Stapp, John Encyclopedia Article

Stapp, John

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American Physician and Researcher 1910-

Colonel John Paul Stapp was a pioneering physician and researcher of the effects of high **G forces**. From the late 1940s through the early 1960s, he oversaw basic research on the subject of human tolerance to mechanical forces. During this period Stapp worked with human and animal subjects to determine their physical limits, and he played an important part in the high-altitude balloon flights of the ManHigh project, which explored the environment at the edge of space and investigated cosmic rays and their effects on humans.

Stapp is probably best known, however, for his rocket sled rides, during which he was accelerated to 1,017 kilometers per hour (632 miles per hour) and then decelerated to a dead stop in 1.4 seconds. As a result of Stapp's findings, the strength requirement for fighter jet seats was increased because his work showed that a pilot could walk away from crashes when properly protected by harnesses and if his seat does not break loose. Stapp also participated in windblast experiments, flying in jet aircraft at high speeds to determine whether or not it was safe for a pilot to remain with his airplane if the canopy should accidentally blow off. In addition to his pioneering work in aerospace medicine, Stapp coined the phrase "Murphy's Law," which he defined as, "If something can go wrong, it will." After retiring from active service, Stapp served as chairman of the International Space Hall of Fame Commission in New Mexico.

Station Keeping **See Docking (Volume 3); Navigation (Volume 3); Rendezvous (Volume 3).**

See Also

G Forces (Volume 3).

Bibliography

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Internet Resources

Air Force Museum, Wright Patterson Air Force Base. <http://www.oneimage.com/&;bsim;wardhl/325.htm>.