

Foreword

On Monday afternoon, 17 September 1962, Tom Stafford, a captain in the U.S. Air Force, was celebrating his 32nd birthday in unusual circumstances. He was sitting on stage in an auditorium at the University of Houston, Texas, being introduced as one of a group of nine new astronauts selected by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

Alongside him were three other Air Force test pilots, Major Frank Borman and Captains Jim McDivitt and Ed White, as well as three naval aviators, Lieutenant Commander Jim Lovell and Lieutenants Pete Conrad and John Young. There were also two civilian test pilots, Neil Armstrong from NASA and Elliot See from General Electric.

Stafford knew some of these men; Borman, McDivitt and White had been his students at the Air Force Test Pilot School within the past two years. He had met Conrad and Armstrong, too, prior to arriving in Houston the day before.

But personal relationships were not on his mind that day. What Stafford thought as he looked to his left and right was: “One of us is going to be the first man to walk on the Moon.”

It was an insight that no human could have had prior to that September day – or since.

That group of nine men, all test pilots between the ages of 31 and 36, had been deliberately selected by NASA to serve as the primary pilots for the Apollo program.

They hadn’t been selected just for their flying skills, though that was an important factor. They were selected for their intelligence, for their ability to serve as project engineers for the command module and lunar module of the Apollo spacecraft that would hopefully take them to the Moon before the decade was out, and then return them safely to Earth.

NASA already had seven astronauts in the Mercury program. But those men were approaching the end of their original tours of duty; the space agency expected some or even most of them to return to their military careers ... certainly it did not plan for them to remain in the program for another seven years.

It was this new group – the Nine – that was tasked with developing and flying Apollo.

Within a year, the Nine would be joined by the Fourteen, a mixed group of test pilots, operational pilots and research pilots whose role would be to support the Nine in development work and serve as additional crew members.

However, it was this Nine – Armstrong, Borman, Conrad, Lovell, McDivitt, See, Stafford, White and Young – who would be the superstars of the Race to the Moon, experiencing both its high points (spacewalks, rendezvous, lunar orbit, lunar landing) and its low points (accidental death).

Colin Burgess' *Moon Bound* explores their story, and those of the Fourteen, in a new and exciting fashion. He also gives us a new perspective on the Nine and the Fourteen by presenting the stories of the men who, for one reason or another, did not make the cut – the men who were, in Tom Wolfe's cruel-but-accurate phrase, "left behind". Some of these pilots went on to highly successful careers in the military, becoming generals and admirals. Others died in combat or aircraft-related accidents. Some simply continued their careers and eventually made the transition to a well-earned retirement ... and likely wondered, "What if ...?"

Chapter Six, 'The Boy From Barren Run', tells the fascinating and tragic tale of naval aviator John Yamnicky. His story alone is worth whatever you paid for this book.

The strength of *Moon Bound* is no surprise to readers of the history of human space flight, because Colin has established himself as one of our best writers on the subject. In addition to the valuable overviews of Mercury, Vostok, Gemini, Soyuz and Apollo (*Into That Silent Sea* and *In the Shadow of the Moon*, both co-authored with Francis French), he has written about Australia's astronauts, NASA's scientist-astronauts, Russia's cosmonauts, Teacher-in-Space Christa McAuliffe, and – in my personal favorite, *Fallen Astronauts* – those men who were selected but didn't live to see the lunar landing.

I must also mention his *Selecting the Mercury Seven: The Search for America's First Astronauts*, which is a vital precursor to *Moon Bound*.

His other work, notably on the triumphs and tragedies of the Australian military in World War II, and his professional knowledge of the world of aviation, give him a unique perspective on the lives and careers of these men.

Colin has also been dogged and energetic in pursuing new information, not just on the non-selected men, few of whom have ever been profiled, but also on the selection process, medical tests and training of the Nine and the Fourteen, and those who came after them.

Open the pages. Prepare for launch. Take the *Moon Bound* voyage.

Michael Cassutt
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Moon Bound

Choosing and Preparing NASA's Lunar Astronauts

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