

Moon Trip

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*A Personal Account of the
Apollo Program and its Science*

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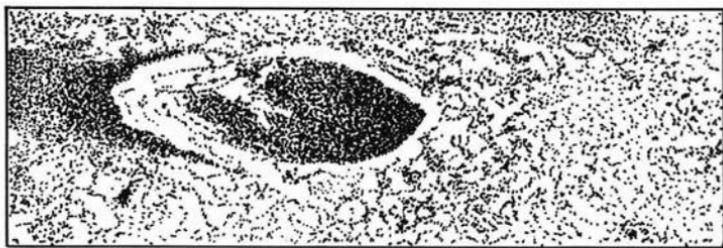
Table of Contents

Foreword	ix
Prologue	1
I. The Space Center	17
II. Astronaut Geology Training	27
III. Lunar Receiving Laboratory	59
IV. Tektites and Meteorites	73
V. First Lunar Landing	87
VI. The Lunar Samples	99
VII. Apollo 12 through Apollo 17	117
VIII. Post-NASA	129
Epilogue	139

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*On the Occasion
of the
20th Anniversary
of the
First Manned Landing
on the Moon*



Foreword

By now you have recognized that I am not and never have been an Apollo astronaut. Like so many others, my trip to the moon was largely vicarious. I am one of a host of overweight, nearsighted, too-tall, out-of-shape, non-potential astronauts who might have waited for an imagined call that never came.

However, time and circumstance chanced to be favorable, and I was privileged to view the lunar program from a unique internal vantage point. My tenure with NASA spanned six of the most turbulent and productive years of the Apollo program and terminated after the first Moon landing, although my involvement in NASA programs continues to this day. In retrospect, I find with some surprise that I have been involved in space sciences in some way or other for more than 30 years. I have been most fortunate to have

collaborated with many hardworking, bright, and trustworthy colleagues during these years, and I fear this story will not fully convey their dedication and "super-human" effort. Many friends and associates and their important contributions to the lunar program are not mentioned. To you I apologize and hope you will consider yourselves included within the spirit of the tale of events, but length and complexity did not allow me to include everything.

I tell this story from my own personal point of view. Formal histories that fix the blame and grant the glory will be left mostly to the realm of historians, which I am not. Most of us who were involved in the preparations for and execution of the lunar landings and the associated scientific investigations sensed the history of the events in which we participated. With all the media attention at the time it seemed that every possible detail had been recorded over and over. I now find this is nearly true for the "nuts and bolts," but that much of the human side of the story is in danger of being lost.

I am particularly indebted to Clifford Frondel, my teacher and co-worker, who constantly chided me to keep a journal, notes, and records. I did so only in a haphazard way, but it was good advice. Also, I thank John Wood for encouraging me to put the story on paper. It seems that, in my mind, some sequences of events are getting a little muddled, and my "perfect" memory is already not so perfect. I thank the NASA Historian's Office at the Johnson Space Center, particularly Joey Pellarin, for helping me sort out some confusion and for checking on many facts. Constructive comments were offered by Don Wilhelms, Cindy Lottinville, and John Lottinville, who read the entire manuscript, as well as Lisa Read, who read several chapters.

Of course, once we understand where we have been, the big question is: Where do we go from here? Naturally, I have a suggestion!

Elbert A. King
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