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The Astronaut Wives Club



Synopsis

Read the bestselling book that inspired the ABC television series. As America's Mercury Seven astronauts were launched on death-defying missions, television cameras focused on the brave smiles of their young wives. Overnight, these women were transformed from military spouses into American royalty. They had tea with Jackie Kennedy, appeared on the cover of Life magazine, and quickly grew into fashion icons. Annie Glenn, with her picture-perfect marriage, was the envy of the other wives; JFK made it clear that platinum-blondé Rene Carpenter was his favorite; and licensed pilot Trudy Cooper arrived with a secret that needed to stay hidden from NASA. Together with the other wives they formed the Astronaut Wives Club, providing one another with support and friendship, coffee and cocktails. As their celebrity rose-and as divorce and tragedy began to touch their lives-the wives continued to rally together, forming bonds that would withstand the test of time, and they have stayed friends for over half a century. THE ASTRONAUT WIVES CLUB tells the story of the women who stood beside some of the biggest heroes in American history.

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Customer Reviews

This was a good book about a fascinating time in American history. I recommend this to anyone interested in the early space program of course, but another audience I feel would enjoy this book are those fans of Madmen and other period shows set in the 60s. The book explores the dynamics of the time. Here is a group of suburban moms, running the kids back and forth to dance lessons, baking and cooking, washing the dog and driving to the grocery store in their station-wagons. Just like Ozzy and Harriet? Hardly. Many of the wives wanted sports cars like the astronauts received, but NASA thought station-wagons were more 'appropriate' for the wives. Everybody drank, everybody smoked.... and that's just the women. Had I been in their perfectly polished and color coordinated shoes, I'm sure I'd have joined them. They put up with more than we can imagine. In many ways they put their own needs and goals on hold in order to support their husbands' career. They dealt with loneliness, crippling worry about their husbands' safety (as well as fidelity), running things alone while the men were away, all while turning out perfect cassaroles and coordinating their lipstick color for publicity shots. I recommend this. It's a good read. These are stories of strong women, dealing with everything that gets hurled at them, raising their children, supporting their friends and smiling for the cameras. It does tend to jump around a bit from wife to wife, from one launch to another. I thought it might have been a bit easier to keep up with all the characters if their stories were told one at a time instead of mixing in stories from each, but I understand why the author wanted to keep the story moving from wife to wife. For fans of The Right Stuff and Apollo 13, this fills in some background from a perspective often overlooked... the women on the home front who held it together while living with nightly news crews camped out on their lawns.

I read this for a book club. I appreciate the research, but it was too much to cover in one book. I would have much rather read the story of one couple than try to get them all in one book. I couldn't keep track of the people, the marriages, or individual's personality traits. This book would have benefited from more photos, and even a chart or two. I would have liked more pictures of the couples together and some NASA photos. I found the family pics at the end, but it was too late to help me. The recipes were a nice touch. Overall, the author really tried to cram a story about famous men's wives into the women's lib story she seemed more interested in constructing. Nothing against the movement, but other than the time period, it had little to do with how these women lived as astronauts' wives. And, as far as a club, the book didn't convince me that it was more than any spouse's club for military members. I forced myself to finish this for the book club, but most members didn't finish it. The conversation at the meeting was more about the TV version (which I

didn't watch), and dried up quickly. I know these are interesting people with stories to tell, but the way this is told, the wives and astronauts seem very diminished. Also, the Stepford Wives angle is overplayed in relation to women from this time period. I knew women like this and not one of them came off as either "perfect" or fake to me.

I love the choice of subject matter, but it failed to deliver much of its potential. At a brief count, the author attempted to sketch the lives of 49 astronaut wives... So the character development etc suffered and it became a chronology, which I don,t think was the original intention. It was disappointing that she did not concentrate substantially on the first seven, painting their lives with vignettes and moments which would have revealed the true depth of the situation these women found themselves in. The only moment which was developed in any way was the presser on the lawns of each wife... And the arrival of the other wives when the news was bad. there was little scarcely any more development which was such an amazing opportunity lost. it seemed as though she has been just collating material from other sources and had not interviewed or known these women at all.

The potential was there for a very interesting and engrossing book but the tone was very glib, punctuation deplorable and "Astro" highly overused. Not a keeper

Being a child growing up in the space age, and having at least one relative working for NASA in the early space program, I felt that this book would be fascinating to read. Unfortunately I had a great deal of trouble dealing with the problems these women had with their husband's infidelity and the supposed chauvinistic attitude that NASA held towards the wives. I know that we as women have progressed in many ways from the stay at home wives/mothers of the 50's and early 60's. Being told by NASA what color of lipstick to wear, what style of clothes to wear, what to say and how to smile, really began to bother me more than I could imagine. Grant you I understand that these women received many "perks" that they normally would not have enjoyed as military wives or as wives of a test pilot. Yet was it worth it, losing your own self respect and accepting the negative behaviors of their husbands and NASA. It was no surprise at the end of the book that of the 30 astronauts that entered the Mercury, Gemini and Apollo programs only 7 marriages stayed intact (and one marriage of that 7 should not have). Out of all these relationships, only 1 couple stood out as a true working marriage with love and respect for each other, Annie and John Glenn. My hats off to these two people. Back to the book though, this should have been in a magazine form, maybe as

a series. As a book though it was so fragmented and jumped around from person to person so much that it was difficult to track the events, dates and individuals.

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