

the nation

Ten year anniversary

Aldrin recalls Apollo 11 moon mission

United Press International
Ten years ago Monday at 9:32 a.m. EDT, three men strapped to form-fitting couches set out on a journey that must rank as one of mankind's great adventures.

Apollo 11 astronauts Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins and Edwin Aldrin left the Earth atop a 363-foot Saturn 5 rocket. They were bound for the moon.

Ahead was man's first landing on another body in the solar system, a walk on the lunar surface, a flight back to lunar orbit, and the trip home to a Pacific Ocean splashdown.

It was a warm, muggy morning when Apollo 11's crew rode in an air-conditioned van to the oceanside launch pad 8 miles from their special quarters at the Kennedy Space Center, named after the dead president who in 1961 established the goal of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely before the end of the decade.

Armstrong and Collins were first to board their command module atop the three-stage rocket, coated

with frost from super-cold propellants already aboard. Aldrin recalled that he waited alone for 15 minutes on a platform at the edge of the spaceship.

"As far as I could see there were people and cars lining the beaches and highways. The surf was just beginning to rise out of an azure-blue ocean. I could see the massiveness of the Saturn 5 rocket below and the magnificent precision of Apollo above.

"I savored the wait and marked the minutes in my mind as something I would always want to remember," he said.

Finally Aldrin took his place aboard the Apollo. A bridge-like access arm from the gantry swung away from the spacecraft at 9:27 a.m.

Then, on schedule to the second, the Saturn's five massive booster engines ignited with a flash of

orange flame. As soon as the five powerplants reached full thrust — 7.5 million pounds — the Saturn slowly left the launch pad.

What sounded like prolonged thunder rolled across the flat marsh land to the viewing areas 3 1/2 miles away.

"For the thousands of people watching along the beaches of Florida and the millions who watched on television, our liftoff was ear shattering," Aldrin wrote later in "Return to Earth," his account of the mission and his personal troubles that followed.

"For us there was a slight increase in the amount of background noise, not at all unlike the sort one notices taking off in a commercial airliner, and in less than a minute we were traveling ahead of the speed of sound."

Apollo 11 soared into its preliminary 118-mile-high orbit with precision, prompting Armstrong to radio mission control in Houston:

"This Saturn gave us a magnificent ride."

But Apollo 11 had yet to break the bonds of Earth's gravity.

That came at 12:22 p.m. The Saturn's still-attached third stage was fired a second time to propel the Apollo out of lunar orbit and on the 24,200-mph path to the moon.

Apollo 11 was on its way. It happened 10 years ago Monday.



Battalion photo by Clay Cockill

Minature monuments?

These oblong hunks of concrete that have recently been placed at sidewalk corners near the Academic Center are actually the old campus street signs buried to a height of about 4 feet. Eugene Ray, director of grounds maintenance, said the signs are being tried out as "bollards — physical barriers to keep traffic where it should be." He said there is about \$8,000 to \$10,000 a year in damages as the result of vehicles running over sprinkler heads.

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