

Astronaut Wives Club

(NASA missions) by Lily Koppel (2013)

The Original [Mercury] Seven [1959]:

Rene Carpenter, Trudy Cooper, Annie Glenn, Betty Grissom, Jo Schirra, Louise Shepard & Marge Slayton.

The New [Gemini] Nine [1962]:

Janet Armstrong, Susan Borman, Jane Conrad, Marilyn Lovell, Pat McDivitt, Marilyn See, Faye Stafford, Pat White & Barbara Young.

The [Gemini & Apollo] Fourteen [1963]:

Joan Aldrin, Valerie Anders, Jeannie Bassett, Sue Bean, Barbara Cernan, Martha Chaffee, Pat Collins, Loella Cunningham, Harriet Eisele, Faith Freeman, Barbara Gordon, Claire Schweickart, Lurton Scott & Beth Williams.

The [Apollo] Nineteen [1966]:

Joan Brand, Nancy Bull, Joann Carr, Dotty Duke, Mary Engle, Jan Evans, Ada Givens, Mary Haise, Mary Irwin, Kathleen Lind, Gratia Lousma, Liz Mattingly, Bernice McCandless, Louise Mitchell, Wanita Pogue, Joan Roosa, Suzanne Weitz & Pamela Worden.

The book was mostly written about the original seven & later nine more, but not too much after that. It describes the stress their wives endured with their husbands being gone, the uncertainty of their return & be the perfect wife. 1959 Life magazine signed an exclusive contract with the astronaut families to give them \$70,000 [\$7000/yr military salary at the time] & a \$100,000 life insurance policy. The wives were very close & were there for each other.

Annie was the ultimate astro-wife, even with her stutter [she overcame it yrs later]. They moved to Houston in 1962 [the original 7 built in Timber Cove; the new 9 built in the new El Lago Estates [both on Taylor Lake] & the 14 built in the latest Nassau Bay [closer to NASA]. Astronauts & their wives were soon invited into Houston's social parties. Astronauts were given a Corvette for \$1/yr. & other perks.

Girls were throwing themselves at the astronauts & some men fell to the temptation. Some ended in divorce [Eisele, Carpenter & others] & others became widows [Grissom, Chaffee, White, Bassett, See & Williams]. The original club was small & personal, but later it became the opposite.

Apollo 17 was the 6th & final flight to the moon. Nixon not only talked to the first man on the moon, but also cancelled the space program. 2.5 million people worked on the space program & a cost of \$25 billion. The space program brought us Tang, Teflon, Velcro & huge improvements in technology.

Quotes: "If you think going to the moon id hard, try staying at home." [Barbara Cernan]

Books: The Right Stuff

Annie's ham loaf recipe: 2 eggs, milk, cracker crumbs, tapioca, ground ham, ground beef, onion. Bake with brown sugar sauce for 2 hrs at 350dF.

Joke: most people mixed up Jane & Marilyn & on the exam table the gynecologist told Jane she reminded him of Marilyn. She replied "inside or out?"

Note: Glenn would orbit the Earth at 17,544 mph. Carpenter was said to waste fuel maneuvering the space capsule that he overshot his splash landing & got his wings clipped. Beano accidentally pointed the camera directly into the sun & burned out the lens on Apollo 11 so some of it was filmed on earth in a studio.

see Longwood Gardens [Du Pont estate] in Kennett Square, PN.