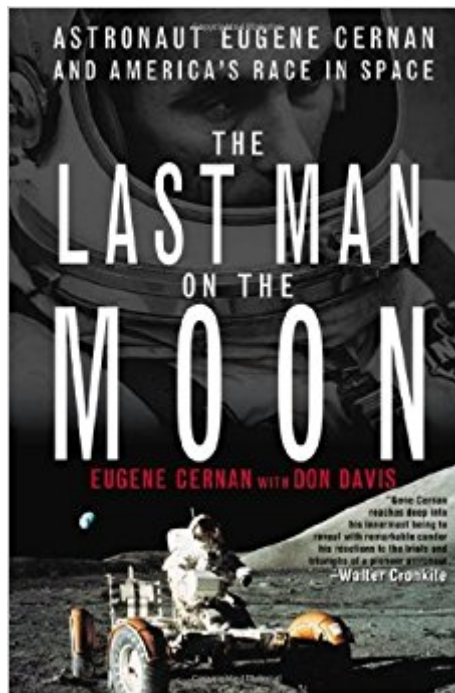




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# The Last Man On The Moon: Astronaut Eugene Cernan And America's Race In Space



## Synopsis

Eugene Cernan is a unique American who came of age as an astronaut during the most exciting and dangerous decade of spaceflight. His career spanned the entire Gemini and Apollo programs, from being the first person to spacewalk all the way around our world to the moment when he left man's last footprint on the Moon as commander of Apollo 17. Between those two historic events lay more adventures than an ordinary person could imagine as Cernan repeatedly put his life, his family and everything he held dear on the altar of an obsessive desire. Written with New York Times bestselling author Don Davis, this is the astronaut story never before told - about the fear, love and sacrifice demanded of the few men who dared to reach beyond the heavens for the biggest prize of all - the Moon.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

That "Geno" Cernan was commander of Apollo 17, the final manned moon mission, was a fitting conclusion to a flying career that included two previous stints in space (Gemini 9 and Apollo 10). His frank, earthy memoir of his years at NASA adds another entertaining, informative volume to the burgeoning shelf of books illuminating the inner workings of the space program and the people who made it happen. Coauthor Don Davis, a veteran journalist, helps Cernan craft a colloquial prose style that nicely captures the competitive, macho personality that seemed virtually mandatory for astronauts in the 1960s and '70s. Cernan candidly depicts the reckless streak that twice led to needless injuries jeopardizing his spot on a mission. He also acknowledges the stresses endured by

his ex-spouse Barbara as she struggled to be the perfect astronaut wife--cheerful and uncomplaining for the cameras while he experienced all the fun and adventure of the job. And it sure was fun, as becomes clear in the exciting descriptions of his spacewalk from Gemini 9 and stroll around the moon from Apollo 17. Detailed accounts of each flight, including technical problems and personal tensions (particularly with Apollo 17 teammate Jack Schmitt, distrusted because he was a scientist, not a test pilot), remind readers that the space program is a human endeavor, with inevitable failures that make the triumphs that much sweeter. --Wendy Smith

Gemini and Apollo astronaut Cernan, helped by Davis (*A Father's Rage*, etc.), takes readers with him on one great space adventure after another including Gemini 9's "Spacewalk from Hell," Apollo 1's fire, Snoopy's hair-raising swoop by the lunar surface. Readers experience the agony of life-or-death decision making in the Apollo 13 control room, exult with Cernan and geologist Jack Schmitt throughout the mission of Apollo 17 and meet legendary characters of the astronaut corps and the technical and political leaders who shared their glory. Cernan reveals the risk-taking, competitive personality and oversized self-confidence that drove his success as a test pilot and astronaut. He also acknowledges his failings as a husband to his first wife, Barbara, whom he presents as a quiet, strong homefront heroine who always found the right words in public despite her private difficulties. However, careful readers may see more of Cernan than he intended to display. His admiration and friendship may justify letting Wernher von Braun and Spiro Agnew off the hook for what many consider their political and personal misdeeds, but his unforgiving view of Buzz Aldrin seems to stem from personal animus. Why must the last man on the moon demean the second? ("[Aldrin] came flapping into my office at the Manned Spacecraft Center one day like an angry stork..."). Despite the bad taste of Cernan's words about Aldrin, this is an exciting, insider's take on what it was like to become one of the first humans in space. 16 pages of b&w photos not seen by PW. Agent, Jane Dystel. Author tour. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

As an aviation and space buff, I haven't really read any of the astronaut biographies, which might be surprising. After a while, the Apollo program becomes something like the Beatles. You become obsessed with knowing everything but somehow there is nothing new and after a while the stories are known and no longer all that interesting. However, I saw an interview with Cernan on youtube, and the film this book was based on with the same title and wanted to read this account. What I always appreciated about Gene Cernan was he was the rare astronaut that had the vulnerability to go beyond the technical. That is, in an interview he stated that he felt he needed to express what

going to the moon's like - how it felt. Unfortunately for many of them who journeyed to the moon, expressing oneself was a difficult thing. Cernan was a bit different and this book is the expression of that fact. The book is open, vulnerable and just a great read. Cernan really expressed what his life as an astronaut was like, how it felt, what it was like. In short, this is just a great read I blew through very rapidly. Cernan talks about himself and his family. Although he wasn't the only one to leave reminders as to his family, his references to his daughter really always said something to me and my life and family. Cernan seemed like a mensch for his actions and a genuine person able to more freely express himself about his travels than most of the other astronauts. Unfortunately, the technical brilliance and ability didn't translate to a ability and desire to convey that beauty to humanity as much as could be hoped. I recall seeing an interview where Cernan felt it was his duty to talk. This book goes a long way towards conveying things that only a limited number of human beings have ever felt. If you have the slightest interest in Apollo I would recommend this book. Unfortunately Cernan passed away in early 2017, but this book is actually inspiring. It made me want to aspire to do better. These astronauts were not just strap it and go types, they were intimately involved in many technical details and were engineers and technically very very smart people. In reading this book I realized just how great so many of the Apollo people were with the three astronauts just being the tip of the spear so to speak. Fantastic read, informative and wished I had grabbed it years ago. My reading of Andrew Chaikin's book was not the quite the whole story as this book makes clear. Recommended.

You may think you've learned everything about the 12 men who walked on the moon, but Gene Cernan's perspective and insights are a great read. 50 years after the clean cut image days, we see the drive to excel. There are candid remarks about not all the astronauts being the best of pals, great anecdotes and, in spite of Cernan wishing he were a poet to better share his experiences with all those taxpayers and engineers and technicians who put him on the moon, he gets the point across that the experience was beyond comprehension and articulation. I've read much on lunar geology by Dr Rock of UW Madison (aka Harrison Schmidt), but these human glimpses were priceless. Cernan is strong and opinionated, but gracious in sharing his beliefs and thoughts with us earthbound folk. He makes me wish people still had the drive to explore and to push themselves beyond the mundane.

I liked this book. It did not have much information that I did not already know, but I read lots of these kind of books so that might not be a surprise. If you aren't someone who has a large interest in

space there will be lots of interesting facts. The one thing in this book that I thought was interesting was hearing Cernan's thoughts on Buzz Aldrin. I knew that some astronauts didn't like him, but it was fascinating to hear Cernan give exacting reasons why. The MP3 CD is great. Very easy to rip and upload to my phone.

I have an affinity for space documentaries, movies, art (Alan Bean!!), and books. Gene Cernan is the last man to walk on the moon, and in his memoir, he talks about his humble beginnings, along with his exciting recollections of becoming a pilot, husband, father, and astronaut. His writing is easy to read, funny, and informative. His sense of humor is wonderful, and I couldn't get enough of his story. I will definitely be reading this book more than once. I encourage anyone, who has a love for NASA, space, space history, or the moon, to read this book. I also encourage those who share my fascination with anything space related, to watch "When We Left Earth" (by Discovery Channel) for an additional look at Gene Cernan. His interviews are funny, educational, and honest. (He also happens to be a pretty handsome guy.) Gene, if you are reading this, thank you so much for writing this book with (so much) detail. Unfortunately, I was born about a year after you took your last steps on the moon, but your book allowed me to feel as if I were sitting in my living room watching it happen (live) on television. I will make sure to pass this amazing history to my children, and assure they will never forget you, and all of the other extraordinary men, who made life in the world of space travel (NASA) look easy.

Gene Cernan is an extension of my clan with a lot of family contact. Gene represents the technically skilled Slovak craftsmen who were often engineers involved in mechanical construction. Many were involved in building the bridges that open and close across the Chicago River. Gene comes across as a skilled, humble and honest man. Too many academics are not humble or honest. God bless the skilled man who has the courage to tackle the unknown.

This book kept me interested from beginning to end. I was sad when I finished it, both because it was the end of the book and also because it was the end of the Apollo program, and while we have achieved some great things, there has been nothing in the past almost 50 years that has come close to this level of magnificence, nothing that has amazed us or kept us glued to the television at the level Apollo did. Whether or not you lived through the Apollo era, you owe it to yourself to re-live this part of American history, when we achieved the unachievable!

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