



Moon on the moon

By Scott Harrup
Photography courtesy of NASA



On April 16, 1972, Air Force Lt. Col. Charles M. Duke Jr., 36, began the longest flight of his career — more than half a million miles. With Navy Lt. Comm. Ken Mattingly strapped on the flight couch to his left, and Navy Capt. John Young at the far left, Duke waited for the countdown at Kennedy Space Center's Launch Pad 39A.

When Apollo 16's Saturn V rocket lifted off at 12:54 p.m., an estimated 1 million people were on hand to watch — from a safe distance. At the launch site, a controlled explosion of 4,500 gallons of fuel per second created 7.5 million pounds of thrust to lift the 360-foot spacecraft skyward.

Man on the moon

Tenth man

One minute... two minutes ... less than three minutes into flight, 4.5 million pounds of fuel had burned, carrying the astronauts 35 miles above Earth as the first massive stage of the rocket fell away. Duke, Mattingly and Young were already traveling at 5,000 miles per hour.

By April 19, the three men were orbiting the moon. Duke joined Mission Commander Young in Orion, the Lunar Module, for descent to the surface. As the mission modules separated, Mattingly continued to orbit in Casper, the Command and Service Module. Young and Duke landed on the moon at 9:23 p.m. EST on April 20. They would explore the mountains and craters of the Descartes highlands, just a little southeast of the moon's visual center from Earth (see sidebar: "Family night out").

Duke became the 10th man to walk on the moon, following closely after Young made the initial descent from Orion. Three days later, they lifted off the lunar surface. Their three excursions had

totaled 20 hours and 15 minutes of exploration, a record, including several trips on the electric Lunar Rover. They had collected more than 200 pounds of rock and soil samples, conducted an array of experiments and shot copious amounts of video and photography.

Left behind were several instrument packages, the Lunar Rover, discarded equipment to lighten Orion ... and a family portrait of Charlie and Doty Duke with their sons Charles, 7, and Tom, 5. Duke had placed the plastic-sleeved picture on the lunar surface and photographed it before returning to Orion for the last time.

But the happy faces immortalized in that picture were a façade.

Family man?

Charlie and Doty Duke were on the verge of divorce. Young Charles and Tom had seen precious little of their dad during his years as an Air Force test pilot and NASA astronaut. Once the spotlight from

the moon mission shifted away, it was an open question whether the family would remain intact.

On Jan. 21, 2008, Doty, 67, thinks back to those days. She's seated at hand-holding distance with Charlie, 72, in their New Braunfels, Texas, home. She's smiling, but the smile is tied to the present rather than the past.

"When I was a young girl," she says, "I thought I would meet my Prince Charming and live happily ever after. When Charlie started courting

me, he seemed to love me more than anything. We didn't know each other but about three months before he proposed, and we were married about seven months after that."

At their June 1, 1963, wedding, Doty thought her dream had come true. She was quickly disillusioned as Charlie plunged into graduate studies at MIT. His test pilot training at Edwards Air Force Base in California's Mojave Desert only monopolized his time even further. By the time Charlie was immersed in training for the Apollo program, he and Doty were living separate lives, even with the arrival of two sons.

Doty maintained a solid home front for Charlie and the boys. She hosted countless reporters and guests during the moon mission. In the months following Apollo 16 she traveled widely with Charlie, always with the public enthusiasm expected of NASA celebrities.

Charlie was named South Carolina Man of the Year and inducted into his home state's Hall of Fame in 1973. He explored various business opportunities. But by the fall of 1975 Doty was suicidal.

"I started thinking, *Well, maybe we live and we die, and that's*

all there is," she remembers. "I convinced myself that even my children would be better off without me."

Doty was contemplating how to end her life when their church organized a renewal weekend. As one of the lay leaders, Doty was expected to be involved. She and Charlie invited one of the couples speaking at the retreat to stay in their home.

"These people talked about how Jesus had changed their lives, and how Jesus had done this and Jesus had done that," Doty says. "It wasn't really mind-boggling. It was simple stuff."

That weekend, alone and kneeling by her bed, Doty prayed to the Jesus she had heard about all her life, but had never known.

"I prayed, 'Jesus, if You're real, I give You my life. And if You're not real, I want to die.' That was my simple prayer," she says.

Man of faith

Doty's prayer set her on a life-transforming journey. The changes were small at first. She began to commit daily needs to God. She saw her prayers answered. As her faith in Christ grew, she tackled the mountain of pain her marriage had become.

The response she sensed during her prayers surprised her. Instead of some divine promise to change Charlie, Doty understood she had a responsibility to forgive him.

"God was saying, *I've forgiven you for everything you've done in the past,*" Doty remembers. "I understood that part. And then He said, *I want you to forgive Charlie the same way I've forgiven you.* That's when the process really started, and the change."

In time, Doty's forgiveness and love drew Charlie closer to her and to God. At an April 1978

conference on Bible prophecy, Charlie declared his faith in Christ.

Sitting next to Doty on Martin Luther King Day 2008, Charlie describes their shared Christian commitment and the life it breathes into their relationship.

"We want to walk in God's will," he says. "So we regularly pray, 'Lord, help us to walk in Your will. We don't want to be in a fog. We want to do what You want us to do.' In the 30 years of together walking with the Lord, we can say that not one promise of God has failed us. God has been there in every situation — financial problems, health problems, deaths of some family, problems with kids. All of that. God has been faithful, and I praise Him for His presence."

Man of blessing

Charlie's encounter with Christ also salvaged his relationship with Charles and Tom, today 43 and 41 with families of their own.

"I was a military drill instructor dad," Charlie says of the Apollo years. "I was real tough. My motive was to make them 'perfect' like I was. I loved them very much, but they could never really please me so I was always on them. I had an explosive temper."

When Charlie accepted Christ, the boys were 13 and 11. As Charlie started reading the Bible, he began to discover what parenting was all about.

"The more I read, the more convicted I became," he says. "The

The moon

- The moon's elliptical orbit puts it some 252,586 miles from Earth at apogee (greatest orbital distance) and 221,331 miles from Earth at perigee (shortest orbital distance).

- The moon's diameter of 2,160 miles means it would fit roughly within the width of the continental United States.

- The moon's density is a little more than half of Earth's. Its estimated weight of 80 billion billion tons is about one-eightieth the weight of Earth.

- The moon orbits Earth at about 2,287 mph.

- The moon's surface area of 14.7 million square miles is about one-fourth larger than Africa.

- Under direct sunlight, the moon's surface temperature reaches 273 degrees Fahrenheit. Night temperatures plunge to minus 244 degrees.

Source: The Moon Book, Kim Long, Johnson Books, 1988

verse that really got my attention was Proverbs 18:21 where I read, 'In the tongue is the power of life and death.' And the Lord spoke to my heart and said, *You have cursed your own children. You're speaking death into them.*"

Charlie's heart was broken as he thought of the pain he had brought Charles and Tom. He went to his sons and asked them to forgive him.

"The Lord eventually delivered me from this explosive temper and critical spirit," Charlie says. "We began to grow together in the Lord, and I began to bless them and encourage them. They started blossoming like spring flowers. It was amazing to see the change in our relationship."

And today?

"We've gotten very close," Charlie says. "We're affectionate one to another. We give hugs, you know, a manly kiss on the cheek, stuff like that. And I'm doing the same thing with my grandchildren to bless them."



Family night out

Dads (and moms) and the family can enjoy an evening of lunar exploration with just a pair of binoculars and a moon map. If you have a small telescope, so much the better.

NASA and Google have put together a fantastic Web site (www.google.com/moon) that shows the position and gives information about each Apollo landing. NASA's Web site (www.nasa.gov) has many other educational resources.

Take a look at a map of the moon and become familiar with the largest features associated with the manned landings. Then choose a clear moonlit night to see if you can find those features yourself — for example, the Sea of Tranquility, where Apollo 11 landed.

You'll be able to see more detail if you look at the moon during one of its quarter phases. The full moon is so bright it can make viewing uncomfortable.

U.S.

manned space exploration highlights

May 5, 1961: Astronaut Alan Shepard is first American in space. (Shepard later commanded Apollo 14 and became the fifth man to walk on the moon.)

July 20, 1969: Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin are first to walk on the moon.

December 14, 1972: Gene Cernan and Harrison Schmitt of Apollo 17 complete last exploration of the moon to date.

May 14, 1973: Launch of Skylab, the first U.S. space station.

April 12, 1981: Space Shuttle Columbia's first test flight

June 25, 1995: Atlantis is first U.S. shuttle to dock with Russian Mir space station.

December 4, 1998: Space Shuttle Endeavor carries U.S. Unity module for the International Space Station.

February 14, 2001: Thomas Jones and Robert Curbeam Jr. perform 100th space walk in U.S. space program.

January 14, 2004: President George W. Bush calls for return to the moon by 2020.

Source: www.seasky.org

"In the Book of Joel it talks about God restoring what the locusts have eaten. Over the years God has restored what was damaged in the earlier years of their lives. Now we have a beautiful relationship."

The Man and the Moon

As one of the featured Apollo astronauts sharing memories in the 2007 documentary *In the Shadow of the Moon*, Charlie Duke took the opportunity to proclaim his faith to millions.

"My walk on the moon lasted three days, and it was a great adventure," he said unapologetically. "But my walk with God lasts forever."

On the moon, each lunar day lasts for 14 Earth days. The sun steadily crosses the black sky and transforms frigid shadow into baking rock. The Duke family



Charlie and Dotty Duke

photo almost certainly has faded and crumbled under the barrage of monthly radiation.

But on Earth, the Duke family lives and thrives thanks to their encounter with a Man ... and God ... who just happened to put that moon there in the first place.



For more remarks from Scott Harrup's interview with astronaut Charlie Duke, visit "Out There" (sharrup.agblogger.org).

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E-mail your comments to tpe@ag.org.

ABCs OF SALVATION

To know God and be ready for heaven, follow these steps:

A. Admit you are a sinner.

"There is no one righteous, not even one ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:10,23 (See Romans 5:8; 6:23.)

Ask God's forgiveness and repent of your sins.

"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13 (See Acts 3:19.)

B. Believe in Jesus (put your trust in Him) as your only hope of salvation.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 (See John 14:6.)

Become a child of God by receiving Christ.

"To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12 (See Revelation 3:20.)

C. Confess that Jesus is your Lord.

"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9 (See verse 10.)

For further help, contact the Assemblies of God church near you.

If you would like someone to pray with you concerning your decision to follow Jesus Christ, please contact the church indicated on the back cover or call:

1-800-4PRAYER

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