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# Countdown To A Moon Launch: Preparing Apollo For Its Historic Journey (Springer Praxis Books)



## Synopsis

Thousands of workers labored at Kennedy Space Center around the clock, seven days a week, for half a year to prepare for the liftoff of Apollo 11. This is the story of what went on during those hectic six months. *Countdown to a Moon Launch* provides an in-depth look at the carefully choreographed workflow for an Apollo mission at KSC. Using the Apollo 11 mission as an example, readers will learn what went on day by day to transform partially completed stages and crates of parts into a ready-to-fly Saturn V. Firsthand accounts of launch pad accidents, near misses, suspected sabotage, and last-minute changes to hardware are told by more than 70 NASA employees and its contractors. A companion to *Rocket Ranch*, it includes many diagrams and photographs, some never before published, to illustrate all aspects of the process. NASA's groundbreaking use of computers for testing and advanced management techniques are also covered in detail. This book will demystify the question of how NASA could build and launch Apollo missions using 1960s technology. You'll discover that there was no magic involved - just an abundance of discipline, willpower, and creativity.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A treat for space fans...the books are great resources and good, solid reads." *Spaceflight Insider* As he did in *Rocket Ranch*, Ward mixes detailed technical information about launch preparations with anecdotes and other insights from the people who worked there. And, while the book primarily

follows the preparations for Apollo 11, Ward includes events from other missions as well, particularly in cases where things did not go according to plan, as Apollo 11 had few major issues leading up to launch.-- SpaceReview.com, November 2, 2015

“This is a painstakingly researched and compiled book, with nearly 400 pages of finely detailed narrative plus appendices, covering the process of preparing, assembling and testing Apollo Moon rockets boosters, command/service modules and lunar modules at the Kennedy Space Center. It is an enjoyable one. This carefully researched and lovingly written book merits a space on the bookshelf of any Apollo aficionado.” (Rod Pyle, Quest Magazine, Vol. 23 (4), 2016)

“This book is organized into eleven chapters, each rich with original photographs, project schedules, flowcharts, and direct quotations from personal interviews with NASA employees. It is a great read for space history and aerospace engineering enthusiasts, and finally gives a voice to those ‘‘nobody’’ who helped Apollo reach the Moon.” (Lisa Westwood, Quest Magazine, Vol. 23 (4), 2016)

“This book covers launch preparations for Apollo launches. This is a fine, fun read with lots of information, especially about coordination and testing. This book is recommended for anyone with an interest in space and the American space program, but it also contains a wealth of information that could be of interest and use for engineering students and those interested in organizational systems and processes.” (Jeffrey Putnam, Computing Reviews, December, 2015)

Thousands of workers labored at Kennedy Space Center around the clock, seven days a week, for half a year to prepare for the liftoff of Apollo 11. This is the story of what went on during those hectic six months. Countdown to a Moon Launch provides an in-depth look at the carefully choreographed workflow for an Apollo mission at KSC. Using the Apollo 11 mission as an example, readers will learn what went on day by day to transform partially completed stages and crates of parts into a ready-to-fly Saturn V. Firsthand accounts of launch pad accidents, near misses, suspected sabotage, and last-minute changes to hardware are told by more than 70 NASA employees and its contractors. A companion to Rocket Ranch, it includes many diagrams and photographs, some never before published, to illustrate all aspects of the process. NASA’s groundbreaking use of computers for testing and advanced management techniques are also covered in detail. This book will demystify the question of how NASA could build and launch Apollo missions using 1960s technology. You’ll discover that there was no magic involved - just an abundance of discipline, willpower, and creativity.

With over 300 books about Apollo in my collection, including technical manuals, I never thought that I'd find one book that could make sense of the thousands of steps and the interactions of parts and people required to fly the most powerful peace time machine ever created. The Saturn V launch vehicle. Well this is that book and it's not just for the techno-geek. Jonathan Ward has created a masterpiece with this work (and it's sister "Rocket Ranch"). Written in a style that makes it enjoyable and understandable to everyone, it puts all the pieces together in a chronological "countdown" order and explains how each part that arrived at KSC was tested, stacked, readied, fueled, moved and finally flown to the moon as well as the time from liftoff that each event happened. If you are going to read just one book to try and grasp the complexity and magnitude that was, flying the moon rocket, start here. The closer you get to T minus 8.9 seconds, trust me, you won't be able to put it down.

Jonathan Ward's excellent *À Rocket Ranch: The Nuts and Bolts of the Apollo Moon Program at Kennedy Space Center* *À* described how the major facilities at KSC functioned, and what it was like to actually work there. "Countdown to a Moon Launch" explains how everything was brought together in the months and days leading up to an Apollo launch. Like its companion, it contains a healthy dose of obscure photographs, diagrams, and first-hand accounts, which I'd never seen or read before. It follows, in intricate detail, the processing flows of the Apollo 11 spacecraft and Saturn V launch vehicle, from their arrival at Kennedy Space Center to the moment of launch. Ward describes the enormous amount of testing each stage and module underwent, the complexities of KSC management and scheduling, and the important work of NASA and contractor QA officials. I'm probably shortchanging the scope of this work somewhat; Mr. Ward squeezes in an impressive number of perspectives here, from the man operating the VAB crane, to the engineers in the firing room, to the astronauts conducting tests in a MSOB vacuum chamber. Kennedy Space Center is often thought of as just "the place where the rocket took off," so it's genuinely pleasing to see two books of such depth devoted to it. Like "Rocket Ranch," this book is exceptionally detailed and revealing. Unfortunately, it falls a little short in terms of readability when compared with it. It's a longer, more detail-oriented work, and doesn't flow quite as well. Although the sections on spacecraft and launch vehicle processing are absolutely fascinating, the early chapters on management and scheduling are a bit of a slog. There are plenty of first-hand accounts from former KSC employees, which gives a very hardware-oriented book a necessary human element. The accounts of some of the major snags encountered during spacecraft processing were enlightening, including the comical tale of the S-II "spacer," and the errant cutoff signal which almost terminated the Skylab 2 mission milliseconds after launch. Although I didn't enjoy it quite as much as "Rocket

Ranch," this is nonetheless a necessary book which demands to be read by serious space buffs. I've been studying manned spaceflight for 20 years, and was genuinely shocked by how much new material I found in these two books. I highly recommend them to anyone whose interest in Apollo goes beyond the astronauts and mission control.

In both *Countdown to a Moon Launch* and its companion volume *Rocket Ranch*, Jonathan Ward offers a fresh perspective and detailed account on what transpired ON THE GROUND at the Kennedy Space Center during America's massive effort to get to the moon in the 1960s. I've read about every space history book out there and was pleasantly surprised at the level of new and interesting information that is contained in these two volumes. After reading these books I'm truly amazed at just how little I knew about launch operations, processing and the facilities at KSC during the Apollo era. Although they present many technical and thoroughly researched aspects of KSC's role in getting man to the moon, these books do not read like a doctoral thesis. They fill a previously large gap in the literature that I wasn't aware even existed. They strike the perfect balance between presenting the technical aspects of launch preparations and the personal side of what it must have been like to be a part of the Apollo workforce during this incredible time in the history of manned space flight. The overall flow of these two books really makes the reader feel like they have gone back in time and were given their own personal VIP tour of the Kennedy Space Center. If you have even the slightest interest in the early history of manned space flight, these two volumes deserve to be in your library.

I arrived at NASA Kennedy Space Center coincident with the first stage for the very first Saturn V moon rocket, AS-501, and retired 35 years later as manager of a set of labs that developed new technologies for launching Space Shuttles and their payloads. I thoroughly enjoyed Jonathon Ward's fine book about the people and processes that launched us to the Moon. I knew many of the main characters in the book, and it is a treat to hear their stories, stories we never had time to share when we were busy preparing for stacking, roll to the pad, CDDT, FRF and launch. These stories are well told by Jonathon Ward, and, I believe, easily understood by any interested space junkie. Enjoy the book!

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