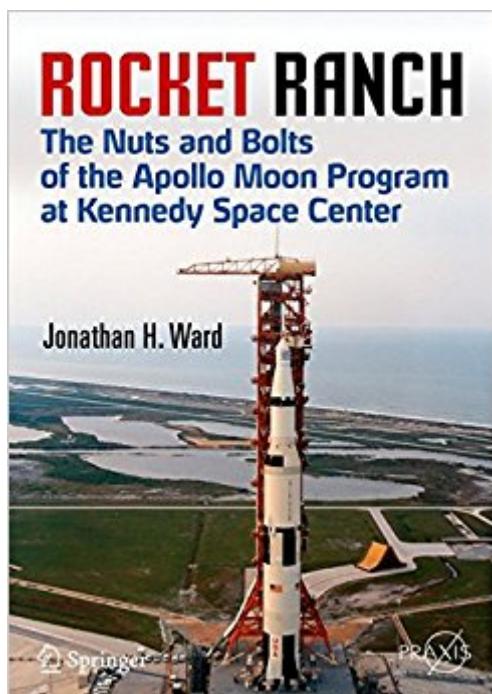


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# Rocket Ranch: The Nuts And Bolts Of The Apollo Moon Program At Kennedy Space Center (Springer Praxis Books)



## Synopsis

Jonathan Ward takes the reader deep into the facilities at Kennedy Space Center to describe NASA's first computer systems used for spacecraft and rocket checkout and explain how tests and launches proceeded. Descriptions of early operations include a harrowing account of the heroic efforts of pad workers during the Apollo 1 fire. A companion to the author's book Countdown to a Moon Launch: Preparing Apollo for Its Historic Journey, this explores every facet of the facilities that served as the base for the Apollo/Saturn missions. Hundreds of illustrations complement the firsthand accounts of more than 70 Apollo program managers and engineers. The era of the Apollo/Saturn missions was perhaps the most exciting period in American space exploration history. Cape Canaveral and Kennedy Space Center were buzzing with activity. Thousands of workers came to town to build the facilities and launch the missions needed to put an American on the Moon before the end of the decade. Work at KSC involved much more than just launching rockets. It was a place like none other on Earth. Technicians performed intricate operations, and hazards abounded everywhere, including lightning, fire, highly-toxic fuels, snakes, heat, explosives, LOX spills, and even plutonium. The reward for months of 7-day workweeks under intense pressure was witnessing a Saturn V at liftoff. For anyone who ever wished they had worked at Kennedy Space Center during the Apollo era, this book is the next best thing. The only thing missing is the smell of rocket fuel in the morning.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A treat for space fans...the books are both great resources and good, solid reads." Spaceflight Insiderâ œWard â | makes the inner workings of the Apollo and Saturn space missions very understandable. â | He does a fantastic job of showing the behind-the-scenes work that allowed the Apollo and Saturn space missions to take place. All readers interested in the history of space exploration will enjoy this work. Summing Up: Highly recommended. All readership levels.â • (C. Charnaswskas-Jasionowicz, Choice, Vol. 53 (9), May, 2016)â œRocket Ranch is an enjoyable overview of the Kennedy Space Center during the 1960s and a once-over-lightly account of the Moon landing program. â | Contained here is the best account I have seen of the computing efforts at KSC and the operational aspects of the Apollo program. There is also a lengthy chapter on the Apollo 1 fire that many will find of interest. Ward relies on more than seventy interviews that he personally conducted â | .â • (Roger Launius's Blog, launiusr.wordpress.com, March, 2016)â œRocket Ranch is the most recent attempt by memorabilia collectors to provide a technical description of Kennedy Space Center. Space Center enthusiasts and technophiles will love the detailed descriptions and the stories drawn from Wardâ ™s interviews with employees, contractors, and associates of Kennedy Space Center during the Apollo era. â | Kennedy Space Center technophiles will love Wardâ ™s Rocket Ranch for providing them a more detailed and largely accurate description of Apollo-era technology infrastructure in a well-organized tour guide format.â • (Orville Butler, Quest, Vol. 23 (2), 2016)

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spills, and even plutonium. The reward for months of 7-day workweeks under intense pressure was witnessing a Saturn V at liftoff. For anyone who ever wished they had worked at Kennedy Space Center during the Apollo era, this book is the next best thing. The only thing missing is the smell of rocket fuel in the morning.

As a lifelong space geek, retired aerospace engineer and serious spaceflight enthusiast with a library running to many hundreds of volumes, I thought I knew almost everything there is to know about the Apollo Program that landed American astronauts on the moon in 1969. Then along comes *Rocket Ranch* to show me how wrong I was. Author Jonathan H. Ward has done the seemingly impossible—he tells the story of a part of the Apollo Program (possibly the most well documented event in human history) that no other book has covered before in a meaningful way, as far as I know. *Rocket Ranch* takes a detailed look at NASA and contractor facilities, organizations, people and operations at the Kennedy Space Center that received, tested, repaired, counted down and launched the giant Saturn 1, 1B and V rockets that carried Apollo spacecraft into earth orbit and to the moon. Mr. Ward's story takes place *where the rubber meets the road*, at a place every reader will know but with new and fascinating details. It's all in here—the MSOB, VAB, ML, LUT, MSS, ACE, LCC. If you already know what those acronyms mean, then you need to pick up a copy of *Rocket Ranch* to learn more about all of them that you'd ever imagine. If you don't know what they mean, don't be put off—Mr. Ward defines them all for you. With a breezy, accessible, conversational writing style, impeccable technical and programmatic accuracy, more than 200 photos and drawings and just the right soupçon of oral history stories from the old timers, now in their 80s and 90s, integrated into the text, *Rocket Ranch* is a must-read for every Apollo fan—especially for those of us who already think we know it all. I recommend it most highly.

I cannot recommend this book enough! What a GREAT read..I honestly cannot put it down. Filled with tons of little known facts. For example, Had Apollo 11 not succeeded, the 12 was scheduled to lift off of Pad B..I never knew that. Gives a detailed explanation of what life was like for the countless engineers and technicians that made Apollo and its launch complex work. What was it like to work on the LUT? Its in here. What was it like being a crane operator in the VAB? Its in here. What did those guys that you always see in the old NASA footage...the hundreds of guys behind consoles at the Cape actually do? Its in here. Terrific read and very well done. I can't put it down.

Although I'm definitely a space geek with a more-than-passing interest in Apollo hardware, I'll admit outright I've never given the day-to-day workings at Kennedy Space Center much thought. Having read this book, I'm kind of kicking myself for neglecting the subject. This is a truly fascinating book that deserves to be read by anyone who describes themselves as a space buff. On a purely technical level, there's a lot of diagrams, technical descriptions, and behind-the-scenes photographs here that I'd never stumbled across before. I'd never known that there was an entire complex of facilities under each launch pad, what the inside of the S-II interstage looked like during launch vehicle processing, the layout of both floors of the LC-34 blockhouse, or what a "viscous damping system" was or how it worked. Talk about revelations! The appendixes include a wealth of data not included in the main text, including the interior layout of the mobile launcher, the function of all 150 consoles in Area B of the firing room, features of the RCA 110A computer, and a detailed list of acronyms. Had this book been a purely oral or purely technical history, it could have been rather tedious. Thankfully, Jonathan Ward does an excellent job balancing the two extremes here. There's enough technical data to give the reader a pretty good idea of how everything fit together and worked, without making their eyes glaze over. At the same time, there are enough first-hand accounts to put it all into human perspective. Along with descriptions of the inner workings of the Manned Spacecraft Operations Buildings and Vehicle Assembly Building (among others), there are extracts of interviews from numerous KSC employees, who give a vivid account of what it was like to live and work on the front lines of the Space Race. I found the chapter on the Apollo 1 fire particularly hard to read; even after almost 50 years, the events of that day are still burned into the memory of everyone Mr. Ward interviewed. If I have to nitpick, it's that the editing leaves something to be desired in places. There are quite a few missing "a"s, "of"s, "and"s, and "the"s that found me re-reading sentences in a couple places. The photo quality is a little iffy in places, something I've noticed from Praxis titles in general. However, my five star rating still stands. I went ahead and bought this book's companion title, *Countdown to a Moon Launch*, halfway through reading this one, which should say enough about its quality.

Jonathan Ward has done an outstanding job with this book "Rocket Ranch", and its companion, "Countdown To A Moon Launch". They tell us what it was really like to be a member of the team at the Kennedy Space Center, during the time of the Apollo missions to the Moon. This is not just the authors words, but also numerous recollections from some of the people that were actually there, doing the work. As the sub-title of this book suggests, "Rocket Ranch" delves into the details of what

the different elements at KSC were for, supported by many, many illustrations and pictures. Tests, procedures and the NASA acronyms used are all explained and the reader really gets a sense of the unbelievable schedules of preparing several missions at once, the learning curves required and the complexity of all the new technologies coming together, where they had to work perfectly the first time. You will also learn, from first hand accounts, of some of the less talked about aspects of working at KSC: the dangers of working around these immense machines, some near misses, where events might have turned out very badly - and sometimes did (Apollo 1). I've read many good books about KSC, which have all added something to the overall story, but Jonathan Ward's books are by far the best, simply because of the details revealed, while at the same time giving the reader an overall picture and order of events. If you're interested in what it took to get the mighty Saturns ready to fly, buy both books - you won't be disappointed.

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