

# Exploring the Unknown

Selected Documents in the History of the U.S. Civil Space Program

## Volume VII

Human Spaceflight: Projects Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo

*Edited by John M. Logsdon with Roger D. Launius*



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*Dedicated to the Pioneers of Human Spaceflight:  
George Low, Robert Gilruth, and the members of the Space Task Group*

[Signed Sam. C Phillips]

Sam C. Phillips  
Lt. General, USAF  
Apollo Program Director

Attachments 1-26

Cc: (w/o attachments)  
CD/HKDeubs  
DIR/WvonBraun  
AA/RRGilruth  
MA-A/GHHage  
MA/WCSchneider  
MAO/JKHolcomb  
MAL/LRScherer

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**Document II-68**

**Document Title:** Letter to George M. Low, Manager, Apollo Spacecraft Program, from Julian Scheer, Assistant Administrator for Public Affairs, 12 March 1969.

**Source:** Folder #148675, NASA Historical Reference Collection, History Division, NASA Headquarters, Washington, DC.

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**Document II-69**

**Document Title:** Letter to Julian Scheer, Assistant Administrator for Public Affairs, from George M. Low, Manager, Apollo Spacecraft Program, 18 March 1969.

**Source:** Folder #18675, NASA Historical Reference Collection, History Division, NASA Headquarters, Washington, DC.

*Julian Scheer was one of NASA Headquarter's "inner circle" during the Apollo program, in addition to his role as NASA top public spokesman. In this letter to NASA veteran manager of human space flight George Low, who assumed responsibility for the Apollo spacecraft project after the January 1967 Apollo 1 fire, Scheer suggested that it would be inappropriate to suggest to the Apollo 11 crewmembers what they might say as they reached the Moon. Low's reply indicates that he agreed with Scheer, and that there had been a misunderstanding of what actions Low had taken. The "Shapley Committee" was headed by senior NASA Headquarters staff member Willis Shapley, who was responsible for NASA's top-level political and budgetary strategy. Simon Bourgin was an employee of the U.S. Information Agency with a particular focus on the space program.*

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**Document II-68**

## NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20546

March 12, 1969

Mr. George M. Low  
Manager  
Apollo Spacecraft Program  
NASA Manned Spacecraft Center  
Houston, Texas 77058

Dear George:

It has come to my attention that you have asked someone outside of NASA to advise you on what the manned lunar landing astronauts might say when they touch down on the Moon's surface. This disturbs me for several reasons.

The Agency has solicited from within NASA any suggestions on what materials and artifacts might be carried to the surface of the Moon on that historic first flight. But we have not solicited comment or suggestions on what the astronauts might say. Not only do I personally feel that we ought not to coach the astronauts, but I feel it would be damaging for the word to get out that we were soliciting comment. The ultimate decision on what the astronauts will carry is vested in a committee set up by the Administrator; the committee will not, nor will the Agency by any other means, suggest remarks by the astronauts.

Frank Borman solicited a suggestion from me on what would be appropriate for Christmas Eve. I felt—and my feeling still stands—that his reading from the Bible would be diminished in the eyes of the public if it were thought that NASA pre-planned such a thing. I declined both officially and personally to suggest words to him despite the fact that I had some ideas. I believed then [2] and I believe the same is true of the Apollo 11 crew that the truest emotion at the historic moment is what the explorer feels within himself not for the astronauts to be coached before they leave or to carry a prepared text in their hip pocket.

The Lunar Artifacts Committee, chaired by Willis Shapley, asked that all elements of NASA consider what might be carried on Apollo 11. I know that General Phillips has properly reiterated the request by asking all elements of Manned Flight to suggest things, but it was not the desire or intent of the committee to broaden the scope of the solicitation to verbal reactions.

There may be some who are concerned that some dramatic utterance may not be emitted by the first astronaut who touches the lunar surface. I don't share that concern. Others believe a poet ought to go to the Moon. Columbus wasn't a poet and he didn't have a prepared text, but his words were pretty dramatic to

me. When he saw the Canary Islands he wrote, "I landed, and saw people running around naked, some very green trees, much water, and many fruits."

Two hundred years before Apollo 8, Captain James Cook recorded while watching the transit of Venus over the sun's disk, "We very distinctly saw an atmosphere or dusky shade around the body of the planet."

Meriwether Lewis, traveling with William Clark, recorded, "Great joy in camp. We are in view of the ocean, this great Pacific Ocean which we have been so long anxious to see, and the roreing [*sic*] or noise made by the waves brakeing [*sic*] on the rocky [*sic*] shore may be heard distinctly."

Peary was simply too tired to say anything in 1909 when he reached the North Pole. He went to sleep. The next day he recorded in a diary, "The pole at last. The [3] prize of three centuries [*sic*]. I cannot bring myself to realize it. It seems all so simple and commonplace."

The words of these great explorers tell us something of the men who explore and it is my hope that Neil Armstrong or Buzz Aldrin will tell us what they see and think and nothing that we feel they should say.

I have often been asked if NASA indeed plans to suggest comments to the astronauts. My answer on behalf of NASA is "no."

I'd appreciate your comments.

Regards,

[signed]

Julian Scheer

Assistant Administrator

for Public Affairs

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**Document II-69**

March 18, 1969

Mr. Julian Scheer  
Assistant Administrator  
for Public Affairs  
National Aeronautics and Space Administration  
Washington, D. C. 20546

Dear Julian:

I have just received your letter of March 12, 1969, which apparently stemmed from a misunderstanding. Let me first point out that I completely agree with you that the words said by the astronauts on the lunar surface (or, for that matter, at any other time) must be their own. I have always felt that way and continue to do so.

I am, of course, aware of the Shapley Committee that was established by Dr. Paine, and have also received a copy of a telegram from General Phillips soliciting our comments on what should be carried to the lunar surface. I felt that in order to respond properly to General Phillips and to the Shapley Committee, I would like to seek the advice of Si Bourgin, whose judgment I respect a great deal in these matters. As you know, I met Si on our trip to South America and found that he offered excellent advice to all of us throughout our trip. I, therefore, called Si as soon as he returned from Europe and asked him whether he could offer any advice concerning what the astronauts should do (not say) when we have first landed on the moon. Si called me back [2] the night before the Apollo 9 launch, and we discussed his ideas at some length. We again agreed at that time that it is properly NASA's function to plan what artifacts should be left on the lunar surface or what should be brought back, but that the words that the astronauts should say must be entirely their own.

Since then, I have had a meeting with Neil Armstrong to discuss with him some of our ideas and suggestions, including those of Si Bourgin's, in order to solicit his views. Even though I had not yet received your letter at that time, we also discussed the point that whatever things are left on the lunar surface are things that he must be comfortable with, and whatever words are said must be his own words.

All of these activities—my discussions with Si, my discussions with Neil, and discussions with many others within and outside of NASA—are to gain the best possible advice that I can seek for what I consider to be a most important event. The result for all of this will be my input to Dr. Gilruth so that he can forward it to the Shapley Committee, should he so desire.

I hope that this clarifies any misunderstanding that we might have had on this matter.

Sincerely yours,

/Signed/  
George M. Low  
Manager  
Apollo Spacecraft Program

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**Document II-70**

**Document Title:** Memorandum to Dr. [George] Mueller from Willis H. Shapley, Associate Deputy Administrator, "Symbolic Items for the First Lunar Landing," 19 April 1969.

**Document Source:** Folder #18675, NASA Historical Reference Collection, History Division, NASA Headquarters, Washington, DC.

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**Document II-71**

**Document Title:** Memorandum to Dr. (George) Mueller from Willis Shapley, NASA Associate Deputy Administrator, "Symbolic Activities for Apollo 11," 2 July 1969.

**Source:** Folder #18675, NASA Historical Reference Collection, History Division, NASA Headquarters, Washington, DC.

*As planning for the first lunar landing picked up in intensity, attention turned to the symbolic aspects of the mission. Willis Shapley, a veteran Washington bureaucrat who served as a policy advisor to the NASA Administrator, chaired a Symbolic Activities Committee that was set up to determine what items would be carried to the Moon, and what symbolic activities would be carried out on the lunar surface on the Apollo 11 mission. The final decisions on these matters were communicated to the Apollo program management just two weeks before the 16 July liftoff of the mission.*

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**Document II-70**

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION  
Washington, D.C. 20546

April 19, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR: M/Dr. Mueller

Subject: Symbolic Items for the First Lunar Landing

This is to advise you, the Apollo Program Office, and MSC of the thinking that has emerged from discussions among members of the Symbolic Activities Committee to date on symbolic activities in connection with the first lunar landing, including articles to be left on the moon and articles to be taken to the moon and returned.



Further discussions will be necessary prior to the time we will make final recommendations for decision by the Administrator, and comments and suggestions from all members of the Committee and others are still in order. However, in view of the general agreement on approach that has been manifested so far and the tight deadlines for decisions on matters directly affecting preparations for the mission, the approach outlined below should be taken as the basis for further planning at this time.

1. Symbolic activities must not, of course, jeopardize crew safety or unduly interfere with or degrade achievement of mission objectives. They should be simple, in good taste from a world-wide standpoint, and have no commercial implications or overtones.

2. The intended overall impression of the symbolic activities and of the manner in which they are presented to the world should be to signalize the first lunar landing as an historic forward step of all mankind that has been accomplished by the United States of America.

3. The "forward step of all mankind" aspect of the landing should be symbolized primarily by a suitable inscription to be left on the moon and by statements made on earth, and also perhaps by leaving on the moon miniature flags of all nations. The UN flag, flags of all other regional or international organizations, or other international or religious symbolism will not be used.

4. The "accomplishment by the United States" aspect of the landing should be symbolized primarily by placing and leaving a U.S. flag on the moon in such a way as to make it clear that the flag symbolized the fact that an effort by American people reached the moon, not that the U.S. is [2] "taking possession" of the moon. The latter connotation is contrary to our national intent and would be inconsistent with the Treaty on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

5. In implementing the approach outlined above, the following primary symbolic articles and actions or their equivalents should be considered for inclusion in the mission:

a. A U.S. flag to be placed and left on the moon. The flag should be such that it can be clearly photographed and televised. If possible, the act of emplacing the flag by the astronaut, as well as the emplaced flag with an astronaut beside it, should be photographed and televised. Current thinking is that a recognizable traditional flag should be emplaced on the moon. The flag decal on the LM decent stage would not by itself suffice unless a flag proved to be clearly not feasible. Consideration of how best to emplace the flag should include but not be limited to the following suggestions:

- (1) Cloth flag on vertically emplaced pole, with astronaut to hold flag in visible position for photographing.
- (2) Cloth flag on pole emplaced at an angle so that flag is visible for photographing.

- (3) An adaptation of the Solar Wind Experiment device in the form of a flag.
- (4) Flag on a pole using the commemorative marker (item b below) as a base.

b. A permanent commemorative marker, suitably inscribed, to be placed and left on the lunar surface, with photographic and television coverage as suggested above for the U.S. flag, if possible. Possibilities to be considered should include, but not be limited to:

- (1) A thin-walled metal pyramid, with inscriptions on each of its three or four sides, which could also serve as a sealed repository for a set of miniature flags of all nations (item c below).
- (2) A container of cylindrical or other more convenient shape to perform the same function as suggested in (1) above.
- (3) A pyramid or other container, as above, which would also serve as the base for the U.S. flag to be emplaced on the moon.

[3]

c. Miniature flags of all nations, one set to be left on the moon in a suitable container (see above), and a duplicate set to be returned to earth for possible presentation by the President to foreign Chiefs of State. If flag container is not feasible, the set of flags might be left on or in the LM decent stage.

d. One or more U.S. flags to be presented to NASA prior to the mission by the President and/or other senior officials, taken to the moon and back, and then suitably displayed, perhaps with photographs of the astronauts on the moon, in suitable national locations such as the Capitol, White House, National Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Library of Congress, or elsewhere.

6. The LM decent stage itself will be of prime symbolic significance since the descent stage will become a permanent monument on the surface of the moon. For this reason, the name given to the LM and any inscriptions to be placed on it must be consistent with the overall approach on symbolic articles and must be approved by the Administrator. The present thinking is that:

a. The name of the vehicle should be dignified and hopefully convey the sense of "beginning" rather than "culmination" of man's exploration of other worlds.

b. Assuming that a commemorative marker with inscription is carried, inscriptions on the LM should be limited to the present flag decal and words "United States."

7. The principal secondary symbolic articles receiving favorable consideration so far include the following:

a. A small postage stamp die to be taken to the moon and back from which commemorative stamps would be printed. Weight and dimensions alternatives are being investigated.

b. A jeweler's die to be taken to the moon and back from which lapel type pins associated with the NASA special "Apollo Achievement Awards" now under consideration would be stamped out. Weight and size requirements are being investigated.

8. It would be appreciated if any comments, further suggestions, or problems you or others receiving copies of this memorandum may have with respect to the foregoing tentative plans and conclusions are made known promptly to me and the Committee via the secretary, Mr. Daniels.

/Signed/  
Willis H. Shapley  
Associate Deputy Administrator

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**Document II-71**

[stamped Jul 2 1969]

MEMORANDUM FOR: M/Dr. Mueller

Subject: Symbolic Activities for Apollo 11

As your office has previously been advised, the symbolic articles approved for the Apollo 11 mission as of this date are as follows:

A. Symbolic articles to be left on the moon

1. A U.S. flag, on a metal staff with an unfurling device, to be emplaced in the lunar soil by the astronauts. This will be the only flag emplaced [*sic*] or otherwise placed on the surface of the moon.
2. A commemorative plaque affixed to the LM descent stage to be unveiled by the astronauts. The plaque will be inscribed with:
  - a. A design showing the two hemispheres of the earth and the outlines of the continents, without national boundaries.
  - b. The words: "Here men from the planet earth first set foot upon the moon. We came in peace for all mankind."

- c. The date (month and year).
  - d. The signatures of the three astronauts and the President of the U.S.
3. A microminiaturized photoprint of letters of good will received from Chiefs of State or other representatives of foreign nations.

B. Symbolic articles to be taken to the moon and returned to earth

1. Miniature flags (1 each) of all nations of the UN, and of the 50 states, District of Columbia, and U.S. territories—for subsequent presentation as determined by the President. “All nations” has been defined on the advice of the State Department to include “the members of the United Nations and the UN Specialized Agencies.” These items will be stowed in the LM.

[2]

2. Small U.S. flags—for special presentation as determined by the President or the Administrator of NASA. These will also be stowed in the LM.
3. Stamp die from which Post Office Department will print special postage stamps commemorating the first lunar landing and a stamped envelope to be cancelled with the cancellation stamping device. Cancellation can be done as convenient during the mission in the CM. The stamp die will be stowed in the LM; the stamping device and envelope will be stowed in the CM. These items will not be announced in advance.
4. Two full size U.S. flags—which have been flown over the Capitol, the House and the Senate, to be carried in CM but will not be transferred to the LM.

C. Personal Articles

Personal articles of the astronauts’ choosing under arrangements between Mr. Slayton and the flight crews.

With respect to all items under categories A and B above, it should be clearly understood that the articles are “owned” by the Government and that the disposition of the articles themselves or facsimiles thereof is to be determined by the Administrator or NASA. The articles returned from the mission should be turned over to a proper authority at MSC promptly upon return. In the case of Item B2, the Administrator has determined that a reasonable number of small U.S. flags will be made available to the flight crew for presentation as they see fit, subject to the avoidance of conflict with plans for presentation of these flags by the President or the Administrator.

With respect to articles in Category C above, Mr. Scheer should be notified in advance of the mission of any items which are or may appear to be duplicates of items the President or others might present to Governors, Heads of State, etc. The value of these "one-of-a-kind" presentations can be diminished if there is a proliferation of such items. Flags and patches particularly fall into this category.

Public announcement has or will be made of all items in Categories A and B in advance of the mission except for the items under B3, any release concerning which is subject to a separate decision.

[Signed Willis H. Shapley]

Willis H. Shapley  
Associate Deputy Administrator

cc: A/Dr. Paine  
AA/Dr. Newell  
F/Mr. Scheer  
C/Mr. Allnutt  
I/Mr. Frutkin

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**Document II-72**

**Document Title: Letter from Frank Borman, NASA Astronaut, to Paul Feigert, 25 April 1969.**

**Source: Folder #18675, NASA Historical Reference Collection, History Division, NASA Headquarters, Washington, DC.**

*For the general public, the two highlights of the Apollo 8 mission at Christmas time 1968 were the photograph of Earth rising over the desolate lunar surface and the reading of the first 10 verses of Genesis from the Bible by the crew on Christmas Eve.*

[stamped April 25, 1969]

Mr. Paul F. Feigert  
1702 Terrace Drive  
Lake Worth, Florida 33460

Dear Mr. Feigert:

Dr. Gilruth has asked me to answer your inquiry concerning the reading of the first 10 verses of Genesis.

- a. Three small Bibles supplied by the Gideons did accompany us on the flight.