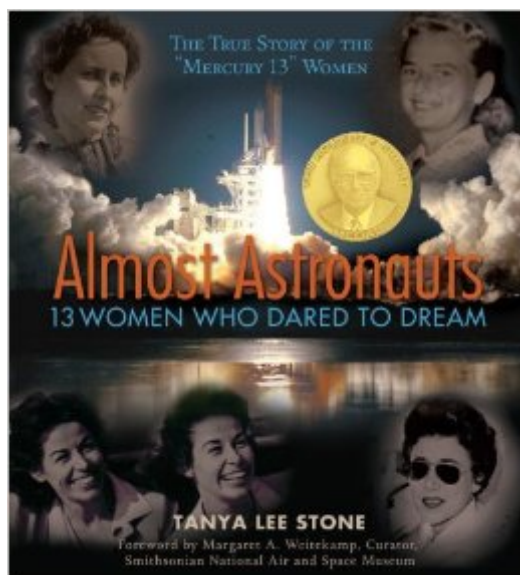


The book was found

Almost Astronauts: 13 Women Who Dared To Dream



Synopsis

They had the right stuff. They defied the prejudices of the time. And they blazed a trail for generations of women to follow. What does it take to be an astronaut? Excellence at flying, courage, intelligence, resistance to stress, top physical shape — any checklist would include these. But when America created NASA in 1958, there was another unspoken rule: you had to be a man. Here is the tale of thirteen women who proved that they were not only as tough as the toughest man but also brave enough to challenge the government. They were blocked by prejudice, jealousy, and the scrawled note of one of the most powerful men in Washington. But even though the Mercury 13 women did not make it into space, they did not lose, for their example empowered young women to take their place in the sky, piloting jets and commanding space capsules. **ALMOST ASTRONAUTS** is the story of thirteen true pioneers of the space age.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars — See all reviews (33 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #93,862 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #42 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > Science Studies > Astronomy & Space > Aeronautics & Space #93 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Science & Technology #93 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > United States > 1900s

Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

Customer Reviews

I'm a 7th grade teacher, and my students can always tell when I'm reading an especially good book during our sustained silent reading time. I'm a reader who wears her literary heart on her sleeve and I'm not always quiet about it. The kids heard me gasping in shock as I read Suzanne Collins' **THE HUNGER GAMES**, laughing out loud at Erin Dionne's **MODELS DON'T EAT CHOCOLATE**

COOKIES, and most recently, grumbling with indignation as I read Tanya Lee Stone's latest work of nonfiction for middle grade readers, *ALMOST ASTRONAUTS: 13 WOMEN WHO DARED TO DREAM*. Known informally as the Mercury 13, these women were the best of the best: pilots who had earned their wings and wanted more. They fought to prove they were just as qualified to be astronauts as the men being trained by NASA, and they had test data to support that argument. *ALMOST ASTRONAUTS* tells the story of why they never made it into space - a story that serves as a shocking reminder of how deeply ingrained sexism was in American society in the early 1960s. This book is loaded with compelling details, from vivid descriptions of the testing and training these women endured to media reports from the time period that illustrate just the kind of bias that kept the women out of space in the end. Modern students reading this account will be intrigued by the historical and scientific details, outraged at the attitudes of the powerful people who put up roadblocks for the women who might have been America's first female astronauts, and inspired by the manner in which these women paved the way for others. Every school year, I'm able to choose just a few books that our full team reads together in class. These books are so well-written that I'm willing to read them out loud four times over the course of a few weeks. They have to be important books, amazing books that I know will capture every student's imagination. *ALMOST ASTRONAUTS* is one of those books for this year, and I can't wait to share it with my kids.

Tanya Stone's well-researched and faithfully recorded "Almost Astronauts" describes a small footnote in history during the early years of our country's astronaut program. For those who weren't adults in 1961, or rather, female adults in 1961, the era of women aspiring to traditionally "male" jobs reveals surprisingly ugly politics and prejudices - NASA notwithstanding. Although I wasn't as active in the women's movement as some others, I commend their grit and applaud Ms Stone's passion for the story and her special talent in telling it. Yours for accurate history, Gene Nora Jessen, one of the 13

Jim Oberg's negative review makes some excellent points that do not diminish my admiration for this book, which echoes what the starred reviews in major publications have said. I think Oberg's follow-up comments in the discussion of his review, rather than the briefer review itself, add quite a bit to the discussion of this excellent book for young readers. Oberg's comments illuminate the paradox that is LBJ. Then-Vice-President Johnson was nothing if not pragmatic, which is why he was later successful getting civil rights laws passed, but he could be blunt and even vicious in his language. The pragmatic LBJ recognized that making special accommodations for women would

lead to other groups asking for the same thing. But when he said that, he used the language of the bigots who were all too commonly in positions of political power, and it is easy to conclude that he, himself, was a bigot. Oberg makes me reconsider whether Tanya Lee Stone's interpretation was correct, or whether we need a little more nuance to understand Johnson. After all, later in his career Johnson became the president who pushed for and signed some remarkable civil rights legislation. And when you follow Oberg's review's link to his 2007 article about women space craft commanders, you will see that he admires women in space and the contribution of pioneers like the ones in Stone's book. He seems to me to be a historian who is arguing for nuance. As an author of books for the same age range as this one, I know that it is not always easy to include such nuances. So I am sympathetic to both Stone's work and Oberg's comments. On my scienceshelf(dot)com review page for *Almost Astronauts*, I have added links to two of Oberg's articles, which I suggest as supplemental reading to the book. Fred Bortz, author of *Beyond Jupiter: The Story of Planetary Astronomer Heidi Hammel* *Beyond Jupiter (Women's Adventures in Science)*

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