

'Go, Baby, Go!' Thousands Exult as the Majestic Journey Begins

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CAPE KENNEDY—With a wish for good luck and Godspeed, they said goodbye to the planet earth and climbed straight through the searing morning sunlight.

Thronged, stretched along the Florida beaches for miles, watched Wednesday as astronauts Neil A. Armstrong, Michael Collins and Edwin E. Aldrin Jr. began man's first attempt to land on the moon.

For 2½ minutes after the launch at 6:30 a.m. PDT, the crowds followed the thundering Saturn 5 rocket higher and higher over the Atlantic.

The last they saw of Apollo 11 was when the Saturn's second-stage engine flashed to life when the vehicle was more than 50 miles off the coast and nearly 222,000 feet high.

Front Row View for 7,000

While ordinary citizens parked their cars on beaches, set up tents, and rested on cots, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration shuttled 7,000 special guests into the space center for a front row view.

Visitors, in dozens of languages, urged the mighty space machine upward as it hammered the earth with 7.5 million pounds of thrust. Women had tears in their eyes. From thousands came the plea: "Go, baby, go!"

The Rev. Ralph David Abernathy, President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, admitted that he even forgot for the moment that there are poor people in the world.

Here to protest huge expenditures on the moon program while many of the poor are starving, Mr. Aber-

nathy said of the launch, "I was one of the proudest Americans."

The astronauts left behind at the moonport a typical American scene of litterbugs, back-slapping politicians and commercialism, but even that did not detract from the majesty of the launch.

The thousands of viewers at the VIP site collectively held their breath as the huge rocket engines ignited, enveloping the launch pad in brilliant orange flames and mushrooming smoke.

Former President Lyndon B. Johnson and Vice President Agnew led the dignitaries viewing from a special site.

After watching the launch, Mr. Johnson said in a television interview, "I don't believe there's a single

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VIP VIEWER — Former President Lyndon B. Johnson cranes his neck as he watches the Apollo 11 liftoff at sunny Cape Kennedy.

(AP Wirephoto)

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thing that our country does . . . that has greater potential for peace than the space effort."

Agnew noted that America should now plan to put a man on the planet Mars by the end of the century. His remark promptly brought criticism from Sens. Mike Mansfield of Montana and Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts in Washington who said that unsatisfied "needs on earth" must take priority over any adventures in space past the moon.

More than 5,000 congressmen, governors, mayors, foreign dignitaries, industrial leaders and other VIPs sat in bleachers and several thousand others stood on the surrounding grounds to watch the liftoff.

Hundreds stood in long lines before the launch to buy space trinkets and other souvenirs while other visitors lined up for cold drinks and snacks.

Thousands of cars, trucks and camper trailers, many of them parked in the area all night, lined most of the available roadside and beach viewing sites outside the moonport before daybreak. Massive traffic jams developed before and after the launch and it took some motorists several hours to get out of the immediate area.

Apollo 11 had circled the earth 1½ times, traveling more than 26,000 miles, and had traveled another 25,000 miles toward the moon before many of the cars here had managed to escape the traffic tieups.

Wrecks No Worry

Police were not worried about traffic accidents. "Traffic is moving so slow nobody can get up enough momentum to cause a wreck," said a highway patrolman.

Everything from buttons and bumper stickers to photo and record albums were mass produced and sold to moonshot viewers as souvenirs. Cheap buttons and bumper stickers were bringing \$1 each.

Also viewing the launch from the VIP site as guests of Thomas O. Paine, NASA administrator, were Mrs. Virgil I. Grissom and Mrs. Edward H. White II, widows of two astronauts burned to death in a launchpad fire Jan. 27, 1967. The widow of the third victim, Roger B. Chaffee, who has since married a Houston physician, declined an invitation to attend.

The widows of two astronauts who died in accidents before they had a chance to make space flights, Mrs. Elliott Sea and Mrs. Charles C. Williams also were guests at the VIP site.

A busload of members of the poor people's campaign watched the launch from the parkway viewing site, an area which the VIP site is about 3½ miles from the launchpad. Mr. Abernathy, who brought his campaign here to dramatize poverty as opposed to the billions spent on the space program, had been invited to the VIP site, but declined.