



The Birth of the Pill: How Four Crusaders Reinvented Sex and Launched a Revolution

By Jonathan Eig

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A *Chicago Tribune* "Best Books of 2014" • A *Slate* "Best Books 2014: Staff Picks" • A *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* "Best Books of 2014"

The fascinating story of one of the most important scientific discoveries of the twentieth century.

We know it simply as "the pill," yet its genesis was anything but simple. Jonathan Eig's masterful narrative revolves around four principal characters: the fiery feminist Margaret Sanger, who was a champion of birth control in her campaign for the rights of women but neglected her own children in pursuit of free love; the beautiful Katharine McCormick, who owed her fortune to her wealthy husband, the son of the founder of International Harvester and a schizophrenic; the visionary scientist Gregory Pincus, who was dismissed by Harvard in the 1930s as a result of his experimentation with *in vitro* fertilization but who, after he was approached by Sanger and McCormick, grew obsessed with the idea of inventing a drug that could stop ovulation; and the telegenic John Rock, a Catholic doctor from Boston who battled his own church to become an enormously effective advocate in the effort to win public approval for the drug that would be marketed by Searle as Enovid.

Spanning the years from Sanger's heady Greenwich Village days in the early twentieth century to trial tests in Puerto Rico in the 1950s to the cusp of the sexual revolution in the 1960s, this is a grand story of radical feminist politics, scientific ingenuity, establishment opposition, and, ultimately, a sea change in social attitudes. Brilliantly researched and briskly written, *The Birth of the Pill* is gripping social, cultural, and scientific history.

8 pages of illustrations

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- Sales Rank: #110540 in Books
- Published on: 2015-10-19
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.30" h x 1.10" w x 5.60" l, .70 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 416 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

“Eig’s nimbly paced cultural history shows that the pill’s genesis was anything but simple.” (New York Times (Editor’s Choice))

“[Eig] brings a lively, jocular approach to the story, casting an unlikely four-part ensemble comedy starring Sanger; the iconoclastic lead scientist, Gregory Goodwin Pincus; the Roman Catholic physician John Rock; and the supplier of cash behind it all, Katharine McCormick.” (Irin Carmon - New York Times Book Review)

“Suspense-filled and beautifully written...an irresistible tale.” (Ken Burns)

“A tale of scientific progress and social change as engaging and gripping as any suspense novel.” (Molly Langmuir - Elle)

“Fascinating... Weaving medical, corporate, and political history with rich biographical detail, Eig turns the history of the pill into a scientific suspense story full of profoundly human characters. The result is cultural history at its finest.” (Alan W. Petrucelli - Examiner.com)

“Jonathan Eig turns the history of the pill into a smart and spicy account of the unlikely bonds that linked a millionaire activist, a free-loving crusader, a Roman Catholic gynecologist, and a maverick scientist. *The Birth of the Pill* is at once intelligent, well researched, witty, and captivating... [A] unique prism into the changing morals about sex, women, and marriage in 20th century America.” (Randi Hutter Epstein, author of *Get Me Out: A History of Childbirth from the Garden of Eden to the Sperm Bank*)

“A fascinating look into the evolution of medical practices, funding and ethics [and] an intricate portrait of how completely women’s reproductive lives are woven into our culture in disturbing and contradictory ways.” (Ashley Nelson - San Francisco Chronicle)

“Masterful... when legislatures and courts threaten to negate the miracles of science and human progress so dazzlingly portrayed here, Eig’s book is essential reading.” (Kate Manning - Washington Post)

“Dynamic, highly engrossing... As hard as it is to put down *The Birth of the Pill*’s story of four privileged individuals’ thrilling quest for better living through science, it’s imperative to remember the scores of women lost to history whose flesh and blood helped make it a reality.” (Anna Holmes - Los Angeles Times)

“The pill is utterly ordinary today. The story of how we got here is anything but.” (Hannah Levintova - Mother Jones)

“Eig’s research is thorough and his account exhaustive.” (Emily Witt - Bookforum)

“Narrative nonfiction at its best... A fascinating and thorough look at one of the most important innovations of the 20th century.” (Bookriot)

“Eig’s stylish storytelling makes this a fresh, infectiously readable take.” (Kate Tuttle - Boston Globe)

“Who knew that the history of oral contraceptives could rival a good procedural drama, with a scrappy group of believers racing against time?” (Meredith Counts - Bust)

“Absorbing... One of the book’s great strengths?accomplished through his smart choice of lead characters?is the depiction of how arduous it is to make real social change.” (Margaret Talbot - New Yorker)

“Aside from being a fascinating look into the evolution of medical practices, funding and ethics, Eig’s book is an intricate portrait of how completely women’s lives are weaved into our culture in disturbing and contradictory ways.” (San Francisco Chronicle)

“An impassioned cultural history.” (Laura Pearson - Chicago Tribune)

“Detailed, compelling history... Eig does a remarkable job of keeping the science and the storytelling in harmony.” (Josh Modell - The Onion A.V. Club)

About the Author

Jonathan Eig, a former reporter at the Wall Street Journal, is the best-selling author of *The Birth of the Pill*, *Luckiest Man*, *Opening Day*, and *Get Capone*. He lives in Chicago with his wife and children.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Charlie Bowers:

Playing with family in the park, coming to see the marine world or hanging out with pals is thing that usually you could have done when you have spare time, in that case why you don't try issue that really opposite from that. Just one activity that make you not experience tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you have been ride on and with addition info. Even you love *The Birth of the Pill: How Four Crusaders Reinvented Sex and Launched a Revolution*, you can enjoy both. It is good combination right, you still wish to miss it? What kind of hang-out type is it? Oh can happen its mind hangout fellas. What? Still don't get it, oh come on its called reading friends.

Joseph Bolden:

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Joshua Atkins:

Is it you actually who having spare time and then spend it whole day by simply watching television programs or just laying on the bed? Do you need something new? This *The Birth of the Pill: How Four Crusaders Reinvented Sex and Launched a Revolution* can be the respond to, oh how comes? The new book you know. You are consequently out of date, spending your extra time by reading in this brand-new era is common not a nerd activity. So what these textbooks have than the others?

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