

Conversation with Brig. Gen. Michael Collins USAFR, director, Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution, former astronaut (Apollo 11), 9 Sept. 1974, with RS. (Telephone).

Mike Collins called to thank me for the review of his "Carrying the Fire" in Time 19 August -- and to express amazement at the "way the editors changed things around -- they even put in a couple of errors you didn't have in the original review: calling me USAF, Retired, instead of USAF, Reserve, and saying a lot of astronauts were in public relations work." I said that's Time for you, and taking some blame myself because I vastly overwrote for the allotted space.

Mike said he saw Jim Webb recently. Webb said Mike was wrong about saying he opposed the Life contract. What did I think? I said Webb could be quoted both ways; he was against the contracts when he was dealing with World Book early in 1962, but he reversed himself. I wasn't certain which way he was leaning when Kennedy made the decision to let the second group have contracts, as the first had.

I told him I thought he was wrong in saying Armstrong threw his weight around in order to be the first to step on the moon. Collins said he might have been wrong about that; he couldn't prove his thesis.

He was thinking about the check list on Apollo 9 -- the first Apollo EVA mission -- he said. That's when Schweickart "had to crawl all over McDivitt" to get out of the LM, but Collins assumed that was the normal thing. It was rational to reverse the order of egress, he admitted, as was done in Apollo 11.

The origin of the title of the book is spelled out in the preface: "Apollo was the god who carried the fiery sun across the sky in a chariot, but beyond that, how would you carry fire?" Carefully, that's how, Mike adds.

Collins will call me tomorrow to point out the passage where he explains to a little old lady how he happened to get the center seat instead of walking on the moon. pp 267-8

He says 37,500 copies of the book are in print, including 5,000 shipped to the Book of the Moon Club (it's an alternate choice), but he doesn't think over 20,000 copies have been sold. I said it was a good candidate for word-of-mouth promotion -- which I think it is.

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