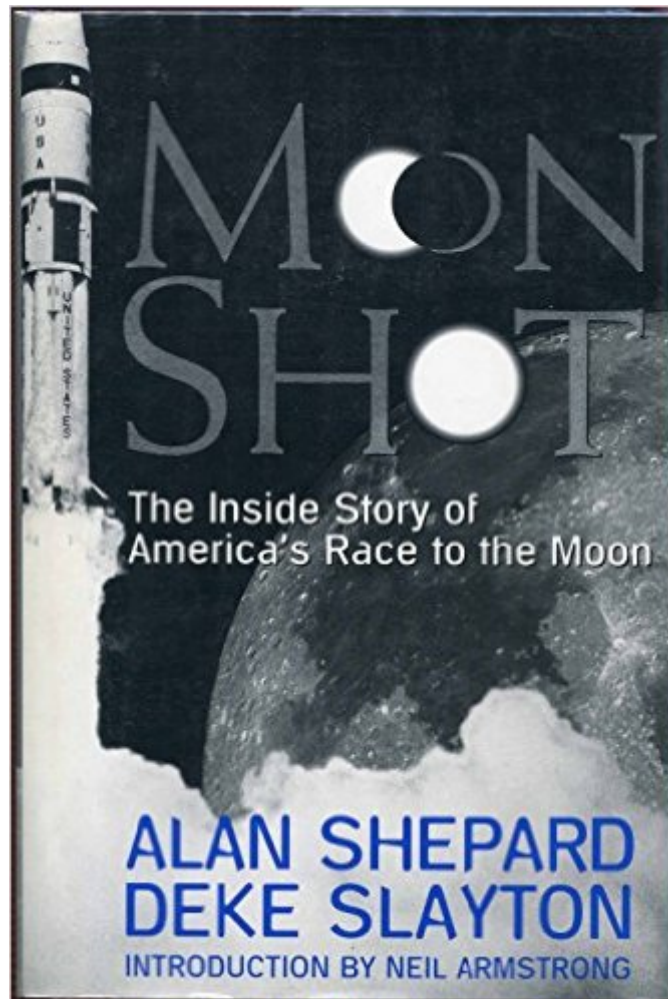


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Moon Shot: The Inside Story Of America's Race To The Moon



Synopsis

Marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first moon landing, two former astronauts tell of the intense human drama behind the lunar race between two superpowers, and of the sacrifices and risks asked of the American crew.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

First, so you know, I'm a lifelong fan of the space program. I was five years old when Apollo 11 landed, and, like many of that age, caught a feverish interest in space travel and the people who actually did what I dreamed of doing. I'm not saying that to claim a special expertise on the topic, but to confess that I'm far from impartial when reviewing a book like this. The fact is, I'd probably find Frank Borman's grocery list or John Young's dog's veterinary records intensely fascinating. More's the pity, since I can't say the same for Moon Shot. Other reviewers have noted that the authors seem to have been unable to make up their minds whether they were writing a history of the space program, or a joint autobiography. Because of this, it fails at both. The coverage of the space program is haphazard, focusing on the authors' accomplishments while ignoring many other significant people and events. As a biography, Moon Shot leaves much to be desired, giving little information on Shepard's or Slayton's backgrounds, reasons for becoming astronauts, etc. If you're looking for an astronaut autobiography and a detailed account of part of Project Apollo, Jim Lovell's book, Lost Moon, does a much better job of putting both in one package. Moon Shot does not go in depth into what it does cover. Instead, the major parts of each event are duly recited, and the

narrative goes no further. Worse, the book breaks no new ground, either. When I bought *Moon Shot*, I expected that, since I would be reading recollections of people who directly participated in Project Apollo, I would be treated to unusual viewpoints and to information not readily available elsewhere. But, at no time while reading the book was I surprised.

My father was an aeronautical engineer who had me take him to his last air show three weeks before he died. I was in first grade when Alan Shepard made his first flight into space, so I grew up with the space program. As an adult, I've had a number of close friends who worked for NASA or NASA contractors. I'm a huge fan of the space program. And I found this book a big disappointment. For one thing, the writing style was too overblown; it sounded like a press release, and not even from NASA. ("Poets in spacesuits" indeed). There were lots of little copyediting problems: run-on sentences, bad punctuation, use of the wrong word or the wrong form of a word. As others have pointed out, Barbree recreates thoughts, conversations and reactions that he couldn't know first-hand and that are inappropriate in a work of nonfiction. He spends far too much time on mechanics and far too little time on perspective. He goes over the countdown and launch sequence in detail several times; anyone who didn't already know about the water blanket that cools the pad as a rocket's engines start up will have several chances to read about it in this book. On the other hand, he gives short shrift to the astonishing technological developments that either came from or were accelerated by the space race and help shape our world today. He mentions virtually nothing learned from lunar exploration except some arcane geology. The most disturbing problem with this book is its lack of direction. It purports to be a history of the moon race from the perspective of Alan Shepard and Deke Slayton, but the voice is strictly Barbree's. We never hear directly from Shepard or Slayton. Some space missions are covered in detail; some are glossed over.

Deke Slayton and Al Shepard's book is a fine, well-written overview of the American space program. It unfortunately misses in several ways. First, the book can't decide if it's an autobiography or not. It's "the inside story," but it concentrates on Shepard's two flights and Slayton's overrated Apollo-Soyuz mission. The plot is skewed towards the authors, which doesn't make sense considering it's written in the third person. I found this third-person narrative approach irritating. I almost felt as if the ghostwriters chose to describe the events in this manner so they could feed the astronauts' egos further. Apollo books often come face-to-face with the astronauts' infamous cockiness, but this book makes no attempt to hide it. Shepard described himself as a "leading test pilot, astronaut, explorer, adventurer, master of wings and rocket fire, and hero to millions." All this may be true but you're not

supposed to say it about yourself. It also needs more character development. It doesn't go beyond saying that Slayton and Shepard were friends. I got tired of being told outright of the friendship. I wanted to be told about it, not of it. I felt like I wanted to know the authors better, especially since they were the focus. On top of that, several crucial people such as Ed Mitchell (Shepard's lunar module pilot) are just names here- they are not given any substance. It also concocts stupid commentary for narrative purposes. For example, to get across a point the book may recount a "conversation" between Slayton and Shepard that is so corny as to be all but useless. This is a subtle, but unfortunate problem with this book. The final downfall of this book is its unwillingness to discuss the other Apollo missions.

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