



Into That Silent Sea: Trailblazers of the Space Era, 1961-1965

Francis French, Colin Burgess, Paul Haney (Foreword)

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It was a time of bold new technology, historic moments, and international jousting on the final frontier. But it was also a time of human drama, of moments less public but no less dramatic in the lives of those who made the golden age of space flight happen. These are the moments and the lives that *Into That Silent Sea* captures, a book that tells the intimate stories of the men and women, American and Russian, who made the space race their own and gave the era its compelling character. These pages chronicle a varied and riveting cavalcade of human stories, including a look at Yuri Gagarin's harrowing childhood in war-ravaged Russia and Alan Shepard's firm purchase on the American dream. It also examines the controversial career of cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman in space, and the remarkable struggle and ultimate disappointment of her American counterparts. It tries to uncover the truth behind the allegations that shadowed Gus Grissom and Scott Carpenter and then allows the reader to share the heart-stopping suspense of Alexei Leonov's near-fatal first space walk. Through dozens of interviews and access to Russian and American official documents and family records, the authors bring to life the experiences that shaped the lives of the first astronauts and cosmonauts and forever changed their world and ours.

Into That Silent Sea: Trailblazers of the Space Era, 1961-1965 Details

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From Reader Review Into That Silent Sea: Trailblazers of the Space Era, 1961-1965 for online ebook

J. says

This is a really excellent book, entertaining, informative, and well-paced. I have to say, too, that this is one of the best designed covers I've seen for one of these "history of space" books (as I've said, I'm a sucker for good book design). The idea to focus on a personal story in the foreground while the history is explored in the background is a really nice approach.

Bear with me, because I think this is VERY important:

I have to say, though, that one chapter fell far below the others, and that was Chapter 7: The Two Wallys. The chapter focuses in on the stories of Mercury astronaut Wally Schirra and female pilot Wally Funk. By now, you will have heard of The Mercury 13 (especially if you're a fan of my reviews). Martha Ackmann's book about the women of the Lovelace tests is really fantastic. It explores the de-facto sexism created by the decision to include only jet test pilots in astronaut candidate pools. Was this done by men sitting around a table, laughing maniacally at how this would keep women out of the program? No. However, it DID create a sex-based barrier, and excluded women based on what Lovelace proved was 100% biologically-essentialist hogwash. Why do I bring this up? Because chapter 7 of French and Burgess' book falls away from the standard of excellence they achieve in the other chapters and instead becomes an argument that no sexism occurred. The old "we would have taken anyone who was qualified, so there was no sexism"-style horsecrap gets recycled. The writing, here, falls to cheap "nun uh" levels of white, male privilege, and it nearly made me out the book down.

Luckily enough, the rest of the book, save one more little cheap shot in the Tereshkova chapter along the same line as above, rises back to a level of excellence.

I recommend it, believe it or not--just skip chapter 7.

Scott Kardel says

Into That Silent Sea brings the reader engaging tales of those who first ventured into space. This book, more than any other I've read on the era, synthesizes what the astronauts/cosmonauts and the other major players involved in the early years of U.S. & Soviet space programs were doing and feeling. Their stories, and those of others that never made their own voyages into space are recounted wonderfully. The authors wove together a great array of sources, from personal interviews to many other accounts, in bringing it all together.

I highly recommend this book for everyone interested in the history of the space program.

Alec says

A good, but lengthy recount of our first space mavericks

Good recount, full of rich anecdotes from both astronauts and cosmonauts from both Nations. The author is very detailed in his anecdotes, sometimes too lengthy. It took a while to finish, but well worth reading.

Tim says

I'm still trying to figure out if the news in the days preceding the release of *Into That Silent Sea: Trailblazers of the Space Era, 1961-1965* symbolizes irony or progress.[return][return]As the subtitle indicates, the book examines the first efforts by the U.S. and the Soviet Union to put humans into space. One of the areas in which the book excels is reminding us just how hazardous those initial steps were and how they grabbed worldwide attention. The book arrives shortly after the 46th anniversary of Yuri Gagarin becoming the first human to travel into space, an anniversary mentioned at best in passing. In addition, the anniversary came amidst the latest exchange of crew members on the International Space Station. At least in America, that event seems to have drawn attention for one reason -- celebrity Martha Stewart planned a meal for the crew because a billionaire buddy of hers is the latest to pay millions to be a space tourist.[return][return]Does the latter show how far we have come since Gagarin's flight or reflect that the media and public today are more interested in celebrity news than the persistent dangers, difficulties and achievements of space flight?[return][return]*Into That Silent Sea* is an excellent reminder of just what Gagarin and other trailblazers did and how they became international celebrities in their own right. We seem to have forgotten just how new the frontier of space was. Would merely orbiting the Earth produce harmful and irreversible changes in the human body? Could astronauts or cosmonauts be expected to physically control a spacecraft? What psychological effects would the darkness and isolation of space produce? While the space station allows continued study of the effects of space on humans, questions such as those seem almost naive today. Yet they were important and substantive unknowns during the time period covered by the book.[return][return]Not only does *Into That Silent Sea* remind us of how primitive our beginnings in space were, it does so by focusing on the astronauts and cosmonauts who risked (and some of whom lost) their lives advancing science. Unlike last year's *Space Race* , which looked at the entire lunar race largely from the perspective of the heads of the programs, *Into That Silent Sea* delves into the very first steps into space largely from the viewpoint of the astronaut/cosmonaut. (Co-authors Francis French and Colin Burgess are working on a follow-up book covering the programs from 1965 through 1969.) Although there is at times a formulaic feel to the chapter structures, we learn about the personal lives and families, the training and the missions of each of the astronauts and cosmonauts who ventured into space in those first years. Their backgrounds reveal not only what helped make them pioneers, but differences between the U.S. and Soviet programs.[return][return]Balance of review at <http://prairieprogressive.com/2007/04...>

Cristin says

Cruising along in the Outward Odyssey series - I considered myself familiar with the history of early manned spaceflight, but did not know how much I was missing until I finished this book. Portions that stood out for me were clarifications on Gus Grissom's "hatch-blowing incident" (things were, in reality, most definitely not what we saw in the movie version of The Right Stuff), stories of the Mercury 13 (women who had undergone independent testing similar to that of the Mercury astronauts, many fully believing they would go on to become Mercury astronauts, themselves), and a detailed look into the Russian side of the race to space. The authors share original research and stories from astronauts and cosmonauts that remind us that spaceflight is not only an amazing feat of technology and engineering, but something that inspires us as humans to keep exploring.

Sugarpuss says

I enjoyed learning more about the personalities behind the great space race, but I picked-up this book primarily for the chapter about the Women In Space program. It filled in more pieces of the picture painted in THE MUCURY 13, because it focused on Wally Funk--one of the 12 women who took tests after Jerrie Cobb--rather then focusing on the power play between Cobb & Jackie Cochran..... And after reading about Valentina Tereshkova, who was just used as a propaganda tool, it begs the question..... What's worse? Being shut out of the space program because you were a woman? Or going into space merely to be used as a tool to promote your form of government?

Aaron says

This was a great but brief history of the first space program for the United States and Russia. For the U.S., it outlines the history of the “Mercury” program with astronauts Alan Shepard, Gus Grissom, John Glenn, Wally Shirra, Scott Carpenter, Deke Slayton, and Gordo Cooper. I have heard much of what I’ve read here through various documentaries for the most part but what the book improves upon is not only the Russian half of the early space race – which I had yet to read about – but also the personal aspects the astronauts encountered along with some technicality thrown in. It did seem like the book jumped around a lot but you didn’t find yourself losing where they were going in the end. It’s amazing how much information they could pack into this book on roughly 4 years of space history. Other parts of the book went earlier and later than 1961-1965 but for the most part covered the Vostok/Voskhod missions for the Russians and the Mercury missions for the Americans.

It also covered the as important but not often lauded about story of the women that tried to get into the space program. I found it fascinating how much crap these women had to go through only to find out they weren’t going up any time soon. Mostly that I did not know there was actually an embargo on woman test pilots that caused a good chunk of the hesitance towards putting women into space. I think down the road it would have been great to have the first woman into space having been an American, but just as they beat us with the first man/human in space, Russia has won on this front as well.

This has kindled my interest in the next few books in the series as well as others written by Colin Burgess, Francis French, and unrelated writers about the topics that were mentioned somewhat briefly in the pages of this book. I would have to say my favorite part to read was about the astronauts I had not heard as much about such as Scott Carpenter and Gordo Cooper. And while I liked the Russian bits, it didn’t have as much of a strong flow as the U.S. bits did. Not anything the writers did wrong, but more of the fact that everything was as it was in Russia. Very secretive and very coordinated. A little chaos makes a good reading and NASA has bred much chaos long before we had accidents that took human lives... The Russians would beat us to that, too, but I think I can speak for all of humanity when I say I wish neither of us had won out on that front.

My rating for this book is 4.5 out of 5 stars.

Thom says

The most comprehensive look at early space programs for both the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Chapters deal

with individual flights, starting with a biography of the principles and ending with their further career accomplishments. It was also fun to read!

I have read articles about Titov or Tereshkova, but this book goes into much more detail than any other source I have found. The authors speculate on the propaganda which has covered up the facts also, though in some cases we may never know more. Interviews were conducted with subjects on both sides of the former iron curtain, giving us an unprecedented look into the space race.

In the last year, I've read *The Right Stuff* and Gus Grissom's biography, but neither is as useful or interesting. This book is followed by *In the Shadow of the Moon: A Challenging Journey to Tranquility, 1965-1969*, and both are part of the *Outward Odyssey* series by the University of Nebraska press.

Ken Hamner says

One of the best books I've read. Outstanding. Highly recommended.

Smh624 says

I grew up near the Johnson Space Center and NASA and the space programs were a big part of my childhood. I thought I knew a lot about Project Mercury but this excellent book greatly increased my knowledge especially regarding the Soviet space program. I'm looking forward to the next two volumes in the series.

brian andrews says

This book gives the history to the pioneers of space flight, American and Russian trailblazers who flew into the sky and observed the stars. You seen them on the television documentaries, *Apollo13* and other films. Learn about their lives, families, joining the respective military services, training and challenges to be come astronauts / cosmonauts venturing into space and their lives post being space wanders. The book illustrates the technologies behind the space race, driven to surpass the achievements of the 'other', learn what made the space programs work and in somecases fail.

Chapters rotate between USA and Russian exploits in the space race, I found the stories of the Russian more interesting, perhaps that it was the first time to read in detail their exploits in achieving space travel.

Angela Joyce says

I hadn't thought about space in a long time. After an initial childhood enthusiasm for the the nine planets, my main impressions of space travel were based on the sadness I felt, at age 10, writing letters of condolence to the McAuliffe family with my fifth grade class. I also remember watching the 90s TV show, *Northern Exposure*, and hearing the character Maurice throw around names like Shepard, Cooper, and Grissom. This didn't make them real people for me, and didn't particularly spark my interest.

This book changed all that, with a vengeance! In the biographical accounts of these astronauts and cosmonauts, I found myself confronted with characters I simply couldn't dismiss-- real people with fascinating life stories (especially the cosmonauts), who took unthinkable risks to make unprecedented discoveries. I got a strong sense of what each person was about, what drove him or her, and I grew to feel quite an affection for four in particular (Titov, Popovich, Carpenter, and Wally Funk. Oh, Wally Funk! She's marvelous).

I was drawn in by the set-up of the chapters, which alternate smoothly between the American astronauts and Soviet cosmonauts. As stated, the cosmonauts held slightly more fascination for me (with the exception of Funk), but there is not a dull page in the book. Suspense is masterfully built up. At times I began to experience the more dangerous moments a little too vividly, and had to remember to breathe!

Non-fiction books rarely affect me so. Perhaps this is due to the approachable, warm, no-nonsense writing by Francis French and Colin Burgess. It is a collaboration, yet speaks with one consistent voice.

I'm sure this book is great for people who already have a love for the history of space travel. Even more, though, I'd recommend it for readers like me: those who need to be reminded how interested they once were and, when it comes down to it, still are.

Tina says

my space nerd heart couldn't put this book down, i especially appreciated the parts on the soviet cosmonauts

Christine says

Wow.

This is by far one of the most informative books I have read on the topic of early manned space exploration.

In particular, the chapters on the cosmonauts and their missions was worth it alone. I knew next to nothing about their missions. I was familiar with some of the names and famous firsts, but I learned a lot about the people, their missions and their lives after. Right away when I read the chapter on Yuri Gagarin, I knew I was in for a good book. (In a later chapter, the story about Gherman Titov and barbecue was priceless.) Finding out more about Valentina Tereshkova was something I looked forward to reading about and was rather surprised by some of what I read. I was more familiar with Alexei Leonov, but reading about him provided more details I did not know.

This isn't to dismiss the chapters on the American astronauts. Even if you know the details of the Mercury flights by heart you will find something new here. I particularly was happy to see stories of people like Dee O'Hara and Jim Lewis told here as well. The chapter 'The Two Wallys' was of interest to me as I had read Martha Ackmann's excellent book on the Mercury 13. The chapter provided me with quite a bit of food for thought.

This book, despite not being very large, took me awhile to read because it is a very dense book. There is a lot to take in, but it is a very rewarding experience to read. I also look forward to reading the other books in this

series.

Jill says

This book gave a good combination of both Russian and American history related to the early space programs for both countries. The information is also provided for the most part in chronological order which is helpful. I have read many books on the history of NASA (Mercury, Gemini, Apollo for the most part) and this book offered interesting information I had not read before in other accounts. I highly recommend this book for anyone who likes learning about the general history of space exploration.
