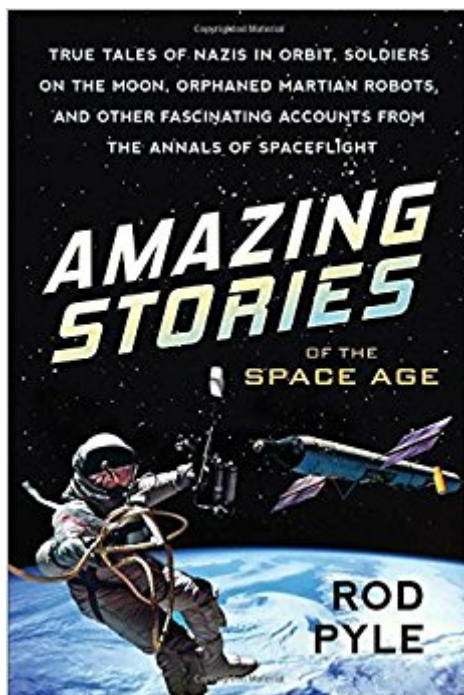


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# Amazing Stories Of The Space Age: True Tales Of Nazis In Orbit, Soldiers On The Moon, Orphaned Martian Robots, And Other Fascinating Accounts From The Annals Of Spaceflight



## Synopsis

Award-winning science writer and documentarian Rod Pyle presents an insider's perspective on the most unusual and bizarre space missions ever devised inside and outside of NASA. The incredible projects described here were not merely flights of fancy dreamed up by space enthusiasts, but actual missions planned by leading aeronautical engineers. Some were designed but not built; others were built but not flown; and a few were flown to failure but little reported: A giant rocket that would use atomic bombs as propulsion (never mind the fallout), military bases on the moon that could target enemies on earth with nuclear weapons, a scheme to spray-paint the lenses of Soviet spy satellites in space, the rushed Soyuz 1 spacecraft that ended with the death of its pilot, the near-disaster of the Apollo 11 moon landing, the mysterious Russian space shuttle that flew only once and was then scrapped--these are just some of the unbelievable tales that Pyle has found in once top-secret documents as well as accounts that were simply lost for many decades. These stories, complimented by many rarely-seen photos and illustrations, tell of a time when nothing was too off-the-wall to be taken seriously, and the race to the moon and the threat from the Soviet Union trumped all other considerations. Readers will be fascinated, amused, and sometimes chilled.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Pyle has created an eminently readable, high-energy journey through the adventures, and frequent mis-adventures, of the space age. If you enjoyed Mary Roach's *Packing for Mars*, you will love this book." --Kenneth Kramer, former Director

of Public Relations, County of Los Angeles Public Library

“This book is essential reading for anybody with an interest in the history of spaceflight. It is a mine of information, much of it only recently declassified, on a wide range of projects. Some of the more expensive or more technologically challenging of these never made it beyond the imagination of their advocates, but their stories are no less fascinating. One of the most daring projects (chapter 3) was Wernher von Braun’s 1952 blueprint for a fleet of spacecraft to visit Mars. Although visionary at the time, it is now clear that we had neither the detailed knowledge of Mars nor the financial resources needed to turn his ideas into reality. My personal favorite was chapter 11, which gave the inside story of the historic lunar landing on July 20, 1969, and of all the things that nearly went wrong—but fortunately didn’t. All in all, a thoroughly good read.”

•David K. Love, fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society and author of *Kepler and the Universe*

“Whether you are a die-hard space fanatic or a casual reader, you’ll find this book is full of fascinating space stories you never knew existed. Rod Pyle is our space supersleuth!”

•Andrew Chaikin, author of *A Man on the Moon*

“I’m a huge fan of amazing stories, and these stories are so compelling I could not put the book down until I finished reading every one. And what’s most mind-boggling is that all these stories are true!”

•Peter Z. Orton, story editor, *Steven Spielberg’s Amazing Stories* NBC series

“Drawing upon little-known Cold War mission plans, and underreported records of actual mission emergencies, historian Rod Pyle has managed to convey the essence of the intensity and drama of those space-age years from well before Sputnik to the shuttle program. Delivering densely packed facts in an entertaining and often amusing style is what Pyle does best. Long after you’ve finished the book, you’ll remember how much fun you had reading it.”

•Susan Holden Martin, the Mars Society, Inc.

“So often our ongoing march into the future trumps remembering and savoring the past. Rod Pyle has made deep dives into space history, amassing well-crafted, storytelling chapters about people, projects, and dustbin endeavors, some recently declassified, that are germane to today’s space initiatives. Be it detailing US Air Force attempts to salute the militarization of Earth orbit and the moon, novel atomic-powered starships, wheeled space stations, to faulty decision making that led to the deaths of human space travelers and robots, Pyle’s ability to capture forget-me-not facts is truly amazing. This is a must-read for today’s space fan, while looking at the rearview mirror of times past.”

•Leonard David, *Space.com*’s Space Insider columnist

A compelling collection of quixotic concepts and harrowing exploits that unfolded during humankind’s first staggering

steps into the space age. Somehow, we got there, but not without more than a few misguided notions, narrow escapes, and tragedies. Rod Pyle's account not only serves as a sobering reminder that politics, paranoia, and public relations have no place in any scientific endeavor, but it also demonstrates how far dreams, grounded in reality, can take us.

• Jeff Kanipe, author of *The Cosmic Connection: How Astronomical Events Impact Life on Earth* "Accomplished space author Rod Pyle digs through the yellowed archives of space history to bring us the alternate reality of space projects that might have been—a proposed Nazi space bomber, a planned trip to Mars and Venus on the Nuclear Crocco spaceship, the sausage gun for battles on the moon, and more. He also peers between the headlines for true stories such as Neil Armstrong's brush with death on Gemini 8, the signal from Apollo 11's Eagle lander indicating that it might explode, and the ghastly death of a Soviet cosmonaut who suspected it was coming. This book will equip you for years worth of conversations over your favorite beverage.

• Steve Fentress, director, Strasenburgh Planetarium, Rochester Museum & Science Center "I highly recommend this book to anyone with an interest in space exploration. Pyle's account of the evolution of the modern space program reminded me of events I'd forgotten, filled in details of events I thought I knew about, and revealed fascinating projects I'd never heard of. His ability to keep mind-boggling facts and fanciful yet true proposals in perspective makes this an engaging book that is gripping, yet easy to read. A wonderful addition to my reference library!

• Melanie Melton Knocke, director of CPS Planetarium, ambassador of the NASA Airborne Astronomy, and author "When the space travel of science fiction became a reality, many outlandish, risky, and sometimes foolhardy ideas seized the imaginations of individuals and world superpowers. Most of the wilder ideas never progressed further than paper studies. Some of the most impossible-sounding dreams, however, happened. Rod Pyle skillfully guides us through both major moments and forgotten corners of spaceflight triumphs and tragedies with a sense of entertaining drama, and reminds us that the impossible can be anything but.

• Francis French, author of *In the Shadow of the Moon*

Rod Pyle is the author of the widely acclaimed *Curiosity: An Inside Look at the Mars Rover Mission and the People Who Made It Happen* and *Destination Mars*--called "the best recent overview of Mars missions" by the *Washington Post*--and also *Destination Moon*, *Missions to the Moon*, and a popular audiobook called *The Space Race*. He has produced numerous documentaries for the History Channel and Discovery Communications, including the widely praised *Modern Marvels*:

Apollo 11. He has been an assistant professor at the University of La Verne and a lecturer with NASA's Johnson Space Center.

Everyone has their weakness when it comes to books. Murder mysteries. Romance novels. History. Mine is the "gee I didn't know that" genre, especially if it's related in any way to my second favorite ... outer space. This book is a cornucopia of facts, trivia and well, amazing stories about anything (and seemingly everything) that's out of this world, specifically missions that were conceived, attempted or didn't quite make it. The book reads in some ways like a novel, in some ways like a documentary and yet in other ways like science fiction couched in reality (think Star Trek). What I'm saying is that the author obviously is into the subject and has created a book that's difficult to set aside. For me it was just the right book to curl up with on chilly Autumn evenings with a cup of hot cocoa just like I used to do when I was a kid. But I don't think you will have to be a scifi fan to enjoy it, it's just darn good writing. A couple of important notes that DO NOT affect this review or rating. The advance copy I read was uncorrected for spelling. That's okay, my brain seems to self-correct such things. The printing and formatting of the book I read also may not be exactly the same as what ends up on the bookshelves, but I just want to mention in passing that when I ordered it I somehow thought it would be larger. I hope the publisher considers making it available in a larger format binding, it would be a good title for gifting or coffee table display.

This book was reviewed in Smithsonian's Air And Space Magazine, with a very good review. I am glad that I purchased it. I would have given it another star if it had been longer. At 68 (and having followed the space program since I was 8 years old) I know a little bit about many of these stories. However, Mr. Pyle gives a great deal of additional details that make them fascinating. To many, it is absurd to consider that our military actually considered a rocket propelled by nuclear bombs. We're not talking about bombs exploding in deep space (this is still being considered in the future.) As Mr. Pyle notes, this is from liftoff on earth. No one stopped to consider the radiation hazards of such a rocket. Once they did, the program was shelved. There are other examples of ideas that are amazing, some which actually worked - at least in some form, and often years later. If you are interested in the Space Age, this book is truly fascinating.

"...Nazis in Orbit..." provides an "inside baseball" view of mainstream missions readers have heard

of and missions and space hardware which are more obscure. An informative and entertaining read.

Very interesting recount of the development of rockets starting before Von Braun. I recall the rivalry of the services and NASA to get launch and orbiting hardware designed and online...was unaware of some programs like Blue Gemini. Great read..

A fun and informative book. A few of the stories aren't so "amazing" but it's still an interesting read.

This is a collection of short stories about the space age. Some of them were quite entertaining.

Great book very informative. Could not put it down.

A great look back at some of the crazy, and not so crazy, stuff people thought of in the early days of space exploration... A very fun read!

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