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The Race

James Schefter



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The messy and glorious saga of the golden years of the American space program, told in never-before-revealed detail by a man who was there.

In 1963, a young reporter named Jim Schefter was given a dream job: cover America's race to the moon. Since the astronauts were under contract to *Life*, Schefter's employer, for their stories, he was given unparalleled access to the lives of all the players at NASA. Of course, for PR reasons he could not write a fraction of what he saw then. Now, at last, he can tell it all.

As incredible as the "official" story of the space program is, the true, behind-the-scenes tale is more thrilling, entertaining, and ultimately, more ennobling. There were vicious battles between the German (often ex-Nazi) rocket pioneers and the younger American engineers; feuds and practical jokes; astronauts whose private lives were considerably more colorful than has been portrayed; many near-fatal accidents other than Apollo 13; political chicanery from the Kremlin and the White House; and dozens of smart, brave, larger-than-life individuals pulling off the greatest exploration in the history of humankind.

No one could tell this story as fully and as well as Jim Schefter. Given full access to NASA archives and the personal papers of many of the participants, both Russian and American, trusted by the astronauts and mission controllers who want the real story passed on to history, Schefter brings to life a more innocent, heroic era in all its bravado and complexity. From drunken astronaut escapades and groupies to near disasters and ferocious political infighting, the race to the moon was anything but the smooth journey of popular imagination.

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