

Hundreds of Thousands Flock to Be 'There'

By BERNARD WEINRAUB
Special to The New York Times

COCOA BEACH, Fla., July 15—The largest crowd ever to witness a space launching surged along beaches, parks, roads and highways tonight and waited excitedly for the Apollo 11 flight to the moon tomorrow.

In Cocoa Beach, Cape Canaveral, Titusville and the coastal towns that rose with the space program, thousands of out-of-state tourists mingled with local engineers and technicians in an all-night wait.

By early evening, lights bathed the 363-foot-high Apollo spacecraft on Launch-Pad 39, in view of the hundreds of thousands who stood miles away along hard sand beaches and jetties to await the lift-off.

"It looks like one big white candle, it's beautiful," said 21-year-old Jimmy Blount, a senior at the University of Georgia who sat on a swarming, tent-filled inlet in Titusville, 11 miles west of the launching pad. "I'm going to tell my grandchildren about it — I was there when men went to the moon."

Johnson in Group

Nearly a million tourists are expected to pack Brevard County for the launching. The wildly assorted group of visitors includes former President Lyndon B. Johnson, members of the Poor People's Campaign, African and Asian diplomats, youths carrying Confederate flags, vacationing families, hippies, scientists and surfers and students and salesmen who trudged the eight-mile-long beach tonight. Everywhere there are buttons and bumper stickers that read: "I Was At The Apollo II."

With cars tonight jamming U. S. Highway 1—the main road in this central Florida county—and crowds pouring noisily through motels and restaurants, local officials estimated that 500,000 tourists had swarmed into the county by early evening. The largest crowd to witness a space shot was the 250,000 to 300,000 people who showed up for the Apollo 10 launching on May 18.

"Based on motels, our traffic count, the airports and beaches, we expect to reach the million figure by 8 o'clock tomorrow morning," said Herbert W. Johnson, the director of Brevard County Civil Defense, whose offices are the traffic and safety command post.

County Sheriff Leigh S. Wilson, a retired New York City policeman, was somewhat more guarded. "Right now we have more people than we've ever had but I don't

think it'll hit a million," he said. "I'm not sure our roads can handle 350,000 cars, which would be a million people."

Much Air Traffic

Air traffic in the county quadrupled during the day, with the 10 airfields in the area handling more than 1,200 single-engine planes and 200 private jets. Aircraft were also scheduled to bring Vice President Agnew and more than 200 congressmen, 69 ambassadors, 19 Governors, 40 Mayors, such military officials as Gen. William C. Westmoreland, the Army Chief of Staff, and guests ranging from the Roman Catholic Archbishop of New York, Cardinal Cooke, to entertainers such as Jack Benny and Johnny Carson.

One of the earliest dignitaries to arrive at Cocoa Beach during the hot, cloudy afternoon was former President Johnson, who flew from Houston to Patrick Air Force Base here in a military plane assigned by President Nixon. Mr. Johnson and his wife occupied a suite at the base tonight.

Looking tanned and somewhat solemn, Mr. Johnson attended a luncheon at the Cape Kennedy Hilton to honor both him and James E. Webb, the former head of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. The

luncheon was given by Paul Miller, president of the Gannett newspaper chain, of which Mr. Webb is now an official. In the evening, the Johnsons attended a private dinner at the Cocoa Beach Country Club.

Mr. Johnson, who posed with a frown for photographers and chatted with Walter Cronkite, the newscaster, before the luncheon, told the businessmen, space officials and military officers: "If we can lead the world to the moon, we can lead them to peace and bountiful prosperity here at home."

Another visitor here, the Rev. Ralph Abernathy, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, arrived for an all-night vigil with 25 poor Southern families at a picnic ground near a gate of the Kennedy Space Center.

"We do not oppose the moon shot," said Hosea Williams, a project director for the organization. "We feel the effort is laudable. Our purpose for being here is to protest America's inability to choose human priorities."

Goal Is Defined

Standing in a corner of the Greater St. Paul's Baptist Church in a heavily Negro section in West Cocoa, Mr. Williams said heatedly: "We don't want to be obstructive

here, we don't want to irritate. In fact, we want to educate."

"It's a matter of priorities," he went on. "We are spending billions of dollars to explore outer space but if America spent that same amount of money feeding the poor and hungry, then poverty and hunger would be gone from the face of America today."

Led by Mr. Abernathy, the families — with four mules and two wagons — are scheduled to walk a half mile tomorrow morning from the picnic ground to the gate. Although the group's leaders insist that the demonstration will be peaceful, local sheriff's officials are worried about possible fights or harassment by tourists here to watch the launching.

Policemen Kept Busy

By this evening more than 1,000 highway patrolmen, sheriff's deputies and state troopers were struggling to speed the flow of cars along the highway near the beach and along the packed NASA Causeway.

Such restaurants as Wolfie's in the Ramada Inn were packed and fast running out of sour pickles. And the Holiday Inn nearby was placing cots in rooms and hauling deck chairs around the pool for all-night visitors.

The hordes of tourists on the beaches resembled nomads—their tents and blankets flapping in the soft easterly breeze, their children shrieking and crying, their transistor radios blaring from tents covered with mosquito nets. Smoke curled near the tents and the smell of pork chops and hamburgers cooking drifted over all.

"This is it," said Cal Rogers, an elderly Oklahoman, who stood beside a tent and sipped a container of coffee. "This is what we've been working and paying for so long. That's why I'm here, to see what it's all about."

Good View for Tourists

In Titusville—whose half dozen parks and beaches were packed because the area affords the best tourist view of the lift-off—William Nelson, an engineering planner from Durham, Conn., sat with his family of seven and gazed at the Apollo rocket, looming 11 miles away.

"They tell me I'll be able to feel the earth shake when it goes off," he said. "Once I see it, I'll know that it was worth all the heat and the mosquitoes. All I know is that my kids will be able to say they were here."