

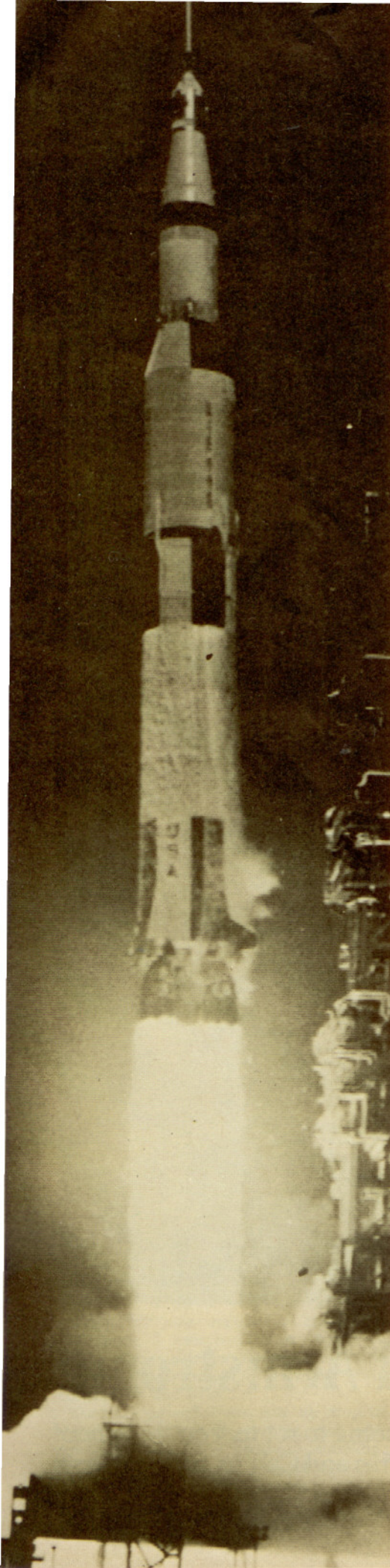


NASA photo

Congratulations AOPAer Neil Armstrong!

All 150,000 of us in AOPA are proud of you--the first human being to set foot on the moon! Our congratulations also go to your teammates, astronauts Aldrin and Collins, for their parts in this great achievement.

(See next page, "The First Man On The Moon," and page 30, "Can Astronauts Fly?")



Neil A. Armstrong (AOPA 251440), who became a pilot at age 16, wins world acclaim by his feat in space. E. E. Aldrin, Jr., second man on moon, also exposed to general aviation at early age

The First Man On The Moon

■ Neil Alden Armstrong (AOPA 251440), the epitome of all the persons who have ever dreamed about or discovered the wonders and joys of flying, has boldly imprinted his name in the chronicles of the universe by becoming the first man to walk on the moon.

Aided by some of the most sophisticated and highly advanced communications and the medium of television, millions of people vicariously shared Armstrong's first steps on an alien planet. None followed his feats more closely, however, than the world's pilots, those individuals who, regardless of the extent of their flying experiences, hold a thread of kinship with mankind's first moonwalker.

Joining Armstrong on his epic-making flight and becoming the second human to tread upon another celestial body was U.S. Air Force Col. Edwin E. (Buzz) Aldrin, Jr., whose father, E. E. Aldrin, Sr. (AOPA 26590), left a cherished spot in front of a television set during the start of the 600,000-mile-plus space journey to provide AOPAers with information on his son's flying activities.

Rounding out the crew on the moon exploration flight was U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Michael Collins who orbited the moon in the trio's command and service module while Armstrong and Aldrin navigated *Apollo 11*'s spidery-looking lunar module to the moon's desolate surface.

Armstrong, the pilot in command of the well-documented and highly publicized lunar expedition, has been labeled by some general news media writers as an "aircraft nut," a label indiscriminately applied by nonpilots at times to persons who exhibit an all-consuming passion for aviation and have dedicated their lives to its development.

Apollo 11 blasts off July 16 with astronauts Armstrong, Aldrin, and Collins aboard—destination, the moon. Wide World Photo

Armstrong joined AOPA on Nov. 12, 1963, about a year after he applied for and was accepted as the first civilian in the nation's manned-spaceflight program.

He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Armstrong of Wapakoneta, O. (population about 7,000). America's space hero is married to the former Janet Shearon of Wilmette, Ill., whom he met while going to college, and the couple has two young sons.

Though not a pilot herself, Armstrong's wife is no stranger to general aviation aircraft. Her father, a physician in Wilmette, reportedly owned a lightplane which her family used extensively for trips to a family summer home in Wisconsin before she married the famous airman. She was the only one of the astronauts' wives to watch the eventful July 16 liftoff from Cape Kennedy.

Born in Wapakoneta, O., on Aug. 5, 1930, Armstrong's interest in aviation extends back to his grade school days, when he became a prolific collector of aviation books, magazines and aircraft drawings. His mother recalled that much of the money he first earned from after-school jobs was spent on model airplanes which he meticulously constructed and dangled from the ceiling of his room.

Soon after entering high school, Armstrong carefully saved his money from a 40-cent-an-hour part-time job at a drugstore and began taking flight lessons at \$9 an hour at Wapakoneta Airport. During this time, he also worked around the airport to help defray costs of his instructions. He received his first instructions when he was 15 and quickly soloed after receiving his student pilot certificate on his 16th birthday, Aug. 15, 1946. Armstrong's early passion for flying is emphasized by the fact that he learned to pilot an aircraft before he learned to drive an automobile.

An outstanding high school student, the world's first moonwalker earned a Naval Air Cadet scholarship and enrolled at Purdue University where he studied aeronautical engineering. After only two years, however, the Korean War broke out and Armstrong left college to take Naval flight training at Pensacola, Fla.

It came as little surprise to those closely associated with his flying career that Armstrong: expertly mastered the intricacies of jet flying; easily earned his Navy wings; and served with distinction over North Korea. He flew a total of 78 combat missions, two of which nearly ended in tragedy.

On one of the two troubled combat missions, Armstrong's plane was heavily damaged by enemy ground fire. The other involved loss of a wingtip when his jet struck a wire strung across a valley by North Koreans to obstruct low-flying airplanes.

Soon after completing his tour of combat duty, Armstrong left the Navy and resumed his interrupted college education at Purdue. He graduated in 1955 with his degree in aeronautical engineer-



The moon and its conquerors. From left are civilian pilot Neil A. Armstrong, commander of Apollo 11; USAF Lt. Col. Michael Collins, command module pilot; and USAF Col. Edwin E. Aldrin, Jr., lunar module pilot. NASA Photo

ing, then joined the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA).

NACA officials made good use of Armstrong's engineering and piloting skills by assigning him to work as a test pilot on the exotic X-15 research plane, an air-launched, hypersonic aircraft constructed by North American. On one experimental flight, Armstrong reportedly flirted with orbital flight by nudging the X-15 to an altitude of more than 200,000 feet at speeds of about 4,000 m.p.h. Though commonly referred to as an "aircraft," the wingless X-15 more accurately might be called a piloted "rocket," or a "rocket plane."

Shortly before taking off July 16 on his momentous moon flight and its at-

tendant aviation firsts, Armstrong was quoted in the general press as recalling that in 1959, when the nation's manned-spaceflight program was first conceived, he believed successful design and development of rocket planes similar to the X-15 would lead to the conquering of space.

After almost seven years with the X-15 research program, however, Armstrong apparently decided his future in aviation belonged in the manned-spaceflight program, and he applied for astronaut training. He was accepted for training in what has been termed the second "class" of the astronaut training program and became America's first civilian astronaut. Others in Armstrong's

class included astronauts Frank Borman, James A. McDivitt, and the late Edward H. White.

Armstrong's first shot at space travel occurred in early 1966 when he and astronaut David R. Scott piloted the *Gemini 8* spacecraft and tried to effect the first "docking" of two space vehicles. The flight plan called for *Gemini 8* to go into orbital flight and hook up with a burned-out rocket stage which also was orbiting the earth. According to news accounts of the mission, almost immediately after hooking up with the burned-out rocket stage, one of *Gemini 8*'s rocket thrusters prematurely fired, sending both the spacecraft and the burned-out rocket stage spinning wildly. Armstrong, commander of the mission, reportedly undocked the spacecraft from the burned-out rocket, brought the ship under control, and safely made an emergency landing in the Pacific Ocean. His actions during the emergency were described as calm and methodical.

His highly tuned senses in the cockpit also stood him in good stead in 1968 when he again averted possible death. A jet-powered lunar module trainer he was piloting went out of control, but he managed to eject himself and parachute to safety before the simulator crashed and burned.

Despite his apparent love for space travel and what it might hold, Armstrong still maintains a strong affection for boring holes in the sky at altitudes more familiar to the average pilot. He holds commercial license number 1208178 and counts among his many ratings those for airplane, single- and multi-engine, land. The young airman from Wapakoneta, Ohio, also holds a glider rating which reportedly sees considerable use.

Like Armstrong, Aldrin, a member of the *Apollo 11* crew and the second man to walk on the surface of the moon, was a jet-fighter pilot during the Korean War. He flew 66 combat missions and knocked down two Chinese Communist MIG jets during the conflict. The 39-year-old Aldrin received his first introduction to flight when he was less than three years old, according to his father, a well-known aviator of the 1920s and 1930s.

"Buzz" Aldrin first soloed in 1951. At last report, he was holding commercial pilot's license number 1337108, and his regular aviation ratings included airplane, single- and multi-engine, land. A West Point graduate and career Air Force officer, the younger Aldrin became an astronaut in 1963 and made his first space flight as a pilot aboard *Gemini 12* in 1966. During the 1966 flight, he made the most successful "space walk" thus far chalked up by any man. He was outside the orbiting capsule for more than two hours.

Based on the unprecedented accomplishments of the *Apollo 11* mission, the names of Armstrong and Aldrin, as well as that of Michael Collins, the third member of the crew, have gained an enviable position in the rolls of aviation greats. □

Neil Armstrong displays the time-honored "thumbs up" gesture as he and fellow crewmembers, Collins and Aldrin, prepare to enter a transfer van on July 16 to board their moon-bound spacecraft at Cape Kennedy, Fla. World Wide Photo

