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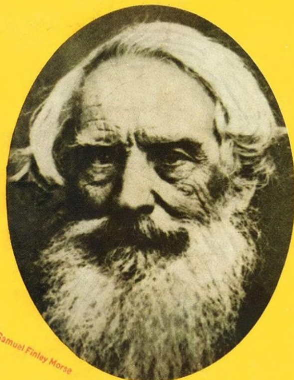
Esquire

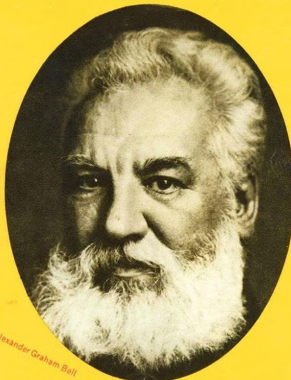
THE MAGAZINE FOR MEN

We asked Marshall McLuhan, W. H. Auden, Marianne Moore, R. Buckminster Fuller, Robert Graves, Ayn Rand, Bob Hope, Hubert H. Humphrey, Tiny Tim, Sal Mineo, Vladimir Nabokov, John Kenneth Galbraith, Muhammad Ali, Truman Capote, and U Thant:

What words should the first man on the moon utter that will ring through the ages?


Samuel Finley Morse

"What hath God wrought."


Alexander Graham Bell

"Watson, come here– I need you."

Henry Morton Stanley

"Dr. Livingstone, I presume?"

Charles Lindbergh

"Well, I made it."

"Er...ah...well, let's see now."

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Esquire

Le Mot Juste for the Moon

by William H. Honan

We, the human race, hereby request that the first man on the moon, destined to speak on our behalf, pause for a moment and give some consideration to what he intends to say

When Neil H. Armstrong, a blond, blue-eyed, thirty-eight-year-old civilian astronaut from Wapakoneta, Ohio, steps out of the lunar landing module this summer and plants his size eleven space boot on the surface of the moon, the event will eclipse in historic importance the landing of Christopher Columbus in the New World. Commander Armstrong's step will not immediately affect the nature or quality of life on earth, of course (neither did Columbus'), but it will mark the departure point of a fantastic new adventure in the saga of man. For that step onto the moon will signal a readiness to travel throughout the solar system, even the universe—in flights that will lead not merely to new worlds, new substances, new conceptions about the nature of matter and of life itself, but, it can scarcely be doubted, to contact with new beings as well. Moreover, Armstrong's will be the first such epic stride to be recorded in detail by the microphone and the television camera. Future generations will be able to relive all that was said and done at that moment as never before in the history of exploration. The stupendous magnitude and unprecedented visibility of what Commander Armstrong is about to do, therefore, combine to pose the question: when the astronaut takes that first step on the moon, what should he *say*?

At the great moments of discovery and invention in the past, men have risen, or stumbled, to the occasion with everything from instant eloquence to stupefied silence. But whatever they have said, or left unsaid, has been handed down to posterity. It was meticulously noted, for example, by a sailor who kept the logbook during Columbus' first voyage to the New World, that it was not the Admiral and commander of the expedition who first set eyes on the New World, but a lookout aboard the *Pinta* named Rodrigo de Triana who drew the watch early on the morning of October 12, 1492. At approximately two a.m., de Triana saw a white sand cliff gleaming in the moonlight and sang out: *"Tierra! Tierra!"* ("Land! Land!"). The captain of the *Pinta*, Martín Alonso Pinzón, rushed up on deck, confirmed the sighting, and fired a gun as a signal to Columbus, aboard the flagship *Santa María* which lay behind. The *Pinta* then permitted the *Santa María* to overtake her, and, as she did so, Columbus, too, must have seen land for he called across to Pinzón: "Señor Martín Alonso, you have found land! I give you five thousand maravedis as a present!" The *Pinta*'s logbook noted that when Columbus led a small party ashore the next morning, he knelt on the beach to offer prayers of thanks and then rose and gave the island the name San Salvador (Holy Savior).

After Magellan had circumnavigated the globe in 1522, his fleet cast anchor off the quay of Seville and, according to a crewman, "discharged all our artillery." Then the ragged sailors went, "in shirts and barefoot, each holding a candle," to offer thanks at the shrines of Santa María de la Victoria and Santa María de l'Antiqua. When Marco Polo met the great Kublai Khan in China he "made obeisance with the utmost humility." The Khan was flattered and so entertained him "with good cheer." When the Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama sighted the New World—if we are to believe Meyerbeer's *L'Africane*—he burst into song, twittering: "Ooooo! Pa-aa-ra-di-so!" Captain Cook was tongue-tied when he came upon Tahiti; evidently he just ogled at the girls. And Commodore Perry, on stepping ashore in Japan, also kept his thoughts to himself but had a Marine band play *Hail! Columbia!*, which caused the samurai warriors standing alongside their troops to scowl ferociously. Stanley, of course, said, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?" when he found the famous British explorer starving almost to the point of death in Ujiji after having vainly sought the headwaters of the Nile. Livingstone's reply—less well-known, although not bad for keeping his sangfroid under the circumstances—was "Yes." Admiral Peary, after he discovered the North Pole, wrote home: "Northern trip entirely satisfactory." Lindbergh, after flying the Atlantic and landing in Paris, peered out of his cockpit groggily and said, with a faint smile, "Well, I made it." He was hauled off to be formally greeted by the American Ambassador and several French dignitaries. "Thank you," he told them. "I am awfully happy." And then, according to a reporter who was standing nearby, "his fatigue could be fought off no longer and he seemed to go to sleep standing there on his feet." When Admiral Byrd flew over the South Pole two years later in his boxy Ford trimotor monoplane, he must have come under Lindbergh's spell because the first words he radioed home were: "Well, it's done." And Sir Edmund Hillary, when returning to his base camp from the summit of Mount Everest, "shouted the good news," according to his own account, "in rough New Zealand slang."

Ever since the cry "Eureka!" rang out from the baths at Syracuse when Archimedes figured out the principle of flotation, scientists and inventors have also contributed to the literature of famous first words. A good many, no doubt, have merely exclaimed in their laboratories or workshops, "Aha!" or "By jove!", yet others have been a great deal more self-conscious about what they were doing and recognized that classy language might add luster to their accomplishments. One so worldly wise was Samuel F. B. Morse, the American painter who began tinkering with electromagnets in the early 1840's and invented the telegraph. When Morse was later granted an appropriation by Congress to set up the first large-scale test of his invention, between the Supreme Court chamber in Washington and a hotel room in Baltimore some sixty miles away, he invited Annie Ellsworth, the bright and attractive daughter of the U.S. Commissioner of Patents, to think up a suitably lofty first message for him to send. Miss Ellsworth suggested a Biblical quotation—"What hath God wrought!"—and when the wire was finally strung and all preparations ready, Morse tapped it out letter by letter and so into history as the world's first intercity telegram.

Alexander Graham Bell, the Scottish-American professor of vocal physiology who invented the telephone a generation later, was much impressed by Morse's first message. When *(Continued on page 56)*

Fifty Helpful Hints

Professor Hubert H. Humphrey — May the conflicts and troubles of man never find a home here. May the moon be a symbol of peace and cooperation among the nations of earth.

Vladimir Nabokov — You want a lump in (the astronaut's) throat to obstruct the wisecrack.

William Bernbach (Chairman of the Board of Doyle Dane Bernbach)—1) This neighborhood is never going to be the same again. 2) Nice place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live here. 3) I'm proud of this but I would rather be the man who made peace on earth. And 4) Now the corruption starts.

James Whittaker (first American to climb Everest; climbed Mount Kennedy with R.F.K.; shot the rapids too)—Now how the hell do we get back? To me, it would be a very natural thing to say. As with mountain climbing, an astronaut is so highly motivated to reach his goal — he's extended himself beyond the margin of safety (although not as much as a climber would have) — that he wouldn't be considering until he reached his goal that he might not make it. But once the goal has been reached you immediately think of how to get back.

Sun-Ra (the space-age jazz poet) — Reality has touched against myth / Humanity can move to achieve the impossible / Because when you've achieved one impossible the others / Come together to be with their brother, the first impossible / Borrowed from the rim of the myth / Happy Space Age To You....

Anne Sexton — Moonsong, Womansong / I am alive at night. / I am dead in the morning, / an old vessel who used up her oil, bleak and pale boned. / No miracle. No dazzle. / I'm out of repair / but you are tall in your battle dress / and I must arrange for your journey. / I was always a virgin, / old and pitted. / Before the world was, I was. / I have been oranging and fat / carrot colored, gaped at, / allowing my cracked o's to drop on the sea / near Venice and Mombasa. / Over Maine I have rested. / I have fallen like a jet into the Pacific. / I have committed perjury over Japan. / I have dangled my pendulum, / my fat bag, my gold, gold / blinkedy light / over you all. / So if you must inquire, do so. / After all I am not artificial. / I look long upon you, / love-bellied and empty, / flipping my endless display / for you, my cold, cold / coverall man. / You need only request / and I will grant it. / It is virtually guaranteed / that you will walk into me like a barracks. / So come cruising, come cruising, / you of the blast off, / you of the bastion, / you of the scheme. / I will shut my fat eye down, headquarters of an area, / house of a dream.

Keir Dullea (actor who plays the astronaut in *2001: A Space Odyssey*) — I shall never lose the awe of being the first man to stand on a given spot where no man has ever trod before.

Lawrence Ferlinghetti — We Roman emperors of space have hereby proved that heaven doesn't exist and that the only god is consciousness itself.

Father Malcolm Boyd — I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. All right, you guys, whoever you are standing behind that rock over there, come out with your hands up!

Marianne Moore — Just got here and I have to look around / (I'm quoting Harry Belafonte) / Sit down. I can't sit down. I've just got to Heaven and I've got to look around.

Leonard Nimoy (plays Spock in *Star Trek*) — I'd say to earth, from here you are a peaceful, beautiful ball and I only wish everyone could see it with that perspective and unity.

E. H. Munn Sr. (Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Prohibition National Committee) — Be assured, people of earth, we shall not corrupt the moon with beverage alcohol, with tobacco's poisons or with other of man's unfortunate concoctions. Rather, we shall keep this area of God's universe pure and free from the ugliness and the devastation of the sinful excesses of humankind.

Robert Graves — (I suggest a tactful propitiation of the Moon Goddess, thus averting national lunacy.) Forgive the intrusion,' Ma'am. Don't smile so bitter / At good Yanks tidying up your Sputnik litter.

Melvin Belli — Since there is a dispute over whether Columbus brought it or got it from the Indians the last time a New World was discovered, our astronauts should spare future moon historians any doubt by saying, immediately upon landing, "Gentlemen, our negative Wasserman cards!"

Harold O'Neill (President, American Sunbathing Association) — I proclaim this a wonderful spot where the bare facts of life shall not be loused up with earthly conventions. Moonlife shall be sans clothing, thus eliminating the need for vacation wardrobes . . . an important weight factor when considering space travel.

Stanley Kunitz — The Flight of Apollo: Earth was my home, but even there I was a stranger. This mineral crust. I walk like a swimmer. What titanic bombardments in those old astral wars! I know what I know: I shall never escape from strangeness or complete my jour-

ney. Think of me as nostalgic, afraid, exalted. I am your man on the moon, a speck of megalomania, restless for the leap towards island universes pulsing beyond where the constellations set. Infinite space overwhelms the human heart, but in the middle of nowhere life inexorably calls to life. Forward my mail to Mars. What news from the Great Spiral Nebula in Andromeda and the Magellanic Clouds?

Senator George McGovern — I raise the Flag of the United Nations to claim this planet for all mankind and to signal a new era of understanding and cooperation among nations — both on the Moon and on Earth.

William Safire (former speech writer for Richard Nixon and currently a Special Assistant to the President of the United States) —Free at last.

Isaac Asimov — Goddard, we are here! It would be a salute to Robert Hutchings Goddard, who was the father of all this. In 1926, he fired the first liquid-fueled rocket. Before that, in 1919, he wrote a booklet about rocketry called *A Method of Reaching Extreme Altitudes.* He was the first American to speculate in scientific journals about rocket flight. He received no recognition at all for his work. In fact, he had to leave Massachusetts because the rocket experiments were considered dangerous. But a great deal of the equipment we have today was originally patented by Goddard. He died on August 10, 1945, unheralded. After the war when we were asking questions about rocketry of the German scientists who made the V-2, they replied, "Why ask us; ask Goddard!" So I'm inclined to be a sentimentalist about this. I'd like to have our astronauts say, "Goddard, we are here!"

Timothy Leary — 1) The C.I.A. really blew it again. How did all those barefoot, long-haired, smiling-eyed kids get up here ahead of us? 2) Eldridge Cleaver, you are under arrest for trespassing on a military reservation.

Muhammad Ali — Bring me back a challenger, 'cause I've defeated everyone here on earth.

Bob Hope — 1) Well, at least I didn't end up in Havana. 2) My God, smog! 3) I'll be darned, it's made of cheese!

Brother Antoninus—Bone cold. An immense Golgotha. Out of this tomb, what resurrection? Out of this dust, what weird rebirth.

Joseph Heller — I'd like to hear nothing; the chances are I won't be listening. I'm more interested in what Joe Namath or George Sauer has to say about anything, and I hope the moon landing doesn't take place during a Jet football game and interrupt the telecast. One of my favorite statements of recent times, in fact, came from George Sauer. He was talking about a Baltimore player with a crew cut, and he said: "He ought to let his hair grow, he looks funny that way." I doubt if anything said about the moon landing will make more sense.

Tiny Tim—The first thing I would like to hear him say is "Praise the Lord through Christ that we landed well and safely." Then I'd like him to describe the moon, and how it looks and feels, what the craters are like, whether there are any cities around, if there's any air to breathe. I think there are definitely beings on the moon. They will probably be people very different from us, but the astronauts should be prepared to show them the goodwill of the people of Earth. They should bring with them free gifts. Things like candies, balloons, bubble pipes, soap bars, pens, pencils, plants, even a ukelele, and, most important, the Holy Scriptures, so we can give our new acquaintances some idea of what life is like down here. I really believe life does exist on every planet, even the suns, and before we go visiting other worlds, we should be sure we are ready to make the people we find waiting there our friends.

Truman Capote—If I were the first astronaut on the moon my first remark would be: So far so good.

Justice William O. Douglas — I pledge that we the people of the earth will not litter, pollute and despoil the moon as we have our own planet.

Theodore Weiss — 1) Moon that we have for thousands of years looked up to, now help us to see the earth in its true light, as whole and one. 2) The moon having shone on the earth till now, by way of its light we, risen also, come to pay it homage, the blessing of that light reflected in us.

Congressman Edward I. Koch (Representative of Manhattan's "silk-stocking" 17th Congressional District) — I proclaim the moon an international scientific laboratory, for all men of all nations to use peacefully in their quest for a deeper understanding of the many worlds which are theirs.

Gwendolyn Brooks (poetess who won Pulitzer Prize in 1950; her volume *In the Mecca* was nominated for National Book Award last year)—*Here* there shall be peace and love.

David Slavitt — We have realized an ancient dream, and it is rock and dust; now we must look back to earth, imagine what it ought to be, and hope that dream turns out better.

Joshua Slavitt (age five, son of above poet) — Hi there, nobody!

(Continued on page 138)

Bell realized he was on the verge of having his gadget operational, therefore, he began to declaim Shakespeare into it—usually the "To be or not to be" soliloquy from *Hamlet*—in testing an improvement or a new piece of equipment. On March 10, 1876, Bell and his assistant Thomas Watson were trying out a new transmitter. Watson strolled off to his receiving station in a room just outside the laboratory and Bell prepared to recite. Just then Bell accidentally sloshed battery acid over his clothes and cried out anxiously: "Watson, come here—I need you!" Watson heard him over the telephone! And came running. Bell, in his joy at Watson's having heard his summons, forgot about the acid spreading over his clothes and the two men took turns rhapsodically declaiming verse, pithy quotations and finally "God save the Queen!" over the world's first telephone. When Bell demonstrated his invention at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition later that year, and in subsequent trials, he boomingly recited "To be or not to be. . . ." But telephonic Shakespeare made little impression on the public; the rhetoric of accident and chance remark seemed more relevant to that increasingly technology-conscious era. Accordingly, on January 25, 1915, when Bell was called upon to inaugurate the opening of the first transcontinental telephone line, nothing would do but to have Bell in New York tell Watson in San Francisco, "Watson, come here—I need you!"

Unfortunately, no one knows what Thomas A. Edison said when he invented the electric light bulb, but in 1877 when he tested his first crude phonograph he simply bellowed a utilitarian "Halloo!" into the instrument and then waited breathlessly for it to replay a whisperish and warbling "Ha-ha-loo-oh-oo." A quarter of a century later, in 1901, when Guglielmo Marconi was pecking out the world's first transatlantic radio signal, it surprised no one that he had selected to send—not a glittering *terza rima* from the immortal Dante but merely the letter "S" in Morse code, repeated over and over again until the team at St. Johns, Newfoundland, finally picked up a faint "dit-dit-dit, dit-dit-dit, dit-dit-dit. . . ." That was the new rhetoric of technology in its purest form.

Two years after, the Wright brothers also expressed themselves in the new fashion. Following that first success with their flying machine, Wilbur and Orville hiked a few miles to the government wireless station at Kitty Hawk and Orville telegraphed to his father a message that now seems almost prophetic of the staccato gauge-reading one hears from the astronauts while in space: "SUCCESS FOUR FLIGHTS THURSDAY MORNING ALL AGAINST TWENTY-ONE-MILE WIND STARTED FROM LEVEL WITH ENGINE POWER ALONE AVERAGE SPEED THROUGH AIR THIRTY-ONE MILES LONGEST FIFTY-NINE SECONDS INFORM PRESS HOME CHRISTMAS."

Prophetic or not, the astronauts have carried on in the same cryptic style. The technical chatter they banter back and forth with the ground is simply unintelligible to the layman. Sometimes, in fact, it is unintelligible to the astronauts. During the flight of Apollo 9, for instance, at one point Mission Control told the men in space: "We'd like to have a P.R.D. readout from each of you. And we'll see you over Tananarive at about 24:25." To this, the spacecraft replied, a little sleepily: "Uh . . . Roger and thank you. We'll get a P.R.D. report as soon as we figure out what it is."

But technical jargon, and its attendant confusions, are to be expected when the business at hand is a highly sophisticated feat of engineering. What is distressing about the messages the astronauts have sent crackling back from space, however, is that when attempting to express themselves on nontechnical subjects, as they quite often do, words fail them. Indeed, the astronauts have shown themselves to be so inarticulate, so crippled in their speech, it must now be stated, with no little alarm, that when they land on the moon this summer the clear indication is they will follow the worst, not the best, of the historic precedents set for them—mumbling and fumbling like Captain Cook and Lindbergh rather than soaring and swelling like Vasco da Gama and Samuel F. B. Morse.

Consider the astronauts' record. February 20, 1962, dawns cloudy and grey. Suddenly the sun breaks through, the sky clears, and from that little-known pancake flat off the Florida coast—a belch of orange flame, the roar of horsepower loosed. Up, up and away! Colonel John H. Glenn Jr. rides the great, shimmering Atlas booster up toward the limitless reaches of space and then arches gracefully into orbit. What a day for America! It was Step One to the moon; the door to the universe flung open! Amidst all this, what did Colonel Glenn have to say?

"Smoothing out real fine. We're doing real fine up here. . . . This is very comfortable . . . I have nothing but a very fine feeling. It feels very normal and very good. My status is excellent. I feel fine. Over. . . . We're doing real fine up here. Everything is going well. Over. Roger. That sure was a short day. . . . Yes, sir! Roger. . . . Negative . . . I feel fine. . . . Man, this is beautiful. Hey, Gordo, I want you to send a message to the Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps in Washington. Tell him I have my four hours required flight time this month, and request a flight chit be made out for me. . . . Roger. . . . Affirmative. . . . Negative. . . . I feel real good, Wally. . . . Chute is out. Beautiful chute. Chute looks good. Chute looks very good. The chute looks very good."

The newspapers ballyhooed Glenn's spatial effusions; radio and TV commentators played and replayed the tapes, yet now that all the patriotic beating of breasts is over with, it seems clear that whatever else he may have added to the Saga of Man, John Glenn filled the first chapter in the Book of Space with five hours of unrelieved drivel—much of it on a par with the McGuffey Reader ("I see the ball. The ball is red"). If the transcript of Glenn's flight was a warning that the first man in space might be some kind of a linguistic throwback, proof came the following year during the flight of Major Leroy Gordon ("Gordo") Cooper Jr. in Faith 7. Cooper's flight was seven times as long as Glenn's and it contained roughly seven times as many muffed opportunities to describe space or express the sensations of a space traveler, and about seven times as much of the sort of Smilin' Jack jargon ("Rog. I read you loud and clear. Affirmative. . . . Negative. . . . Over") that schoolchildren had already begun to pick up from Glenn. A few phrases of particular significance, however, cropped up in the colloquy between the astronaut in space and Commander Walter M. Schirra Jr. who served as the capsule communicator on the ground. At the moment Cooper was successfully injected into orbit, Schirra told him, "You're right smack dab in the middle of the plot." *Smack dab?* No American had used such an expression, except in jest, for more than a generation. And then, hours later, when Cooper landed Faith 7 only seven thousand yards from the aircraft carrier *Kearsarge*—a bull's-eye for a vehicle reentering from space—he exclaimed joyously that he had come down "right on the old bazoo!" Had Cooper said "right on the money" it would have sounded at least vaguely contemporary. Even "right on the old gazola"— a World War II expression—would have called less attention to itself. But *bazoo?* That sounded more like Granny on *The Beverly Hillbillies* than a daring young man flashing around the globe at 17,000 miles per hour.

And Granny was not far from the mark. Both "smack dab" and "old bazoo" came into vogue at the turn of the century through the popular novels of Will N. Harben, a now completely forgotten literary artist who specialized in tales of small-town life in northern Georgia. Harben had an absolute genius—unrivaled before or since—for phony colloquialism. He could cram more "By crackeys," "Tarnations," "Looky heres," "Gee whillikins" and "Jumpin' Jehoshaphats" on a page than Shakespeare could images or Alexander Pope rhymes. And the public ate it up. So successful in fact, was Harben that it is almost impossible for present-day philologists to determine whether anyone ever really said "Looky here" or "Gee whillikins" before Harben popularized such expressions in his novels, claiming, of course, that the people down in northern Georgia really talked that way. In any case, it now appears that Harben was a sort of rhetorical Robert Goddard of the space program. Both "smack dab" and "bazoo" appear in Harben's novel *Abner Daniel*—a tale about a kindly old Georgian Mr. Chips—published in 1902. "A railroad is goin' to be run from Blue Lick Junction to Darley," says one of Harben's characters. "It'll be started inside of the next yeer an' 'll run *smack dab* through my property." Later on, another character says, "Don't shoot off yore *bazoo* on one side or t'other." The book is a veritable glossary of space terms.

As the American moon program topped the feats of Glenn and Cooper, new astronauts with equally curious manners of speech became known to the public. For instance, on September 12, 1966, as Commander Charles Conrad Jr. aboard Gemini 11 was closing his range to an Agena rocket in order to perform a docking maneuver, he said: "Whoop-de-doo!" In 1968, when Captain Schirra was maneuvering his Apollo 7, he cried: *(Continued on page 139)*

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AFTER FORTY YEARS OF WRITING ABOUT MOVIES, I KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT CINEMA AND, BEING A CONGENITAL CRITIC, I ALSO KNOW WHAT I LIKE, AND WHY. BUT

(Continued from page 83) *Saturday Review*, Max Beerbohm, is still interesting to read but not because one is curious about their conclusions on plays and playwrights who have been forgotten for half a century.

After Mr. Crowther got wised up to the renascence abroad—his dismissal of *L'Avventura* as a pretentious bore provoked a massive backlash of indignant letters that changed his mind—I found I agreed with his valuations of foreign films more often than with those of Pauline Kael—and even on American movies, Mr. C's newly acquired benignity toward imports being paralleled by cautious sprouts of skepticism about Hollywood. (In admirable contrast to Mr. C, the eternal philistine, forever insecure and so a pushover for whatever "trends" are pushing hardest, Miss K refuses to be bullied by highbrow fashion, reacting against the European "art" film and in favor of our domestic commercial product; okay but she overdoes it; and she forgets that sometimes a fashionable trend is justified.) But I continued to skim Mr. C's clotted journalese, you couldn't *read* it, getting from it what I had before our tastes agreed, zero; and I continued to enjoy Miss K's reviews. Her judgments were often wrongheaded but always clearly reasoned. I found her roundabout trip to the wrong terminus more educational than Mr. C's shuttle service to the right station.

Actually, Mr. C was a reviewer, not a critic. The latter is interested in what he thinks of a work, the former in what his readers will think of it. A reviewer performs a humble but useful service, like a racetrack tout or a market analyst. And like them, he has a short memory as against the critic's, or the economist's, which extends over decades, periods, even centuries. The horses or plays or books or movies or stocks of the moment are his standard of comparison. When a reviewer says, to cite some recent ads in the *Times*, that a movie is "great" (Liz Smith, *Cosmopolitan*) or "an absolute must-see" (*Newsday*) or "Stunning!" (*Glamour*) or "like a dipperful of fresh spring water" (Howard Thompson, New York *Times*) or "a yummy movie-movie" (Judith Crist, *New York* magazine), he, she or it means no more than that it is great or yummy or dipper-fresh compared to the current crop; which may be correct.

Critic-critics like me or John Simon are accused of "not liking movies," which is also correct, seasonally speaking. I disliked most of the new releases I saw while I was reviewing for Esquire from 1960 to 1966. But this was because I have for so long had such a passion for movies—"like" is too mild—that I ask a lot from the experience. My comparisons are not with the relative junkiness of one as against another item in the mayflower swarm of junk that flourishes yummily this year and is forgotten next. My idea of cinema is more extensive, going back to the sound renascence that began fifteen years ago and, in extreme cases like comedy, to the Keaton-Chaplin-Sennett period.

Like its older sisters, cinema has in its history a few great innovators, a larger number of talented followers ("school of" or "minor" but they are essential to the life of the medium, ecologically—also enjoyable in their own special ways) and an enormously greater quantity of energetic, untalented hacks who produce the bulk of any period's works, as one may see by walking through the remoter galleries of any large art museum. The critic's job is to discriminate between these three categories; with reasons. ⧻

FIFTY HELPFUL HINTS

(Continued from page 55)
John Kenneth Galbraith—We will hafta *pave* the damn thing.
Marshall McLuhan— 1) The thickest mud that was ever heard dumped. 2) Spitz on the iern while it's hot.
Julie Harris—Never mind Mission Control . . . see if you can get A.A.A. Travel Service on the radio!
Sal Mineo—Oh, hi!
Ayn Rand—What hath man wrought!
Aram Saroyan—(Concrete poet and son of William Saroyan)—Moo-n!
W. H. Auden—I've never *done* this before.
Norman Cousins—Actually, I would hope he might feel the occasion called for a moment or two of quiet, perhaps even meditation.
Russell Baker—I hereby declare this moon open for pollution.
Yetta Bronstein—(1968 "Jewish Mother" candidate for President)—Miami Beach, it isn't.
Peter De Vries—It's a good time for non-verbal communication. Well, I once said, when somebody asked me if I thought we should go to the moon, of course we should. We were put on this earth for a purpose.
Rosser Reeves (former Chairman of the Board of Ted Bates & Company)—You now have proof positive that the moon isn't made of green cheese.
Dan Rowan (of *Laugh-In*)—We finally found Judge Crater!
R. Buckminster Fuller—Wish you were here.
Secretary-General U Thant—When I greeted Colonel Frank Borman, commander of Apollo 8, at U.N.

Stewardesses do it
(in the galley)

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headquarters on the 10th of January, 1969, he responded by saying: 'We saw the earth the size of a quarter and we recognized then that there really is one world. We are all brothers.' So I would like the first astronaut to land on the moon to remind us again of this fact so that we may all have a new sense of perspective to enable us, in the language of the Charter of the United Nations, to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors.

Lowell Thomas—Now see who's the man on the moon!

Kurt Vonnegut Jr.—Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships?

Sandra Hochman (who wrote *Loveletters from Asia*)—First incantation to the moon:/ Peace, Shalom, Salaam, Pache, Paix, Heiwa, P'ing, Amani./ Moon you were once the ancient goddess,/ All men lived under your double harness,/ Now we live to touch your rim,/ You, ancient guardian of our dreaming life,/ You authentic teacher in the matter of our dreaming mind,/ And you are real as I have always known that a dream is real,/ Peace, Shalom, Salaam, Pache, Paix, Heiwa, P'ing, Amani. ##

LE MOT JUSTE FOR THE MOON

(Continued from page 56) "Rub-a-dub-a-doo!" And five months later, when Russell L. Schweickart stepped out on the "front porch" of Apollo 9 and became the first self-contained human spacecraft, he was asked by a fellow astronaut to look toward the TV cameras and say something. Schweickart mugged, and remarked: "Hello, dere." These expressions also, it can scarcely be doubted, originated in the unexpectedly influential works of Will N. Harben.

What is disturbing about all this is not just that our space rhetoric appears to have been informed by a hack Victorian novelist—that comes as a lump to our national pride—but that the language the astronauts use is resolutely, almost defiantly, uncommunicative. Never, in all those hours they have bobbed around up there, have they managed to convey what space really looks like or feels like. All they ever tell us is that it is "beautiful." They use that word, like a Boy Scout jackknife, for every imaginable task.

As with much else about orbital space flight, it was Colonel John H. Glenn Jr. who conducted the first experiments with the word "beautiful." It was during that maiden orbit of the earth in 1962 when Glenn peeked out the window of Friendship 7 to take a look at the cloud-dappled state of Florida that he exclaimed, "Beautiful sight!" Three months later, as Captain Scott Carpenter was flying the U.S.'s second orbital mission, he tried to describe the succession of sunrises and sunsets that he saw. "Boy!" Carpenter said, "They are more beautiful than anything I have ever seen on earth!" And five months after that, Captain Schirra was making six revolutions of the earth. "How's your spacecraft handle?" asked Ground Control. "Beautifully," said Schirra.

If the peninsula of Florida, the effects of sunlight and the performance of American spaceships were all "beautiful," so indeed was space itself. This discovery was made on March 23, 1965 when the late Major Virgil I. ("Gus") Grissom and Lieutenant Commander John W. Young were making the first orbital maneuvers in space. One could almost feel Young straining to escape the practically gravitational pull of that word upon astronauts, only to be drawn at last into its clutches. "You can't take your eyes away from the window at first," he radioed back to earth. "It is incredible. [That, at least, was original.] There aren't words in the English language to describe it. [The first danger signal.] It was . . . [now falling helplessly] bee-*yoot*-iful!"

The space journey of Majors James McDivitt and Edward H. White in June, 1965, aboard Gemini 4 is memorable not only because it was the first time man took a "space walk," but because it added a new word to the astronaut's lexicon. The new term emerged, like many a great leap of the imagination, casually and unheralded. It popped out of McDivitt's mouth as his Gemini capsule was separating from its booster. McDivitt happened to turn around just at that moment and saw the gleaming, stainless-steel rocket canister sailing away behind him—*E'en like the passage of an angel's tear / That falls through the clear ether silently.*

Unquestionably, the scene looked beautiful to him, yet McDivitt did not call upon that adjective which had been so faithful a companion of man's timid first steps into the great beyond. Instead, McDivitt said: "It looks pretty."

That was, as Mission Control would say, another first. A new word was in orbit. And for months thereafter everything that swam into our astronauts' ken was pronounced "pretty." In August, 1965, for example, when Lieutenant Colonel Cooper was making the first extended flight in space, he said in his slow Oklahoma drawl: "Space is the purtiest thing I ever have seen."

It was Commander Eugene A. Cernan who rediscovered the beauty of space, and thereby got the astronauts back in the groove again. On the morning of June 3, 1966, Cernan opened the hatch of his Gemini spaceship and stepped out into the void. "It sure is beautiful out here, Tom," he radioed to his copilot, Captain Thomas Stafford. And then, turning around and looking back at the capsule, Cernan made yet another discovery: "Oh, what a beautiful spacecraft!" he said. And from that moment on the astronauts were never again in space without the word "beautiful." They clung to it, like a parachute pack, secure in the knowledge that whenever tormented with doubts about what to say, whenever some new sight or sensation might cause the amber light of wonderment to flicker, "beautiful" was always there to bail them out. Take, for example, the flight of Lieutenant Commander Richard F. Gordon Jr. in September, 1966. After Gordon rendezvoused and docked his Gemini 11 capsule with an Agena rocket, he took a space walk to inspect this unearthly copulation of robots in the lonely void. "How's it look?" he was asked from the ground. Quick as a flash, Gordon shot back: "Beautiful day!" Two months later, Major Edwin E. Aldrin opened the hatch of Gemini 12 in order to photograph an eclipse of the moon—the first eclipse witnessed in space unimpaired by any wafting of the earth's atmosphere. It was, said Aldrin, transfixed by the glorious sight, "a beautiful view." Last year, just after Captain Schirra throttled up the Apollo spacecraft's great rocket motor for its first manned test in space, commanding enough thrust to fling himself to the moon and back, he was asked how the motor performed. "Beautifully," he said. And

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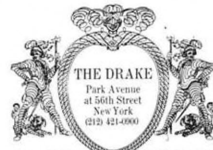

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when Colonel Frank Borman and his crew were circumnavigating the moon last Christmas, Borman looked out the window at one point and glimpsed the green earth as a distant planet looming up over the barren horizon of the moon, and, sure enough, he reported, it was something "beautiful" to see.

Because of the fairly widespread feeling that the astronauts ought to increase their word power if they were to continue to enjoy the interest and support of their public, Julian Scheer, N.A.S.A.'s Chief Public Affairs Officer, suggested to Colonel Borman that while he and his crew were nipping around the moon last Christmas, it might not be a bad idea to broadcast to the earth something appropriate for a change. Borman took the suggestion, and, being a lay reader in the Episcopal church, hit upon the device of reciting from the Book of Genesis. He presented his plan to the rest of the crew and they, naturally, thought it a beautiful idea. Accordingly, Major William Anders began with, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and earth . . ."; Captain James A. Lovell Jr. took over at "And God called the light Day. . . ." And Borman was the anchor man coming in with "And God called the dry land Earth. . . ." Their renditions proved a little stiff, and of course the whole concept was vividly stippled with anachronism—reading Genesis while circumnavigating the moon was a little like using an advanced digital computer to work out horoscopes. Nevertheless, one could only wish well those cramped and rather forlorn wayfarers on that cold Christmas Eve, and so the public good-naturedly accepted this Scriptural lesson in the hope that it was bolstering the spirits of the astronauts themselves if not, especially, anyone else. Now that they are safe at home, however, it must be said that since Borman, Anders and Lovell did not compose Genesis, the recitation did little to dispel the notion that the astronauts as a group tend to share, among other things, a pronounced verbal dysfunction.

Indeed, it is now perfectly clear—it would be folly to deny it longer—that while the space program is poised on the brink of a truly epoch-making triumph of engineering, it is also headed for a rhetorical wreck. The principal danger is not that we will lose the life of an astronaut on the moon, but that the astronauts will murder English up there; not that we run the risk of biologically contaminating space, but that they are likely to litter the intergalactic void with gibberish and twaddle, despoil the written record of man's reach for the stars with the sentiments of squares, and very likely cause the long, pointed ears of those who may be awaiting our arrival to droop with disappointment when the astronauts open their mouths.

Some weeks ago, at the suggestion of this magazine, I resolved to do what I could to help Commander Armstrong and his fellow moonlanders by issuing a call the world over to poets and philosophers, scientists and politicians, novelists, judges, scholars, entertainers and others of distinction, asking them: What would *you* like to hear the astronaut say when he takes that historic first step on the moon? All told, I received sixty-one answers. They came from such a varied lot of persons as U Thant, George Plimpton, Hubert Humphrey, Truman Capote, John Lindsay, Timothy Leary, Muhammad Ali, John Kenneth Galbraith and Tiny Tim. I fervently hope the astronauts can find the time, amid the rigors of their training program, to read and contemplate their suggestions.

As may be seen on pages 54-55, not all of my respondents took the question seriously. And yet, considering the temper of the times, a witty remark should not be automatically ruled out. A good quip might be better than a thousand meandering words. For example, Dan Rowan of *Laugh-In* hinted in his contribution that Armstrong might not be the first man on the moon after all, and might exclaim: "We finally found Judge Crater!" With airliner hijacking in the headlines, Bob Hope was prepared to say: "Well, at least I didn't end up in Havana." Mrs. Yetta Bronstein, last year's "Jewish Mother" candidate for President of the United States, imagined herself glowering at the desolate, forbidding moonscape through jewel-framed sunglasses and muttering: "Miami Beach, it isn't." And Art Buchwald seemed preoccupied about the sex life of the astronauts when he proposed: "Instead of reading from the Bible, they might try *Portnoy's Complaint.*" The Madison Avenue admen I queried were bubbling with gags. William Bernbach, chairman of the board of Doyle Dane Bernbach, the ad agency, gave me four alternatives as if he were making a presentation to Volkswagen or Polaroid, ranging from anti-moon: "Nice place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live here," to pro-moon: "This neighborhood is never going to be the same again." Rosser Reeves, former chairman of the board of Ted Bates & Company and father of the "hard sell" in radio and TV commercials, dug into his *Mother Goose* to come up with: "You now have proof positive that the moon *isn't* made of green cheese." At least one of my experts, however, was wary of all efforts to be funny in outer space, no doubt recalling some of the lame attempts the astronauts have already made. When my cable caught up with Vladimir Nabokov at the Palace Hotel in Montreux, Switzerland, the author of *Lolita* shot back: "You want a lump in his throat to obstruct the wisecrack."

Three others (Norman Cousins, Peter De Vries and Joseph Heller) agreed with Nabokov that the occasion called for silence, or "perhaps even meditation" as Cousins put it, and two (Marya Mannes and General Anthony C. McAuliffe) said the ones who should keep mum are us kibitzers. "It ought to be spontaneous," General McAuliffe told me when I reached him at his home in Washington, D.C., "—just the way it was when I said 'Nuts!' " (in response to a German surrender ultimatum when he was trapped at Bastogne in 1944).

Some of the most with-it intellectuals on my list responded wryly. While their replies may not be of any direct assistance to Commander Armstrong and his crew, they nevertheless illuminate a problem the astronauts may wish to cope with in whatever they decide to say on the moon; namely, that an influential segment of the American intelligentsia is profoundly alienated from the space program. Many intellectuals simply look on the plan to put a man on the moon as a distraction from more pressing needs here on earth —a "Moon-doggle" as Amitai Etzioni, the Columbia sociologist, has called it in the title of a recent book. John Kenneth Galbraith pretty clearly felt this way when I reached him at his ski chalet in Gstaad, Switzerland. He retorted, perhaps after a good swig of hot mulled *glüh*, "We will hafta *pave* the damn thing!" Similarly provoked by all the effort (and billions) expended by N.A.S.A. was Marshall McLuhan, who gave the undertaking the back of his hand with two replies: "The thickest mud that was ever heard dumped" and "Spitz on the iern while it's hot." Buckminster Fuller's proposal, too, seemed disdainfully frivolous: "Wish you were here." And George Plimpton thought he ought to say, "It's real beautiful," since "that's what he's going to say anyway."

Other intellectuals were downright suspicious of the moon program. When I asked W. H. Auden what he would like to hear Armstrong say, he replied at first with a mischievous chuckle: "I've never *done* this before!" adding, "What else *should* he say? It would be a true statement." But when I went on to ask if he would not prefer

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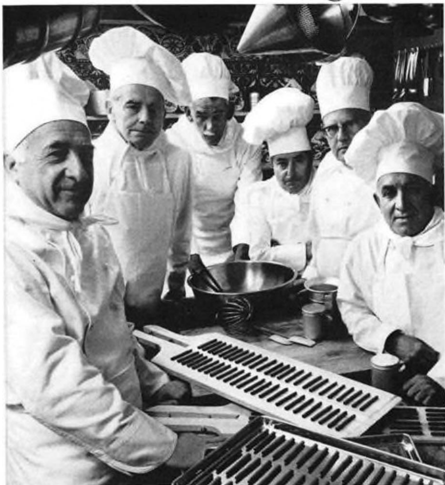

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something more elevating, perhaps about world peace, he grew sober. "Well, that's a little different," Auden said. "We all know that the chief reason for their going there is military, so I don't think you should ask them to say much about that!" Auden's fear that the moon will become a military base, whether justified or not, is widely shared. His fellow poet, Robert Graves, touched on that concern when he cabled darkly from Majorca suggesting a tactful propitiation of the Moon Goddess: "Forgive the intrusion, Ma'am. Don't smile so bitter at good Yanks tidying up your Sputnik litter." Timothy Leary suggested that the first astronaut on the moon would be a kind of Shore Patrol sergeant, saying: "Eldridge Cleaver, you are under arrest for trespassing on a military reservation."

Going even beyond the fear of moon militarism was Father Malcolm Boyd, the Episcopal priest who wrote *Are You Running With Me, Jesus?*, now a fellow at Yale, who was worked up about lunar colonialism. His answer was: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. All right, you guys, whoever you are standing behind that rock over there, come out with your hands up!" As he explained to me: "That's been the history of missionary-oriented colonialism—a great deal of self-righteousness about one's mission coupled with a great deal of pragmatic self-interest."

The political leaders, in contrast to the foregoing men of letters, tended toward idealistic statements, perhaps in the hope that a pitch for peace would steer the development of the moon in the right direction. One such suggestion came from U Thant. "When I greeted Colonel Frank Borman . . . at U.N. headquarters . . ." the Secretary-General told me through his assistant, Ramses Nassif, "he responded by saying: 'We saw the earth the size of a quarter and we recognized then that there really is one world. We are all brothers.' So I would like the first astronaut to land on the moon to remind us again of this fact so that we may all have a new sense of perspective to enable us, in the language of the Charter of the United Nations, to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors." Hubert Humphrey also sounded a characteristically up-beat note: "May the conflicts and troubles of man never find a home here. May the moon be a symbol of peace and cooperation among the nations of the earth." Senator George McGovern added a novel touch to the internationalist theme, saying that in the manner of the polar explorers a flag should be planted in the crust of the moon—the U.N. flag, naturally. "I raise the Flag of the United Nations to claim this planet for all mankind and to signal a new era of understanding and cooperation among nations—both on the Moon and on Earth," wrote Senator McGovern. More parochial (and less serious) was Mayor John V. Lindsay's proposal: "I claim all moon mineral rights in the name of the government of New York City—they need the money the most!" Another interesting notion came along from Congressman Edward Koch, who represents Mayor Lindsay's old "silk-stocking" congressional district in Manhattan. Congressman Koch, a member of the House Committee on Science and Astronautics, said he would like to hear the astronaut proclaim the moon "an international scientific laboratory."

President Nixon neglected to answer my question, but William Safire, one of his chief speechwriters during the campaign and now a Special Assistant to the President, liked the words: "Free at last." They were, Safire told me, "a reprise of a Martin Luther King line, applied to the emancipation of earthbound men." Then, just to keep things politically balanced, I got in touch with Richard Goodwin in Boston, a longtime Kennedy speechwriter. Goodwin puzzled over the question for a few days and then remarked: "I would have to be there on the moon myself to know what to say."

If politicians contributed some fresh thought to the exercise, not surprisingly poets (aside from Auden and Graves) expressed the feeling of emotional uplift that might come over the first man to realize the age-old dream of treading the lunar surface. Marianne Moore, now eighty-two and dowager queen of the lady poets of America, embroidered lyrically on a line she drew from a song by Harry Belafonte: "Just got here and I have to look around. / Sit down. I can't sit down. I've just got to Heaven and I have to look around."

By contrast, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, the San Francisco beat poet and proselytizer of underground causes, came on with a statement that clanks as if with heavy armor: "We Roman emperors of space have hereby proved that heaven doesn't exist and that the only god is consciousness itself."

Stanley Kunitz, the New York poet who has won both a Pulitzer prize and the 1968 American Poets Fellowship Award, wrote of the moon as a mere steppingstone into the starry firmament in his contribution: "I shall never escape from strangeness or complete my journey . . ." he wrote exultantly. "I am your man on the moon, a speck of megalomania, restless for the leap towards island universes pulsing beyond where the constellations set. . . . Forward my mail to Mars. What news from the Great Spiral Nebula in Andromeda and the Magellanic Clouds?" And Sun-Ra, the jazz musician who describes himself as a "cosmic space musician/poet," would have the astronaut chirp with joy: "Happy Space Age to You. . . ." Brother Antoninus, the Dominican lay brother who is a leading exponent of the school of poetry known as erotic mysticism, seemed intrigued by what men might make of the moon in his suggestion: "Bone cold. An immense Golgotha. Out of this tomb, what resurrection? Out of this dust, what weird rebirth?"

Two other poets preferred to think of the moon as a vantage point from which to contemplate the earth. Theodore Weiss, currently Professor in Creative Arts at Princeton who has just completed his fifth volume of poetry, *The Last Day and the First*, put it this way: "Moon that we have for thousands of years looked up to, now help us to see the earth in its true light, as whole and one." And David Slavitt, playwright and poet whose *Day Sailing and Other Poems* will be published later this year, wrote: "We have realized an ancient dream, and it is rock and dust; now we must look back to earth, imagine what it ought to be, and hope that dream turns out better." Slavitt then asked his five-year-old son, Joshua, what he would like to hear Commander Armstrong say, and out of the mouth of the babe popped: "Hi there, nobody!" ###

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