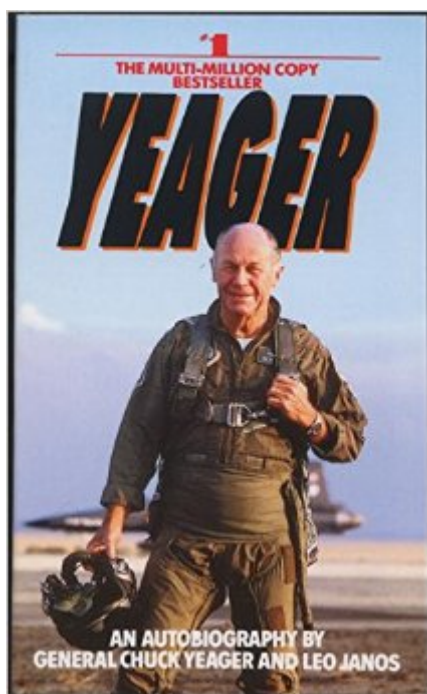


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Yeager: An Autobiography



Synopsis

General Chuck Yeager, the greatest test pilot of them all -- the first man to fly faster than the speed of sound . . . the World War II flying ace who shot down a Messerschmitt jet with a prop-driven P-51 Mustang . . . the hero who defined a certain quality that all hotshot fly-boys of the postwar era aimed to achieve: the right stuff. Now Chuck Yeager tells his whole incredible life story with the same "wide-open, full throttle" approach that has marked his astonishing career.Â Â What it was really like enaging in do-or-die dogfights over Nazi Europe.Â Â How after being shot over occupied France, Yeager somehow managed to escape.Â Â The amazing behind-the-scenes story of smashing the sound barrier despite cracked ribs from a riding accident days before. The entire story is here, in Yeager's own words, and in wonderful insights from his wife and those friends and colleagues who have known him best.Â Â It is the personal and public story of a man who settled for nothing less than excellence, a one-of-a-kind portrait of a true American hero.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If I could jump inside one person's head Being-John-Malkovich style and experience their entire life, beginning-to-end, without regard to anything but the sheer roller coaster thrill of it, I'd probably pick Chuck Yeager. (Granted, the guy's not dead yet. But unless he meets a truly horrendous end--eaten alive, say, by Bengal Tigers, while slow-roasting over a barbecue pit--I'd consider myself a truly lucky man to see everything he's seen and do everything he's done.) Ripping through the sound barrier in a bullet-shaped orange rocket plane, battling Messerschmitts in the cold European skies,

testing exotic aircraft of all shapes and sizes in the bleak Mojave desert, hunting and fishing and hiking the high Sierras, hooting and hollering with friends on crazy drunken misadventures--it all sounds too fun to be legal, and except for the hooting and hollering part, I haven't done any of it. What's more, he lived the kind of life that people don't seem to believe in anymore, the life of the self-made man who rises from nothing, who picks himself up by his own bootstraps and succeeds through good ol' Yankee Doodle initiative, ability and gumption. One of the nice things about this book, though, is that he doesn't rub it in. He's the first one to acknowledge how lucky he's been to live the life he's lived and live to tell about it. An upside-down-bolt on an airplane aileron, parachute shroud lines that almost burnt through after an ejection gone awry--any of these things could have ended this remarkable life long before old age, and he knows it. Beyond the good luck, though, he knew enough not to press his luck.

Supposedly, Chuck Yeager has amassed a bad rap, but from his autobiography, it's hard to see why. The retired USAF General, who went from shooting down German jets in WWII to flying faster than sound before anybody else thought it possible, tells it like it is. While that won't engender warm feelings, Yeager was obviously a man even his rivals could trust. The General writes of his humble Virginian origins. Enlisting in the Army as a mechanic, Yeager moved to the pilot's seat through a program intended to put more non-com's into flight-duty. Yeager displays a true pilot's nostalgia of the days when he writes lovingly of the obsolete P-39's he flew from Oroville (half the P-39's built went to the Red AF under lend/lease). Getting to England by 1943, Yeager upgraded to the legendary P-51...only to get shot down by a German FW-190. Smuggled into neutral Spain and then repatriated, Yeager returned to his unit and then began shooting down German planes, including the Me-262, the first operational jet fighter. Describing the crude though effective jet, Yeager shows how his mechanic's training and senses made the crucial difference: the early jets, built for high-speed, were vulnerable when approaching their runways for landing. Because existing jet engines responded slowly and unpredictably - with one engine spooling up much faster than the other - Luftwaffe pilots who tried to speed away from threats at low speeds often got sucked into mysterious and uncontrollable rolls. It was thus in that vulnerable state that Yeager hunted the vaunted jets. After the war, and on the strength of his having been shot down, Yeager became a test pilot at the famed high-desert testing ground of Edwards AFB.

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