

READING GROUP GUIDE

Questions for Discussion

1. Who is your favorite character? What made you relate to that particular wife?
2. Would you let your significant other be blasted into space? Why do you think these women let their husbands go on these incredible, but also very risky, journeys?
3. Does the sudden celebrity around the astronauts and their families depicted in this book remind you of today's celebrity culture in any way? How does it strike you as different? In what ways are the astronaut wives similar to today's reality show families? In what ways are they different?
4. *The Astronaut Wives Club* depicts the female friendship and female bonding that result from an unusual circumstance. Do the friendships and bonds in this book remind you of friendships you've experienced? What tensions did you see between the different groups of wives? Did you expect more solidarity? Less? Were you surprised at how the friendships evolved over time, so that the wives now meet for reunions and are able to be more open with one another than they ever were back then?

5. In many ways, *The Astronaut Wives Club* is about what it meant to be a “good” wife in the 1950s and 1960s, and how that role changed over the course of the space program. What do you think it means to be a good wife? A good husband? How do you think those roles have changed since the time of this book?
6. The wives in *The Astronaut Wives Club* were often under a high level of stress and intense scrutiny, without the benefit of preparation for or training in dealing with the media. Do you think NASA should have prepared them better to deal with the pressures of public attention?
7. The early astronauts and their families had deals with *Life* magazine to let photographers and reporters into their homes. In many instances, the media seems to have idealized their lives. How do you think those stories affected their day-to-day experiences? How might the published articles have affected the day-to-day lives of housewives who read the pieces?
8. Were you surprised at what happened to the widows of the Apollo 1 fire, such as Pat White? Do you think being in the space program was harder on the astronauts, or their wives?
9. As a contemporary reader, were you surprised to read about the extramarital affairs between a few of the astronauts and the Cape Cookies at Cape Canaveral, Florida? What did you think of the two worlds: the playground of the Cape and the wives’ suburban world back home in Houston? Putting yourself in the wives’ shoes, do you think you would have challenged the status quo?

10. One of the wives, Rene Carpenter, always seemed to challenge the existing state of affairs of being the perfect archetypal astronaut wife and went on to write an opinionated women's column and host her own feminist television talk show. How do you think she was able to do this?
11. Were you surprised by any of the wives' reactions to their husbands' decisions to go into space? How about the wives' decisions post-space program? What did you think about how going to the Moon changed the men and the marriages (often expanding the men's horizons and leading to divorce)?
12. Do you think Betty Grissom had good grounds for her lack of confidence in NASA, going so far as to sue its largest contractor, North American Rockwell?
13. The wives themselves set up the Astronaut Wives Club, but in many ways the official, all-inclusive organization failed to be the space for open sharing that the founders intended it to be. How did the on-record Astronaut Wives Club differ from the smaller friend groups that formed among the wives? What purpose do you think the official club ended up serving, and why do you think it might not have become what the founders had hoped? Do you think it finally comes together with the reunion group of wives that meets today?
14. The astronaut wives shared intimacies on a daily basis over coffee, cocktails, and cigarettes. What have we gained today that the wives didn't have, and what have we lost?



A Conversation with Lily Koppel

Q: Why did you decide to write about the astronaut wives? What attracted you to this topic?

A: I saw an incredible *Life* magazine photo of the wives in their skyrocketing beehives, outfitted in their swirling candy-colored Pucci minidresses. I've always loved *The Right Stuff* and *Apollo 13* and *Mad Men*, but I never knew how much I wanted to know more about these women until I saw that picture. I now know that what drew me to those movies and the books was an interest in the women. When I learned that they actually have a club—and that they raised their families in the Houston “space burbs” near NASA’s operations, in a community known as “Togetherville”—the whole thing was just amazing! I knew I had to write the book and tell their story: the emotional side of the space race.

Q: There seems to be a cultural fascination right now with the 1950s and '60s. Do you think that nostalgia has anything to teach us, today, about our contemporary world?

A: Well, there is definitely a different way of living from the 1950s and 1960s to the 2000s. As the wives told me, they were stay-at-home moms first and foremost. They had tea with Jackie Kennedy and appeared on the cover of *Life* magazine, but

they did womanly, wifely things. Revisiting those times was very comforting to me. Just how they would pick up a pink or white rotary phone and call a friend to come over for a cup of coffee and a cigarette, or a cocktail, if they were feeling alone or needed to talk. They walked (and ran) to friends' homes across lawns. One astronaut kid told me nostalgically how his mother used to lock him and his siblings out of the house and tell them to go play with their friends and be home in time for supper. It was a more innocent time. It was a time when people got to live in the moment without yoga, Twitter, Facebook, and all the rest. It was also a magical time when human ingenuity meant everything and America accomplished amazing things. I think today is wonderful, but we need to incorporate some of yesterday's examples into how we live (of course, I am a sucker for '60s fashion, too, not to mention the music).

Q: The scope of this book is wide—you report on many wives and devote attention to a broad range of women, while also focusing on a few notables like Rene Carpenter, Annie Glenn, and Betty Grissom. Given the breadth of the space program, how did you decide what stories to include?

A: I focused on the wives who had the most interesting, dramatic, and, at times, difficult experiences. I let their stories, missions, and personalities guide me in an organic way, focusing on the moments that jumped out at me, like when the Mercury wives were introduced to America like the country's first reality stars, and how this very different group of women bonded and came together. Also, my favorite mission turned out to be Apollo 8, the first flight to the Moon on Christmas 1968, given a fifty-fifty shot (Genesis was read during it), because it showed how two

women dealt, in very different ways, with the pressures of having their men go to the Moon. Mission wife Susan Borman truly believed her husband would die orbiting the Moon; while Marilyn, married to Jim (“Houston, we have a problem”) Lovell, who later became famous for commanding Apollo 13, kept the faith. Although it is serious history, I always wanted it to read like a page-turner. I hope readers will get into the spirit (with me) of what it meant in a very real, womanly way, to send your husband a quarter of a million miles away—to the Moon (and back)!

Q: This book documents some remarkably intrusive behavior by reporters—one journalist surreptitiously tails a wife to the hair salon hoping for a scoop. As a reporter yourself, where do you draw the line when it comes to pursuing a subject? What obligations do reporters have to their subjects—and what obligations do they have to their readers?

A: I started writing the book by visiting the wives across the country, unlocking the secrets of this very exclusive club of women behind the astronauts with the “right stuff.” I was very conscious that the press had often hunted down and harassed the wives (and their children), and so it was important for me to get to know them as women and friends. I interviewed them extensively and spent heaps of time with them. I was lucky that the women were so forthcoming with me. Now in their seventies, they finally felt it was time to let loose a little and come clean. Reporting is always a relationship of trust, working both ways. For example, Joan Aldrin, Buzz’s wife, gave me her diary to explore, which she kept on the Apollo 11 “Giant Step” world tour as her husband’s life was spiraling out of control.

Q: What other books on the space program do you recommend?

A: *The Right Stuff* by Tom Wolfe; *Of a Fire on the Moon* by Norman Mailer; *Carrying the Fire* by astronaut Michael Collins; and one of the only other books about the space program written by a woman, *If the Sun Dies* by the controversial Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci. (In it, astronauts spout Julius Caesar poolside and dream about opening a chain of A&W stands on the Moon.)

Lily Koppel on Writing *The Astronaut Wives Club*

As the snowflakes swirled outside, I sat inside the home of Marilyn Lovell, wife of Jim Lovell, played by Tom Hanks in *Apollo 13*. Near a roaring fire in her living room decorated with family photos and the pastel Impressionist paintings she collects, I shook out my handbag, arranging my tape recorder, notebook, pen, and other journalistic trappings on her coffee table. As we pored over a photo of Mount Marilyn and the card from “The Man in the Moon” that came on top of Jim’s very romantic Christmas present to her in 1968, she started telling me her story of being an astronaut wife.

Marilyn had saved headlines about the Astrowives, such as “HUSBANDS IN HEAVENS, ANGELS AT HOME,” and dire Apollo 13 clippings in her scrapbooks all these years. She laughed as she told me how absolutely normal it was for the Lovell kids to make the sign for their father that read “WELCOME BACK TO EARTH, DAD.” Because they lived in a neighborhood of rocket scientists, they figured everybody’s daddy was an astronaut and a hero.

At one point, reminiscing about the old neighborhood, she started to cry. “Just talking about all these friends— We all had such a good time in those days...” she said as she reached for a tissue. “It was a time in my life that I would never give up. It

was the best time in my life.” Then she excused herself for a moment, to dry her tears and check on our lunch: “Let me turn on this oven. I hope you like quiche.”

After lunch, served with iced tea and warm rolls, she set out coffee and perfectly baked chocolate chip cookies. A few hours and a lot of talk later, Jim came home. When he walked in, I finally got that whole astronaut rock star thing. Even though Jim is in his eighties now, the whole room lit up. In Jim’s glowing presence Marilyn can slip into being “the hero’s wife.” In fact, I noticed this transformation all around the country as I visited with the ladies. When I sat down with some of the wives, I would sometimes have to shoo away an astronaut who was used to being in the spotlight.

“So, whaddya want to know?” asked Captain Lovell, plopping himself down in a cushy armchair by the fireplace.

“Jim,” said Marilyn, all eyes (they were high school sweethearts and recently celebrated their sixty-first wedding anniversary).

“Jim,” I kidded him, “I came here to interview your wife.”

My interviews with the wives were never typical. They nearly always began with the *bing-bong* of a suburban doorbell. I would be introduced to a beloved dog or cat, and we’d go into the living room. Back in the day, to be an astronaut’s wife was an immense opportunity that meant you were not just your typical Betty Draper-type stay-at-home mom. The whole country was caught up in the space race, and these women were at the forefront of President Kennedy’s New Frontier. They knew in their hearts that they were playing an important role, and they’d attracted the media attention to prove it. But they had now been out of the public eye for forty years.

Harriet Eisele, the four-foot-ten, pint-sized woman who filed for the “first space divorce” following the heartbreaking death of her young son Matt from leukemia, still lives in the same El Lago ranch house that *Life* magazine once shot, where there was a tree house out back and she dedicated her life to raising her four children during the race to the Moon. Harriet offered me coffee in a space mug, the kind all of the wives have from the reunions they now throw every couple years. She made a delicious salad for lunch with her special vinaigrette, and for dessert there was homemade lemon custard and more strong, good coffee. (Harriet herself, who does the lawn and odd fix-up jobs around the house, runs on about five cups a day.) At other homes across the country, I was met with offers of coffee and tea, spreads of cookies and cakes. But the best time was just before five, when one of the wives asked me, “Is it cocktail time yet?”

If some of the wives were a bit skeptical of me at first, they were always kind, open, and welcoming. As one woman wrote to me before we sat down, “The whole expectation of women in those days was far different than now, and I wonder if your research can really reveal the extent of the social changes that occurred before you were born. Hopefully, those issues will be covered in your interviews, and that world we lived in will become more clear to you.” As I told them, perhaps I was the perfect person to explore these questions, being the same age they were when they learned their husbands would be sent into space.

After seeing the Technicolor *Life* magazine photo of the Astrowives that sparked the idea for the book and feeling a sense of kinship with those young women, I began the writing process the old-fashioned way—by picking up the phone and calling Jan

Evans, who now keeps the wives' roster. Soon I was off to Arizona to meet her. Jan drove to pick me up at my hotel, greeting me with a hug. Jan told me that she and her friends had talked about wanting to set down their story, but in such a diverse group with different alliances and friendships—not to mention everyone so busy with grandkids (and great grandkids)—they hadn't ever gotten around to it. But she knew, as they all did, that they were all getting older, and time was passing. It was a regular Astrowife domino effect once I spoke to Jan, and the interviews fell into place.

I interviewed over thirty wives and spent a great deal of time in Texas, where many still live. One big thing for me was avoiding the trap the press often fell into by assuming that the men were heroes and the wives their spotless heroines. The wives were feeling brave, and were very encouraging of one another and felt this was the time to tell their story. Marilyn Lovell said to me, "You are so easy to talk to." Interviewing is a two-way street, and I deeply appreciated their willingness to open up their lives and homes to me, sharing their stories, memories, photo albums, scrapbooks (the Pinterest of the '60s), and, in the case of Betty Grissom, her vintage designer wardrobe mostly purchased from Neiman Marcus, including a scandalous pair of fur hot pants!

In some cases, it was harder than I expected to initially get into those living rooms. Afraid to talk, some put up barriers at first. Betty, Gus's wife, was someone many of the other wives thought would be the toughest nut to crack when I first embarked on the project. "Is Betty going to talk to you?" they'd ask, then murmur to each other, "Oh, I doubt it..."

Betty is amazing. After sending me an initial letter inviting me to come to visit her at her home in Houston, she turned out

to be a real sweetheart (but don't tell anyone or you will ruin her reputation). She's in her eighties now and uses a walker, but as someone pointed out, "she still looks like Betty." When I interviewed her, I asked about how the wives dressed. She looked at me in all seriousness and said, "Not many people know, but Betty was the wildest one." She likes to refer to herself in the third person as Ole Betty, and to Ole Gus. Then she showed me her fur hot pants circa 1969.

Wild clothing aside, she has devoted her life to ferociously protecting Gus's legacy and has even battled for years with NASA over this, and most recently about a silver spacesuit she claims rightfully belongs to her family. She holds a memorial ceremony every year at the Cape to commemorate Gus and his two fellow astronauts who died in the Apollo 1 blaze, which people come from around the world to attend (one gentleman flies in every year from Japan). Betty wears a denim jacket sewn with an Apollo 1 mission patch. It is incredibly moving.

As tragic as Gus's death was, in a way it sheltered Betty from the troubles many of the wives experienced. As my book documents, "the space program didn't do much for the marriages," Jane Conrad told me. Jane and I have spent loads of time together, just as she once did with another writer fascinated by the male space stuff: Tom Wolfe. He and Jane used to exchange stories over bottles of red wine. Jane has shared with me her memories and her innermost thoughts and worries, and also her writing and painting—she's very talented at both. The first wife of notorious hotshot astronaut Charles "Pete" Conrad, she and Pete divorced in 1990, after he retired from NASA and around the same time one of their sons, Christopher, then in his twenties, died of lymphoma. Pete was killed in a motorcycle crash a

couple years later. Theirs was representative of many of the space marriages that ultimately couldn't survive the pressure cooker of the space race and the temptations of the groupie-like Cape Cookies.

Jane also talked to me about the "tackiness," as she tactfully puts going through a "space divorce," and dealing with a second wife, who at one point wanted to make plastic He-Man-type action figures of the astronauts, including Pete. Moreover, she has shared with me her incredibly creative side, along with her sense of humor. Despite the heartbreak inherent in so many of the wives' stories, she has a rare ability to see the bright side of the incredibly exciting period they played leading roles in. (It might help that her story ended happily: She is totally over the Moon about her second husband, Seymour, of twenty-some years.) I couldn't help but smile when she recently e-mailed me a short story in which she imagines what it would be like if *she* were the astronaut and what it would feel like to do *it*, up *there*. It left me knowing what I already suspected: Jane, like the other wives, has the Right Stuff.

One of the more memorable, funny, and touching moments from my interviews with the wives was spending a girls' weekend in Texas with Jane and her best friend, Marilyn Lovell, at the Lovells' home there. It was a girls' slumber party and I felt privileged to be made honorary Astrowife for the weekend. Jim Lovell took us for a ride in his Cessna. At night, we kicked back over glasses of wine and I took notes as the gals sat around talking late into the night in PJs and robes.

Many wives experienced heartache and tension. After the men came back from the Moon, many of the marriages fell apart as a result of a decade of living under severe strain. They didn't know

how much their husbands' trips into space would change their lives on Earth. Like the rest of the astronauts' womenfolk, Sue Bean, the former wife of Alan Bean, waited at home in the space burbs. "After the lunar flight, I think sometimes the guys saw things a little bit differently. That type of experience can't help but change your outlook on the world, and we drifted apart," Sue confessed.

She and Barbara Cernan, two big-haired Texas blondes who have been best friends since their their husbands went to the Moon, have one of the most enduring friendships of the group. The wives' relationships have also evolved and today they are much closer than ever before, a symbol of the changing times they've lived through and the fact that without all the competition of the space race they can finally be honest with one another. Surprise, surprise—the wives remain closer than the astronauts. The relationships between them have been evolving and complex. Marilyn Lovell characterized the wives' enduring female friendships as proving ultimately more powerful than many of the marriages.

I reconnected with many of the wives and their children following the publication of *The Astronaut Wives Club*. Many readers have asked me what the space race was like for those kids. I interviewed many of them about their experiences and what it was like growing up as Astrokids. They told me over and over that in many ways, growing up in the close-knit community of astronaut families back when the space program was ramping up in the '60s, was growing up in the cradle of the American Dream! Their mothers often had to pry their kids away from *Star Trek* to watch their dad's launch into space. It was also hard on the kids having a hero dad who was often an absentee father

figure, as the Astrowives took on the role of “superhero mom” while the astronauts were away training for most of the week down at the Cape.

After the book came out, I sent all of the wives a patriotic candle—I thought it was a perfectly appropriate souvenir for the keepers of the flame. There were several book launch events (pun intended), but the party we had in Houston was particularly special because many of the wives still live there and attended, as did astronauts, socialites, and Joanne Herring (played by Julia Roberts in *Charlie Wilson’s War*). The jazz band played “Fly Me to the Moon.” It was like throwing the Moon Ball again. As one of the wives said at the very beginning of the project, “It will be every bit as exciting as watching a Saturn liftoff and over too quickly!”

On the dance floor was Gene Cernan, known as the last man to walk on the Moon. He’s the bookend to Neil Armstrong. I gave a speech and thanked all the wives, who were scattered around the room wearing yellow rose of Texas corsages, the A.W.C.’s signature flower. After I was done, Cernan asked for the mike. He first joked and said he was disappointed there was no “former husbands club” for him and his fellow astronaut buddies to join, but his voice faltered as he told the crowd, “If it weren’t for the wives who committed their lives to what we were doing, I don’t think we would have ever gotten to the Moon.”

The wives laughed. They knew how Gene, “Mr. Last Man on the Moon,” likes to hold center stage. But more important, they all knew what he said was true. They all knew what they had done. Their tear-rimmed eyes said it all: “Happy, proud, and thrilled!”

Tips from Lily Koppel on Planning an *Astronaut Wives Club* Book Club Night

See more recipes, discussion topics, and tips, including “The Wives Playlist,” at www.AstronautWivesClub.com.

For decorations, think patriotic, and for costumes, dress up Astronaut Wives style! Don’t hold back, ladies—get your girlfriends together for a night and rock 1960s style with beehive hairstyles. Take a photo and share on your favorite social media platform with the hashtag #AstroWives. Toast the Moon!

Recipes

Moon Eggs (Blue Cheese Deviled Eggs)

The art of the spread seems so 1950s, and if you had asked me about a year before meeting these incredible women, I would have pooh-poohed homemaking as being a prefeminist throw-back, going against all I was taught growing up to be a strong, self-reliant woman. (Before researching *The Astronaut Wives Club* I could barely get myself to wear an apron without cracking an ironic smile; I preferred to see my husband in one.) But these women were pros at setting a homey, welcoming atmosphere with a steaming cup and a plate of delectables: the gateway to

sharing. These blue-cheese deviled eggs would have been right at home on an Astrowives platter, because they always said the Moon was made of green cheese.

- 12 hard-cooked eggs
- 4 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons sour cream
- 1 teaspoon cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt, or more to taste
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon hot sauce, such as Tabasco
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup crumbled blue cheese, such as Roquefort or Danish blue
- 2 tablespoons finely minced parsley, plus extra to garnish

Halve eggs lengthwise. Set whites aside and transfer yolks to a fine-mesh strainer set over a medium bowl. Using a spoon or rubber spatula, press the yolks through the strainer into the bowl. Add the remaining ingredients and stir until smooth. Arrange egg whites on a serving platter. Spoon or squeeze the yolk mixture into the whites and garnish with a sprinkling of minced parsley.

Note: Deviled eggs can be assembled, covered with plastic wrap, and refrigerated for up to 2 hours before serving. (Recipe courtesy of Gail Monaghan)

Perfect Mini Astrowife Chocolate Cookies (or Cape Cookies)

Annie Glenn's famous chocolate chip cookie recipe once graced the pages of newspapers across the nation. Think of these as her cookie's modern update. They also remind me of those Marilyn Lovell served me. When I came back from the road, I tried them out on a friend. They made my New York City apartment smell delicious. "Can I offer you tea, coffee?" I took pleasure in watching my friend's smile grow. "Fresh-baked cookies? A friend gave me the recipe." We sat around the living room, feet up on the coffee table, sipping and snacking and gabbing away as women do. These modern minis are highly snackable and have only 10 or 15 calories each.

- 2¼ cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1¼ teaspoons salt
- 2 sticks unsalted butter, softened
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 packed cup dark brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 large eggs at room temperature
- 8 cups (four 12-ounce packages) chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 375°F.

Sift flour, soda, and salt together.

Combine the butter, both sugars, and vanilla. Add eggs and continue to mix until light and fluffy.

Stir in and evenly distribute the chips.

Using a fork or two knives, form tiny cookies containing just 2

to 4 chips each. Place about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch apart on parchment-lined cookie sheets and bake until golden, about 8 minutes. Cool on racks, then store in airtight containers for up to a month and frozen for much longer.

(Recipe courtesy of Gail Monaghan)

Mount Marilyn Martini

Marilyn and Jim Lovell treated me to dinner at the restaurant their family owns, Lovell's of Lake Forest Restaurant, which is filled with Captain Jim Lovell's space memorabilia and is a veritable Apollo 13 museum (including a little "Welcome Back to Earth" note from Princess Grace of Monaco and a mural of the steeds of Apollo that once decorated the St. Regis hotel before Tom Hanks purchased it for the couple as a gift at a space auction). If you make it to Lovell's of Lake Forest, be sure to order the Mount Marilyn Martini. They serve this celestial confection there, named after a certain special first lady of space. (Marilyn was raised in a candy shop that her parents owned in Milwaukee, so she's a self-proclaimed chocoholic.)

1 ounce Absolut vanilla vodka

1 ounce Godiva chocolate liqueur (or $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce Godiva chocolate liqueur and $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce Godiva white chocolate liqueur)

$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce Baileys Irish Cream

$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce Kahlúa

Pour over ice, shake well, and serve in a fudge-rimmed martini glass (put some Hershey's chocolate syrup on a plate and swirl the rim in it). Voila: the Moon in a glass!

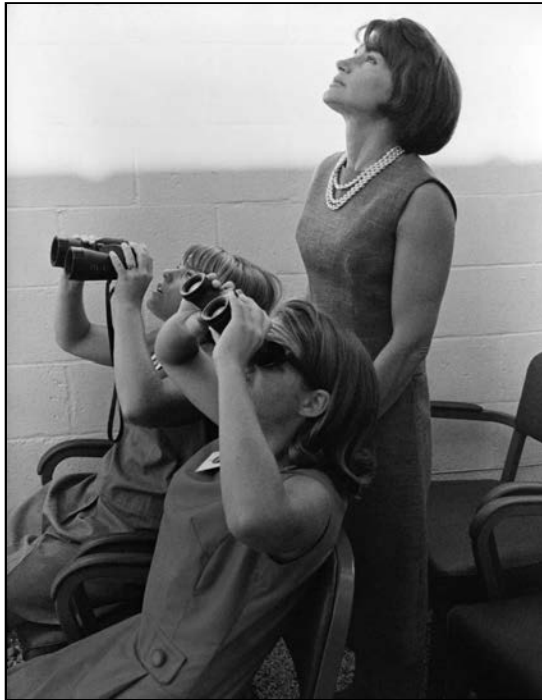
(Recipe courtesy of Lovell's of Lake Forest Restaurant)



Out of This World Photographs of the Astronauts and Their Wives



Here's Rene! Platinum blonde Rene Carpenter (pronounced to rhyme with *keen*), wife of astronaut Scott Carpenter, second American to orbit the Earth, poses with her family, May 1962. Rene's trajectory explains how the wives' collective story reflected a new era for women. By the early 1970s, Rene was hosting her own feminist talk show. (*Courtesy: NASA*)



Aviatrix Powder Puffer. Pilot Trudy Cooper, wife of “Gordo” Cooper, and her teenage daughters Cam and Jan watch Gordo lift off during Gemini 5, August 1965. Trudy and her husband had been separated when he was going through the astronaut selection process, and they got back together for the sake of the space race. *(Courtesy: NASA)*



Dream Girl. Annie Glenn, wife of Mercury astronaut John Glenn, smiles, posing for a photo after John is tapped to be the first American to orbit the Earth, 1962. America had been in love with the Ultimate Astrowife Annie Glenn ever since she had caught attention in a *Life* cover story, “Astronauts’ Wives: Their Inner Thoughts, Worries.” Annie delivered what NASA demanded of each astronaut family—a squeaky-clean image. (Courtesy: NASA)



“Betz.” Betty Grissom, who worked as a late-night telephone operator to put her astronaut husband, Gus, through college, was destined, against all odds, to become the torchbearer of the space wives. After Gus died in a disastrous 1967 capsule blaze during a routine training, Betty sued NASA’s largest contractor, North American Rockwell, and settled for \$350,000. Here, Betty and Gus Grissom with their two sons, Scotty and Mark, after Gus’s Gemini 3 flight, March 1965. (*Courtesy: NASA*)



The Wife Stuff. Mercury astronaut Wally Schirra's wife, Josephine "Jo" Schirra, was the perfect Navy wife and knew the proper codes of behavior, taught to her by her Navy-wife mother. Here, Jo sits for a portrait in her new home in Timber Cove (a suburb of Houston), September 1962. Jo had furnished the house with a modern Oriental flair. (*Courtesy: NASA*)



Lady Louise (the wives' own "Jackie O"). The first American in space, Alan Shepard received the NASA Distinguished Service Award at the White House from President John F. Kennedy after his *Freedom 7* flight, May 1961. In this photo, Alan's wife and mother are on the left, and the other Mercury astronauts appear in the background. All the other wives were envious that Louise got to be the first to meet Jackie. (Courtesy: NASA)



Meet the Lovell Family. From a Florida beach, the family of Jim Lovell (of “Houston, we have a problem” fame) watching the Apollo 8 liftoff on December 21, 1968. From left: James, Jeffery, Susan, Marilyn, and Barbara. Apollo 8 was the first mission to orbit the Moon, and Jim and his crewmates were given a 50-50 chance of survival by NASA. The Lovells are representative of many of the astronauts and their wives: they were high school sweethearts and got married after Jim graduated from Annapolis. Marilyn was with him throughout his test-pilot career. You had to be almost a superwoman to be married to one of these guys, because the job was so dangerous, and the men were so macho. (*Courtesy: NASA*)



Queen Jane. Jane Conrad (now Jane Dreyfus), the wife of astronaut “Princeton Pete” Conrad, in a Pucci dress specially designed for her to wear while her hubby was Moonbound. During Pete’s Apollo 12 mission in November 1969, Jane’s sanity hinged on having her family and the other Astrowives with her for support (she was also able to hear Pete via the “squawk box,” a fabulous space-age device that allowed the wives to hear the transmissions between the astronauts and mission control). Jane compared the anxiety of listening to the squawk box to being pregnant, and “wanting the baby to kick so you know it’s OK.” (*Courtesy of Jane Dreyfus*)



The Pats. Astrowives Pat White (right) and Pat McDivitt (left) and the Whites' children, Bonnie and Eddie III, visit mission control and sit with flight director Chris Kraft during Gemini 4 (the mission on which Ed White performed the first U.S. spacewalk), June 1965. After Ed White died in the Apollo 1 fire two years later, his wife, Pat, fell into a depression. Tragically, the weekend before the astronaut wives reunion in the mid-1980s, Pat White committed suicide. (*Courtesy: NASA*)



Mr. and Mrs. Last Man on the Moon. Astronaut Gene Cernan, the last man to walk on the Moon as the commander of the final Apollo mission, poses for a family portrait with his wife, Barbara, and their daughter, Teresa Dawn, age nine, at their home in Nassau Bay, near the Johnson Space Center, Houston, Texas, October 1972. In this photograph, Barbara is wearing some “space bling” around her neck. After the missions, the husbands would present to their wives gold jewelry they’d taken into space. And if they were landing on the Moon, the pieces would actually touch down on the lunar surface in a PPK—a personal preference kit—and be flown back. (*Courtesy: NASA*)

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