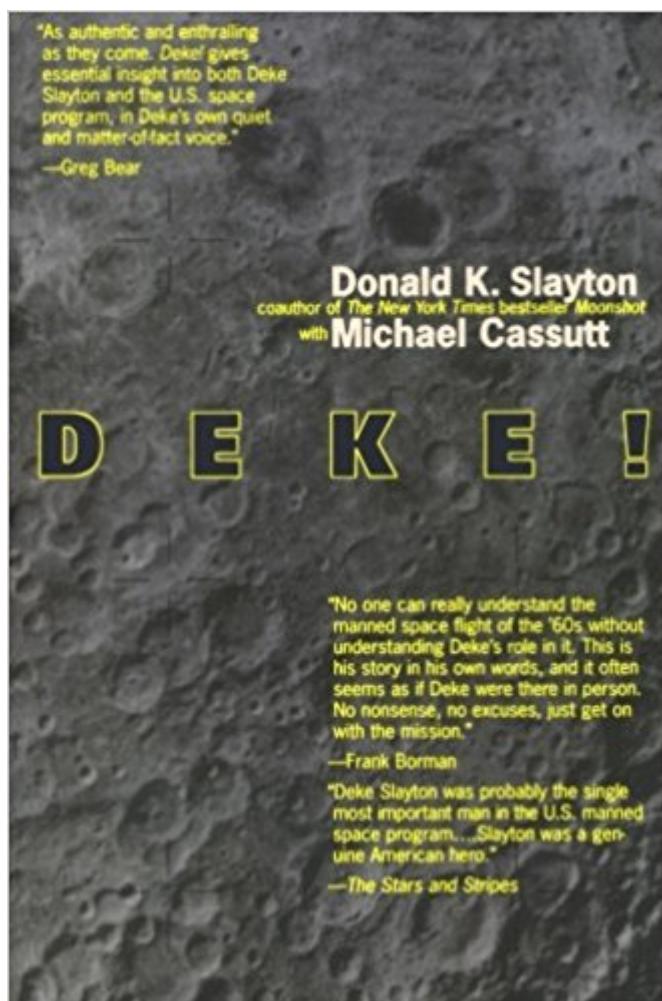


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Deke ! U.S. Manned Space From Mercury To The Shuttle



Synopsis

Deke Slayton was one of the first seven Mercury astronauts--and he might have been the first American in space. Instead, he became the first chief of American Astronaut Corps. It was Deke Slayton who selected the crews who flew the Gemini, Apollo, and Skylab missions. It was Deke Slayton who made Neil Armstrong the first man on the moon. Deke! is Deke Slayton's' story--told in his own words and in the voices of the men and women who worked with him and knew him best. Deke Slayton's knowledge of how the .S. manned space program worked is the missing piece of every space buff's puzzle. Now, after decades of silence, he tells his priceless stories of those years when American was engaged in the greatest voyage of exploration in human history.

Book Information

Paperback: 352 pages

Publisher: Forge Books; Reprint edition (June 15, 1995)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 031285918X

ISBN-13: 978-0312859183

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.8 x 228.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 76 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #537,328 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #290 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Aerospace > Astronautics & Space Flight #726 in Books > Science & Math > Astronomy & Space Science > Aeronautics & Astronautics #1067 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Scientists

Customer Reviews

For 20 years Slayton, one of the original Mercury astronauts, ran the Astronaut Office at the Manned Spacecraft (later Johnson) Space Center in Houston, a position he assumed after being pulled off his Mercury flight for a minor heart ailment. In that capacity, he played a central role in selecting new astronauts and especially in assembling flight crews. In these posthumously published memoirs, he gives his account of those early years of U.S. manned spaceflight.

Compared with the recent Moonshot (LJ 4/15/94), which he coauthored, this book allows the reader to get a sense of the man, of how a farm boy from Wisconsin ended up deciding who would be the first man on the moon and who finally, at the age of 51, got his own spaceflight on the Apollo Soyuz mission-the last Apollo flown. As another valuable addition to the recent first-hand accounts of

NASA's early days, this book is highly recommended for public and academic libraries. Thomas J. Frielings, Bainbridge Coll., Ga. Copyright 1994 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The autobiography of one of the original Mercury Seven astronauts, this is one of the best additions to the literature of the early American space effort. Slayton, who'd first flown as a World War II bomber pilot, came to the space program by a somewhat circuitous route. He was grounded in 1962 because of a heart murmur, and actually flew as an astronaut only once, in the 1975 Apollo-Soyuz mission. He was head of the astronaut office, however, and as such, one of the key persons involved in selecting crew, a process he describes with an insider's knowledge of detail and considerable frankness about the virtues and limitations of his colleagues. At the same time, Slayton never lost, nor will his readers miss, the sense of wonder with which space was contemplated in the days when it was a high and gallant dream. Roland Green --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Deke! is an excellent book and a very easy read, giving details over the course of his life from childhood, through WW2, his long career at NASA and onto his work after retiring from NASA. Deke Slayton was the person who assigned crews during the Gemini and Apollo missions after being grounded from the Mercury program due to a medical condition. Therefore he was one of the most influential people in the early days of NASA. This book gives valuable insight into how he chose the crews, the rotation system that was used etc. It also details his return to flight for the Apollo-Soyuz mission that he flew. Having read a great number of books on Mercury, Gemini and Apollo from both non-NASA authors and biographies from ex-astronauts I was surprised to see just how much contradiction there was in this book compared with the others. Now Deke was actually there rather than some researcher who never took part in NASA, but so were the other astronauts biographies that I've read and given that most people say one thing then I read in Deke! that it's something else, I'm not entirely sure just how good Deke's memory of events were when he started to write this book in 1991. Some of these things are really just points of view rather than actual historical facts and therefore in no way detracts from the book. In fact it's good to read a new and fresh perspective on things. Deke! is one of the better biographies I've read, not quite up to Flight by Chris Craft, Failure is not an option by Gene Kranz or Carrying the Fire by Mike Collins but is still definitely worth reading and having in your collection.

Having devoured the complete Apollo canon of histories, biographies and autobiographies, I admit that I'd been putting this one off for some time. I suppose because Deke was a Mercury astronaut who never flew in that program and was barely an Apollo astronaut (if you see the Apollo-Soyuz test Project as actually being part of the Apollo project), I didn't think his story would be that compelling. Well, I confess now to being wrong and misinformed. This is a great addition to the Apollo story, not because of Deke's activities as an astronaut, but because of his unique position of being in charge of flight crew selection during Gemini and Apollo. Who decided that Neil Armstrong would be the first human to set foot upon the moon? Deke did. The Apollo chronology is familiar and told in a fairly breezy style but there's a lot of information here on astronaut personalities, social mechanics between them and unvarnished accounts of what Deke really thought about each of them. That's one of the things that really comes through this book: Deke's gruff but intelligent style. Why, you can almost feel the crew cut brushing you on the arm on some of the pages! While the book was co-written with Michael Cassutt, there is a great deal of authenticity in the book's style. Unlike other "assisted" autobiographies, Deke feels like the sole author here, not just a name on the cover. The language is plain and direct and the book is better for it. If you're not already encyclopedically familiar with the 1960s Space Race, this is a great book from which to get an overview on the thrilling early days of manned spaceflight. From the selection of the original Mercury 7 astronauts, the incremental steps achieved in the Gemini program to the early missions of Apollo, you'll be right there (again or for the first time) with Deke as he recounts the journey from his unique viewpoint. [A side note: I read the Kindle edition of this book and I have to say the print-to-digital conversion was a little off, particularly towards the later chapters. You could tell that OCR must have been used as letters and numbers that have similar shapes were often misinterpreted.]

I read absolutely everything I can get my hands on about America's Space Program and I especially enjoy autobiographies by the astronauts. Deke Slayton is an American hero and this book shows why. In such an understated way, Deke describes the greatest adventure of mankind and he really downplays his part in it. But I am convinced that without his behind the scenes work - we may never have made Kennedy's deadline to land on the moon. I appreciated the comments of others that were included into the story in many spots - including comments from his own family. It was a book that I was excited to read - I couldn't put it down - and I was so sad when it came to an end! I wanted there to be more. America may never have the same type of heroes again - as more and more of the Apollo astronauts pass away but we can honor their memory by continuing the spirit of adventure and exploration! Enjoy each page!

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