



## **Jimmy Stewart: The Truth Behind the Legend**

*Michael Munn*

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Many of the stars of the silver screen in twentieth-century Hollywood became national icons, larger-than-life figures held up as paragons of American virtues. Unfortunately, the private lives of actors such as John Wayne, Henry Fonda, and Errol Flynn rarely lived up to the idealistic roles they portrayed. However, James Stewart was known as the underdog fighter in many of his films and in real life. He was highly decorated for his bravery during his time as a bomber pilot during World War II and was adored for his earnest and kindly persona.

Here many unknown sides of Stewart are revealed: his explosive temper, his complex love affairs, his service as a secret agent for the FBI, his innate shyness, and his passionate patriotism. Munn's personal touch shines through his writing, as he was a friend of Stewart and his wife, Gloria, and interviewed them as well as their colleagues and friends. This definitive biography reveals the childhood ups and downs that formed this cinema hero, explores the legendary Fonda-Stewart relationship, and recounts Stewart's experiences making acclaimed films that include *The Philadelphia Story*, *Rear Window*, *Anatomy of a Murder*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*.

## **Jimmy Stewart: The Truth Behind the Legend Details**

Date : Published September 1st 2013 by Skyhorse Publishing (first published January 1st 2005)

ISBN :

Author : Michael Munn

Format : Kindle Edition 352 pages

Genre : Biography, Nonfiction, History, Culture, Film

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# **From Reader Review Jimmy Stewart: The Truth Behind the Legend for online ebook**

## **Lee says**

Partly based on several meetings between the author - a journalist - and Jimmy and his wife Gloria, this is a fascinating story of the actor, raconteur, model aircraft maker and bomber pilot.

The highs and lows of the actors professional and personal life are told, including the years when he was an FBI informant - he thought on the mafia, but in reality on communists in Hollywood. This lead to a falling out with Henry Fonda, a close personal friend from early in both their acting careers. Reconciled in the 1950s, they never spoke about their differing political viewpoints again.

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## **Suzanne C says**

The material was interesting and I enjoyed 'getting to know' a favorite actor. But while I liked having the author's viewpoint as a personal friend of Mr. Stewart's, the writing was somewhat ponderous and over-detailed. All things considered, the book is worth a read to fans who have time to spare, but is absolutely not the definitive biography of James Stewart. If you are on a schedule, look elsewhere.

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## **Yasmin says**

While I like Jimmy Stewart as an actor fortunately for me I had no illusions about him as a man outside of the acting world. He was a descendent guy, but he had a lot of flaws too. It's worth a read for those readers who like Jimmy Stewart as an actor and know the difference between the actor and the man in private.

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## **Steve Schrader says**

Good biography on Stewart. The author had a chance to talk to him, his wife Gloria and his friends and co-workers. I've always liked him as an actor and person and almost everyone does but he doesn't shy away from his faults. Good history on his background and how he really got in to acting through playing the accordion. All movies are discussed and what he liked or didn't like for each movie.

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## **Andi Reed says**

I really enjoyed this book. I love Jimmy Stewart and I loved getting to know more about him. There were things about him that I didn't know, but my impression of him was right. I admire the fact that he had passionate beliefs and remained true to those throughout his life. I am glad to learn that he was flawed, that

we would not have agreed about certain things, and that his character was such that I can still see him as a role model of how to live and love and stand up for what you believe in. The two movies I know of his, and the movies I consider inspiring and full of hope, are It's a Wonderful Life and Mr. Smith Goes To Washington. I'm really looking forward to seeing some of his other films!

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### **Becky says**

One of the pleasures of reading a biography is that someone else has fleshed out the story through their research. In this book, however, the research is spelled out for you, quote by quote by quote. So there is redundancy reading about an event multiple times through different eyes. I would just rather have the author do the research and tell what he believes happened with an occasional note to explain other possibilities. I couldn't get more than 25% through the book as reading page-long quotes over and over again was just too tedious for me.

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### **Lori says**

This was a well done book for a biography. I have always been a fan of Jimmy Stewart. My favorite movie is "It's a Wonderful Life" Michael Munn keeps this biography of the star nice. There is not mud slinging or trying to dig up dirt. I get the feeling there would be not dirt on Mr. Stewart anyway. like most biographies, it takes the book from James Stewart's birth in Indiana Pennsylvania and his growing up. College. I liked reading about all the movies he was in some more described than others. There is some talk about his famous friends especially Henry Fonda. the Truth behind the legend kind of leads one to believe there is some real "dirt" but not really. Things are revealed that Jimmy Stewart was a ladies man until he married Gloria and raised his step sons, and twin daughters. he had his share of tragedy. no huge surprises though and that was fine with me. I like a lot of Jimmy Stewart's movies, like Harvey, Rear Window. so it was nice to read a biography dedicated to him.

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### **Beth says**

This was an enjoyable read about the life of Jimmy Stewart, not a perfect man by any means, but a great actor and seemingly a genuinely nice man who did engage in some questionable behaviour because of his political beliefs and apparently some glaring naivety.

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### **Rick Colburn says**

#### **Wonderfully written**

I have read a lot of biographies and autobiographies but this is one of the best not just because it is Jimmy Stewarts but because of the man and person that he was GOD BLESS AND BE WITH YOU Mr Stewart

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## **Doug says**

### **An American Legend in a Man**

I loved Jimmy Stewart. I always had him on a pedestal and now more so. His flaws make him evermore real and tangible. His early womanizing, bouts with booze, time in the Service and his devotion to country and camaraderie. He is humble and yet larger than life and his esprit de corps is universal. Thank you Jim for the memories.

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## **Tom says**

There are few—if any—actors in the annals of American film like Jimmy Stewart. In films like “It’s a Wonderful Life,” “Mr. Smith Goes to Washington,” “Harvey,”—even his darker films, like Hitchcock’s “Vertigo” and “Rear Window,”—audiences felt like they knew the man, like he stood for something good.

And James Stewart was a legitimate American hero. In addition to bringing so much entertainment to us over the years, he fought valiantly in World War 2. He didn’t wait to get drafted, then go on a cushy, safe, morale-boosting tour. Stewart volunteered even before the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. He knew the United States would soon be entering the war, and he intended to serve his country, just as men in his family always had.

He enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Force as a Private. By the end of the European war, he’d earned his way up to Colonel, flying dozens of bombing missions over Germany. He was decorated for his valor, and ultimately promoted to Brigadier General as a Reserve Officer.

Stewart was definitely a ladies man when he was young, but once he got back from the war, parties and serial dating lost its appeal for him. He found and married Gloria, and the couple would remain faithful and loving till she passed away at 75. Stewart died soon after.

Michael Mann’s excellent biography, “Jimmy Stewart: The Truth Behind the Legend,” doesn’t dwell much on the sad end of Stewart’s life, but the whole great, magnificent ride of this true American hero.

We follow Jim from his idyllic childhood in Indiana, Pennsylvania, through Princeton, and how he stumbled into a stage career—he’d been planning to be an architect. In his New York and Hollywood years, he was best friends with Henry Fonda. They were roommates on a few occasions, and after the war, Stewart lived in a small play house Fonda had built for his children. Stewart played Santa Claus one year, and nearly fell off the roof.

Mann also takes us behind the scenes of some classic James Stewart films...and a few absolute bombs.

What makes this biography such a wonderful tool to understanding James Stewart—the man and the actor—is that Mann has interviewed hundreds of film stars and directors during his career, and he actually became friends with Jimmy and Gloria Stewart (especially Gloria). It’s one thing to read that Stewart is a generous, kind person. However, it elicits a stronger reaction when you’re hearing it from Fonda, Burgess

Meredith, George C. Scott, or any number of Stewart's other friends and co-stars, in their words, with their anecdotes.

To be honest, I was reticent to read "Jimmy Stewart: The Truth Behind the Legend." I'm always a little leery starting a biography of somebody I really like. I'm afraid they'll turn out to have been heroin addicts who were mean as hell and absolute terrors when the camera was off.

Michael Mann's biography reinforced my view of James Stewart as being a genuinely decent human being.

My favorite image from "Jimmy Stewart" is of Stewart and Henry Fonda. Early in their friendship, they realized that they were complete opposites, politically. Thus, they forged a pact not to discuss politics. What they did was build model airplanes. For hours, they'd sit quietly, not talking, other than for one to ask the other for a specific model part or more glue.

That's the kind of man James Stewart really was. When he was a young star, he dated around and attended his fair share of Hollywood parties. But there was always some part of him that was happiest just sitting by himself, daydreaming, thinking, keeping his own counsel. "That's just the way he was." It seems like every friend or costar he ever had used some variation of that quote.

Michael Mann has written a wonderfully readable, informative, and entertaining biography. Drawing on his various interviews with other stars shows just how beloved James Stewart truly was among his peers.

By the end of "Jimmy Stewart: The Truth Behind the Legend," I was relieved. Michael Mann, through his research and interviews, confirmed my beliefs about James Stewart. He was a good and kind man, a true American hero who left us with some timeless film classics, and he was the rare nice guy in a business filled with egomaniacs.

Oh, yeah. He was also one hell of an actor.

Most Highly Recommended

(nb: I received an advance review copy of this book from the publisher via Edelweiss)

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### **Corinne Driscoll says**

Really disappointing. You've got to suspect the veracity of an author who refers to Stewart's Harvey character as "Edward P. Dowd" once, and then as "Howard P. Dowd" the next time. ( It's Elwood). The author spends most of his time inserting lengthy "quotes" from people, most of whom are dead and can't protest. A real waste.

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### **Avis Gill says**

What an interesting book about Jimmy Stewart!! From the beginning of his life to the end, you'll read things that you never knew about him. His friendships, fallings out, renewing some friendships, the women he knew & dated, his time served in WWII and beyond. There were many

sides to Jimmy Stewart. His explosive temper, his complex love affairs, his longstanding marriage and his passionate patriotism.

This book is a must read for anyone. Those who remember him and that that don't or didn't.

I recommend this book highly!

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### **Anne E. Floyd says**

#### **Wonderful!**

I did not intentionally mean to play on the word "wonderful" but it aptly describes how great the book is. It feels like all the people in it are alive once again ( I really wish I could have met his wife because of her jest for life!) The author does a great job of showing Jimmy Stewart's foibles and humanity without apology or excuses. He leaves the reader to decide how they're going to like the man or not.

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### **Lesley says**

I loved this book! There were many times when I couldn't put it down. Jimmy Stewart was a wonderfully, complex, caring, thoughtful and warm human being and I could go on and on with the descriptives. This book had me laughing and crying. Michael Munn tells it how it is, without sounding like he is merely rubbing shoulders with the rich and famous. Highly recommended.

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