives anew. Where Captain Stapp would become a renegade doctor...THANK YOU GOODREADS FIRSTREADS FOR THIS FREE BOOK!!!

Zach says

John Stapp's research is fascinating - he strapped himself to a rocket sled that slammed to a stop to test whether humans can survive extreme g-forces - but he was a military man in mid-century America. As a result, the book is a mix of unbelievable self-experimentation and an unremarkable personal life. It's written well enough, but it feels stuck between plumbing the depths of his research and trying to make a compelling story out of a man who was by all means compelling, but very much defined by his devotion to work.
