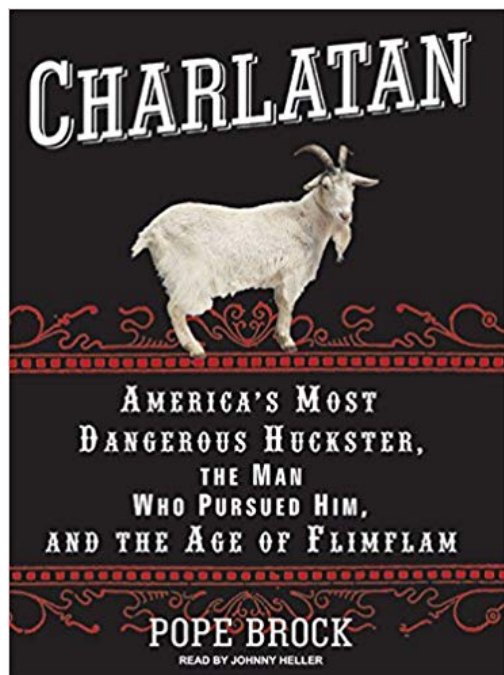


Charlatan: America's Most Dangerous Huckster, the Man Who Pursued Him, and the Age of Flimflam *by* Johnny Heller,Pope Brock



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Author: Johnny Heller,Pope Brock

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The rise and fall of the greatest medical con man of all time. This is the enormously entertaining story of how a fraudulent surgeon made a fortune by inserting goats' testes into impotent American men. "Doctor" John Brinkley became a world renowned authority on sexual rejuvenation in the 1920s, with famous politicians and even royalty asking for his services. His nemesis was Dr. Morris Fishbein, editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association, but it took him fifteen years to destroy Brinkley in a dramatic courtroom showdown. In the meantime, despite mounting evidence that his quack treatments killed many patients, Brinkley became a millionaire, and his pioneering use of radio not only kick-started country music as a national force in America but also invented the whole concept of radio advertising. He became the first politician to campaign over the airwaves when he ran for governor of Kansas.



Reviews of the **Charlatan: America's Most Dangerous Huckster, the Man Who Pursued Him, and the Age of Flimflam** by Johnny Heller, Pope Brock

Alsath

This a great book - an interesting and well written account of the doings of a major rascal who profited enormously selling totally bogus medical procedures in the early parts of the 20th century. He made millions, back when 'millions' really amounted to something. The bogus doctor, John R. Brinkley, could sell ice at the North Pole, or sand in the desert. And he did it not just once or twice; he huckstered everyone for decades (including the US and Mexican govt) with absolutely no conscience whatever. He harnessed the power of radio advertising at its' beginning, a time when most ordinary folk did not even realize that such a thing as 'advertising' existed.

At one point, Brinkley controlled the largest and most powerful radio network in the entire world. You think you know about shysters and crooks? HA! I knew some of the background of other medical schemes, but reading this was a total revelation.

Strongly and happily recommended

So, yeah - the book is interesting and the five stars are well earned.

JoJosh

I wasn't quite sure what I was expecting when I bought *Charlatan: America's Most Dangerous Huckster, the Man Who Pursued Him, and the Age of Flimflam*, but the topic caught my attention. I have to say that I loved it. It was a narrative type of non-fiction that I like to read and Pope Brock can tell an intriguing story.

Of course, he also found a great subject to write about, which is half of the battle.

In the early 20th century, confidence man John Brinkley came up with his ultimate money-making scheme. He would use surgery and goat testicles to restore male virility. It makes most men cringe nowadays, but think about some of the odd things we still do to maintain our youth that involved surgery.

Brinkley also developed a sideline of selling potions and pills that turned out not to contain what they claimed to contain. This sort of thing was going on before Brinkley with snake oil salesmen and still continues today.

I found myself reading the book and thinking how could people fall for this, but then I thought about the modern equivalents and wondered how many times I've been taken in without knowing it.

Brinkley made a fortune off his quack theories and inspired a lot of copycat "doctors." He also left behind dozens of dead and maimed people, all the while claiming success.

So, if Brinkley was the antagonist, the protagonist would be Morris Fishbein, the editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. I'm not sure about other readers, but I just didn't like Fishbein. I actually found myself hoping that he would fail in his efforts to destroy Brinkley. On the other hand, I found myself cheering for Brinkley at times because he wouldn't be stopped. He kept reinventing himself to work around the restrictions that were thrown at him. I admired that even though I hated what he was doing.

I've seen a few movies and read some books lately where I didn't like either the protagonist or antagonist. Who do you root for then? Besides his gross medical malpractice, Brinkley also had an impact on politics, radio, and country music.

One reason why Brinkley was successful with his scams was because he was a master marketer. His initial marketing efforts dealt with newspaper advertising and direct mail. He recognized the marketing potential of the new media of the day, radio, and made the most of it.

When the government started to crack down on how the airwaves were used, Brinkley moved south of the border and opened a radio station in Mexico that eventually broadcast more than a million watts. Not only was this more powerful than his Oklahoma radio station had been, it was more powerful than all of the U.S. radio stations combined.

Besides pitches for his products and surgeries, Brinkley also presented entertainment. Many of the performers he chose went on to become pioneers in country music.

When Fishbein started to have an impact on Brinkley's goat gland empire, he used his radio popularity to move into politics and very nearly became elected governor of Oklahoma as a third-party candidate.

I found *Charlatan* to be a fascinating story. I kept guessing at what Brinkley would do next to outwit Fishbein and his other detractors.

Landamath

We never learn, do we? While I was reading this book, I kept thinking about all the health hucksters that exist today. I will avoid naming names, but I think Dr. Brinkley would really enjoy television, and the current internet access. He would have continued on his merry path of medical malpractice...just as many others continue to do today. This book didn't surprise me much. I was not aware of this particular quack, but I've read of many of these guys...I was actually reading more for the information about Morris Fishbein. I was a little disappointed that more information about Fishbein and the American Medical Association at that point of time wasn't given.

I wish people would educate themselves more about various 'medications' and proposed surgeries. I always do research on everything ahead of times...and it is never a good idea to be the first few people to try medicines or surgeries if you can avoid it. I teach pathophysiology in college, and I've learned that people are too gullible as far as doctors are concerned. They are not Gods, even if they have an MD. As a PhD who went through classes with the MDs, too many of them didn't understand the need for research, and their behavior with patients wasn't what I would have liked it!

Brinkley may have lost everything at the end, but he made a good life for himself and his family off of the money of others. I'm afraid I agree with Fishbein, Dr. Brinkley had absolutely no qualms about either his goat gland operations or killing people...not a shred of remorse or concern for others.

Book was very readable, and definitely a good addition to the history of medicine!

Bodwyn

This book I read on the recommendation of another book about Dr. Brinkley "Making Them Believe: How One of America's Legendary Rogues Marketed "The Goat Testicles Solution" and Made Millions".

Read just the intro to the other book and decided "Charlatan" should be read first. Really glad I did. Dr. Brinkley's actions seem unbelievable today, even as I wonder what medical treatments of today will be tomorrow's goat gland operation.

The best of the book is Brinkley's masterful use of all current "media" and new methods which he pioneered and perfected.

The author has a clear bias or better said, respect for his own theme, which colors the writing in a useful way. The reader can hold his own judgment even as Brock inserts his own feelings and aversion for quacks.

It is a must read for anyone in sales facing the temptation to tell folks what they want, rather than what's good for them or in this case the truth. The book is filled with interesting facts and real events. Like being led along a train wreck where the best or worst is still yet to come.

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