



Smithsonian

National Air and Space Museum

Carrying the Fire: An Astronaut's Journeys Manuscript

Sarah LeClaire

2023

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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	
Administrative Information	1
Biographical / Historical	2
Scope and Contents	7
Arrangement	8
Names and Subjects	
Container Listing	

Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	<i>Carrying the Fire: An Astronaut's Journeys</i> Manuscript
Date:	1973-1974
Identifier:	NASM.XXXX.0399
Creator:	Collins, Michael, 1930-2021
Extent:	.23 Cubic feet (1 box)
Language:	English .
Summary:	<i>Carrying the Fire: An Astronaut's Journey</i> is the 1974 autobiography of Michael Collins (1930--2021). While his early aviation career in the United States Air Force is covered, the vast majority of the text details his experiences as Command Module Pilot during the historic Apollo 11 mission in July 1969. This manuscript features hand-corrections from the author.
Digital Content:	Digital Content: NASM-SI-2009-31387 NASM Director Michael Collins reviewing his notes prior to the museum's opening, NASM.XXXX.0399

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Material found in collection, October 1992.

Related Materials

Apollo 11 command module from the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum collection: [Apollo 11 command module, A19700102000](#) .

Gemini X capsule from the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum collection: [Gemini X capsule, A19680272000](#) .

Collins' sunglasses from the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum collection: [Collins' sunglasses, A19850145000](#) .

A7-L pressure suit from the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum collection: [A7-L pressure suit, A19711841000](#) .

Razor and shaving cream from the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum collection: [Razor and shaving cream, A19980010001](#) .

Biological isolation garment, Apollo 11 from the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum collection: [Biological isolation garment, A19721301000](#) .

Personal preference kit, Apollo 11 from the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum collection: [Personal preference kit, A19850134000](#) .

Checklist, launch operations, Apollo 11 from the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum collection: [Checklist, A19850131000](#) .

One dollar bill, Apollo 11 from the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum collection: [Dollar bill, A19770432000](#) .

Checklist card, standup EVA, Gemini X from the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum collection: [Checklist card, A19850124000](#) .

Apollo 11 commemorative plaque from the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum collection: [Commemorative plaque, A19870029000](#) .

Processing Information

Arranged, described, and encoded by Sarah LeClaire, 2023.

Preferred Citation

Carrying the Fire: An Astronaut's Journeys Manuscript, Acc. NASM.XXXX.0399, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

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Biographical / Historical

Michael Collins (1930 - 2021) served as a fighter pilot and an experimental test pilot at the Air Force Flight Test Center, Edwards Air Force Base from 1959-1963. He was one of the third group of astronauts named by NASA in October 1963. Collins was pilot on the three-day Gemini 10 mission in 1966, during which he became the nation's third spacewalker and set a world altitude record. His second flight was as command module pilot of the Apollo 11 mission in July 1969. He remained in lunar orbit while Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first men to walk on the moon. After leaving NASA in 1970, Collins became Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs and, in 1971, became the Director of the National Air and Space Museum, where he remained for seven years. Collins has received numerous decorations and awards and is the author of several books, including this, *Carrying the Fire: An Astronaut's Journeys*, which was released to critical acclaim by Farrar Straus Giroux in 1974.

A Chronology of Major General Michael Collins' Life

<i>1930, October 31</i>	Born to James and Virginia Collins in Rome, Italy. He is the youngest of four children.
<i>1942, September 22</i>	Enters St. Albans School in Washington, DC.
<i>1948</i>	Graduates from St. Albans School.
<i>1952, June</i>	Graduates from the United States Military Academy in West point with a Bachelor of Science degree in Military Science.
<i>1952, August</i>	Joins the United States Air Force (USAF) and begins basic training at Columbus Air Force Base in Mississippi, where he learns to fly the T-6 Texan.

1953	At Connally Air Force Base, Waco, Texas, he learns to fly T-33A Shooting Star jet trainers.
1953, September	Learns advanced day-fighter training on an F-86 Sabre at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada.
1954, January	Joins the 21st Fighter-Bomber Wing at George Air Force Base, California, where he learns nuclear weapons delivery systems and ground attack.
1954, mid-December	Transfers with the 21st Fighter-Bomber Wing at Chambley-Bussi�res Air Base, France.
1956	Wins first place in a gunnery competition.
1956	Deploys to West Germany during the Hungarian Revolution.
1957, April 28	Marries Patricia Finnegan, a social worker, in Chambley, France.
Late 1957	Enrolls in a nine-month aircraft maintenance officer course at Chanute Air Force Base, Illinois, that he finishes in six months.
1959, May 6	Birth of daughter, Kathleen.
1960	Commands a Mobile Training Detachment (MTD) at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada. This requires him to travel to airbases world-wide. He later becomes the first commander of a Field Training Detachment (FTD).
1960, August 29	Enrolls in the USAF Experimental Flight Test Pilot School at Edwards Air Force Base, as a member of Class 60C. While there, his flight test instructional aircraft are the F-104 Starfighter, F-86 Sabre, T-33 Shooting Star, B-52 Stratofortress and T-28 Trojan. He logs more than 5,000 hours of flying time.
1961, October 31	Birth of daughter, Ann.
1962, February 20	Collins' interest in becoming an astronaut is piqued after seeing coverage of John Glenn's orbit around Earth.
1962, October 22	Begins a postgraduate course on spaceflight at the USAF Aerospace Research Pilot School (ARPS) (formerly the USAF Experimental Flight Test Pilot School) where he flew the T-38A Talon and the NF-101 Voodoo. Classmates include future astronauts Joe Engle, Charles Bassett and Edward Givens.
1963, February 23	Birth of son, Michael.
1963, May	Returns to fighter operations at Edwards Air Force Base after having successfully completed the coursework at ARPS.
1963, June	Applies to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to become an astronaut.
1963, September 2	Is interviewed by NASA in Houston, Texas.
1963, October 14	Receives a phone call from NASA's Director of Flight Crew Operations Donald K. "Deke" Slayton, asking if he would like to be an astronaut. He does.
1963, October 18	At the Manned Space Center (MSC). later renamed the Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center (JSC), Collins is selected as one of fourteen new astronauts (7 from the Air Force, 4 from the Navy, 1 from the Marines and two civilians), bringing the total number of NASA astronauts to 30. This third group includes Edwin Eugene "Buzz" Aldrin Jr. Each astronaut

	is assigned a specialization. His is extravehicular activities (EVAs) and pressure suits.
1965, July 1	Collins and Edward White II are named the backup crew for Gemini 7. Frank Borman and James A. Lovell Jr are the prime crew.
1966, January 24	Collins is assigned to the prime crew of Gemini 10, along with John Young as mission commander. This makes Collins the seventeenth American to fly in space.
1966, July 18	At 5:20 pm EST, Gemini 10 lifts off from Launch Complex 19 at Cape Canaveral, Florida. Among the accomplishments on this three-day mission were the successful rendezvous and docking with an Agena target vehicle, conducting dual rendezvous maneuvers using the target vehicle's propulsion systems, conducting two EVAs, practice docking maneuvers, executing fifteen scientific experiments and evaluating various docked spacecraft systems.
1966, July 21	Gemini 10 splashes down in the Atlantic Ocean, 529 miles east of Cape Kennedy, and is recovered by the amphibious assault ship USS <i>Guadacanal</i> . Gemini 10 attained an apogee of approximately 475 statute miles and traveled a distance of 1,275,091 statute miles. It was the second spacecraft in the Gemini program to land within eye and camera range of the prime recovery ship.
1966, late July	Receives Air Force Command Pilot Astronaut Wings.
1966	Receives NASA's Exceptional Service Medal.
1967, January 27	While attending a meeting in the Astronaut Office in Houston, Texas, Collins and others hears of the tragic deaths of astronauts Virgil "Gus" Grissom, Roger Chaffee and Ed White. Collins went to the Chaffee home where he informed Roger's wife Martha that her husband died during a routine launch rehearsal test.
1967, November 19	NASA announces the crews for the first two manned Apollo/Saturn V flights. Collins (as command module pilot), Frank Borman (as commander) and William A. Anders (as lunar module pilot) are named the prime crew for AS-505, the second mission.
1968, July 22-23	At Wilford Hall Hospital at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas, Collins undergoes surgery to fuse two vertebrae after a bone spur is found on his spine.. His role as prime Apollo 9 crew in jeopardy as his convalescence might take up to four months.
1968, August 8	NASA announces that James Lovell will replace Collins as prime command module pilot for the upcoming Apollo mission.
1968, December	Collins serves as capsule communicator (CAPCOM) for Apollo 8
1969, January 9	NASA names Neil A. Armstrong (commander), Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin, Jr (lunar module pilot) and Collins (command module pilot) as prime crew of Apollo 11.
1969, May 24	Armstrong, Collins and Aldrin practice splashdown and anticontamination procedures they will use after returning from the moon in two months. They donned plastic-coated biological isolation garments and sprayed each other with Betadine disinfectant before leaving a test spacecraft in the Gulf of Mexico.

- 1969, July 3 Armstrong, Collins and Aldrin complete their final countdown rehearsal test. They achieved simulated liftoff at 9:32 am EST, the exact time of the scheduled July 16th launch.
- 1969, July 5 At MSC, the Apollo 11 astronauts hold a press conference where they are seated 50 feet away from the nearest reporters and were partially enclosed in a plastic booth to limit their contact 21 days prior to flight lest they get ill. Collins says that he doesn't not feel "the slightest bit frustrated" about going to the moon without landing on it. "I'm going 99.9 percent of the way there," he states, "and that suits me fine."
- 1969, July 11 The Apollo 11 crew undergo the last major preflight medical examination at KSC and are cleared for launch.
- 1969, July 16 At 9:22 am EST, Apollo 11 lifts off from launch complex 39A by Saturn V 506 booster at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. Liftoff was relayed live on TV to 33 countries on 6 continents and watched by an estimated 25 million TV views in the United States. Onboard is command module pilot Collins, spacecraft commander Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, lunar module pilot. While the latter two descend to the lunar surface on the Sea of Tranquility in the lunar module Eagle, Collins orbits the moon alone 30 times for more than 21 hours in the command module Columbia. It takes 48 minutes to pass behind the far side of the moon and is the most distant part of space that humans have yet visited alone. During that time, Collins loses all means of communication; the moon's 2,100-mile rocky diameter stood between him and all other human beings. While the press would later shortsightedly dub him "The Loneliest Man in History" during this period of disconnect, Collins recalled in *Carrying the Fire* that he was not having an existential, solipsistic crisis. Instead, he was preoccupied with the very real problem of failure on a scale that was hard to fathom. He documented his fear on audiotape recorded at the time, saying, "My secret terror for the last six months has been leaving them on the Moon and returning to Earth alone; now am within minutes of finding out the truth of the matter." What if things went terribly wrong and he returned to Earth alone? "I will be a marked man for life, and I know it." His worries proved to be unfounded. After Armstrong becomes the first man to set foot on the moon, he and Aldrin collect 21 kg of lunar surface material and conduct scientific experiments. After spending 21 hours and 36 minutes on the lunar surface, Armstrong and Aldrin lift off the moon's surface using the Eagle's ascent stage and return to lunar orbit, where Collins successfully docks Columbia to it.
- 1969, July 21 After almost a full day on the lunar surface, Armstrong and Aldrin launch off the moon's surface using the Eagle's ascent stage and return to lunar orbit, where Collins successfully docks Columbia to it. After jettisoning the lunar module, Apollo 11 begins its journey home.
- 1969, July 25 The Air Force promotes Collins to the rank of full colonel. In a congratulatory message, General John P. McConnell, Air Force Chief of Staff, says the Apollo 11 mission was "indeed a momentous achievement" and the promotion was a "token of appreciation for the part you played."
- 1969, July 25 Armstrong, Aldrin and Collins splash down on July 24 in the Pacific Ocean and are retrieved by the USS *Hornet*. After donning biological isolation garments, they enter the Mobile Quarantine Facility along with

	the recovery physician, a recovery technician and the lunar samples where they remain until August 10, 1969.
1969, August 12	Armstrong, Aldrin and Collins hold their first postflight press conference at MSC, where they narrate a 45-minute film of the mission and answer questions. While discussing the lunar landing, Collins says it was a "technical triumph for this country to have said what it was going to do a number of years ago and then, by golly, do it. It was also a triumph of the nation's overall determination, will, economy, attention to detail, and a thousand and one other factors that went into it."
1969, August 13	The three Apollo 11 astronauts attended parades in their honor in New York City and Chicago, Illinois and Los Angeles, California. An estimated six million people attend.
1969, August 17	Armstrong, Aldrin and Collins appear on CBS's "Face the Nation". Collins mentions that he would not fly in space again because he found it increasingly difficult "to keep up year after year" with the rigorous training required.
1969, September	The three Apollo 11 astronauts embarked on a 38-day world tour. In all, they visited 22 countries.
1969, September 6	The Apollo 11 astronauts attend celebrations in their hometowns. Collins, who was born in Rome, Italy, chooses to visit New Orleans, Louisiana, as his adopted hometown, where he also visits NASA's Michoud Assembly Facility.
1969, December 15	Begins work as Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs. President Nixon announced his plan to nominate Collins on November 28th.
1970	Receives NASA's Distinguished Service Medal.
1970	After 18 years of Active Duty service in the Air Force, begins serving in the Air Force Reserve.
1971, February 22	President Nixon accepts Collins' resignation as Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, effective April 11.
1971, April 12	Becomes Director of the National Air and Space Museum (NASM) in Washington, DC. Collins tirelessly lobbied for funding from Congress to build the museum. \$40 million was allocated for construction.
1973, April 6	The Senate confirms the nomination of Col. Michael Collins to be a brigadier general.
1974	Completes the Harvard Business School's Advanced Management Program.
1974, August 11	Publishes <i>Carrying the Fire: An Astronaut's Journeys</i> to critical acclaim.
1976	Publishes <i>Flying to the Moon and Other Strange Places</i> .
1976, March 10	Is confirmed by the Senate as a reserve major general.
1976, July 1	The National Air and Space Museum opens to the public. Thanks to Collins' leadership, it is both under budget and three days ahead of schedule. The ceremony was presided over by President Gerald R. Ford and ribbon was cut by a signal transmitted by the Viking I spacecraft in orbit around Mars to a large metal arm.

1976, November 16	Collins in one of 3 NASA employees to win the National Civil Service League's career service awards.
1976, December	The Air Force Systems Command (AFSC) announce that Collins has been appointed mobilization assistant to the AFSC commander. This position was the top Air Force Reserve post in AFSC.
1977	Is inducted into the International Space Hall of Fame at the New Mexico Museum of Space History.
1977, September 30	The National Aeronautic Association announces that the Federation Aeronautique Internationale (FAI) will present the gold space medal to Collins, at a ceremony to be held in Rome, Italy, on October 3rd. It is awarded yearly as the world's highest award for spaceflight.
1978	Becomes an Undersecretary of the Smithsonian Institution, a position he holds until he resigns on January 28, 1980.
1980	Is Vice President of Vought, Inc. (formerly Ling-Temco-Vought (LTV) Aerospace and Defense Company) in Arlington, Virginia.
1982	Retires from the Air Force as a Major General.
1983, March 4	Asteroid 6471 Collins is named after him.
1985	Resigns from LTV Aerospace and starts his own consulting firm, Michael Collins Associates.
1987, March	<i>Aviation Week and Space Technology</i> reports that the Space Goals Task Force of the NASA Advisory Council, headed by Collins, will recommend a crew-tended mission to Mars. Collins stressed that the development and operation of a US/international Space Station was a prerequisite for exploration of Mars and beyond.
1988	Publishes <i>Liftoff: The Story of America's Adventures in Space</i> .
1990	Publishes <i>Mission to Mars</i> .
1993, March 18	NASA announces that 14 astronauts who orbited the Earth during Project Gemini (which includes Collins) were inducted into the US Astronaut Hall of Fame.
1993, March 3	Death of son Michael in Massachusetts.
2011, November 16	Collins, Armstrong and Aldrin receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award in the United States.
2014, April	His wife Pat passes away.
2020	The National Air and Space Museum Award, established in 1985, is re-named The Michael Collins Trophy.
2021, April 28	Michael Collins dies of cancer at his home in Naples, Florida.
2023, January 30	Collins' ashes are interred in Arlington National Cemetery.

Scope and Contents

This is the original manuscript of *Carrying the Fire: An Astronaut's Journeys*, the book in which Apollo 11 astronaut Michael Collins describes his experiences as a test pilot and in the space program. It features hand corrections

by his editor (in red) and Collins (in black) and includes passages which are crossed out and do not appear in the published version.

Arrangement

Collection is a single item and divided into five folders.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Aeronautics
- Apollo 11 Flight
- Apollo Project
- Gemini Project
- National Air and Space Museum
- Test pilots -- United States
- United States Air Force

Container Listing

Box 1, Folder 1	Carrying the Fire: An Astronaut's Journeys Manuscript (1 of 5) Notes: This folder contains the cover page through page 146.
Box 1, Folder 2	Carrying the Fire: An Astronaut's Journeys Manuscript (2 of 5) Notes: This folder contains pages 147 through 294.
Box 1, Folder 3	Carrying the Fire: An Astronaut's Journeys Manuscript (3 of 5) Notes: This folder contains pages 295 through 430.
Box 1, Folder 4	Carrying the Fire: An Astronaut's Journeys Manuscript (4 of 5) Notes: This folder contains pages 431 through 559.
Box 1, Folder 5	Carrying the Fire: An Astronaut's Journeys Manuscript (5 of 5) Notes: This folder contains pages 560 through 722.