

# Apollo astronaut Frank Borman remembers the view

October 7 2016, by Meg Jones, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

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Frank Borman hasn't forgotten the view.

How could he? Borman and his fellow astronauts were the first humans to gaze at the bright blue marble of Earth as they orbited the moon, snapping the unforgettable Earthrise photos.

"Looking back at the Earth was a profound experience. It looked so fragile from 240,000 miles," Borman, 88, recalled in a recent phone interview. "You have a hard time understanding there could be so much conflict when it looked so fragile."

Borman will be the featured guest Saturday at EAA AirVenture Museum's Space Day in Oshkosh. He'll talk about America's early space program.

Commander of Apollo 8, the first spaceflight to orbit the moon, Borman had already flown in space on Gemini 7. Both of his space flights were with James Lovell. On Gemini 7, the pair spent almost 14 days orbiting the Earth in 1965, a flight designed to test the limits of humans since doctors didn't know if humans could survive that long in zero G.

Though Borman and Lovell were stiff and their leg muscles had atrophied sitting in cramped conditions, they were back to normal in a few weeks, said Borman. He compared the conditions to "the two of us in the front seat of a Volkswagen. I was fortunate Jim had a good sense

of humor and we never had a problem.

"People ask me, 'Did you get claustrophobic?' No," Borman said. "Inside the spacecraft everything was warm and comfortable, and outside everything was cold. We were quite happy to be inside."

Borman, Lovell and William Anders blasted off on Apollo 8 four days before Christmas 1968.

As the crew prepared for the historic space flight, Borman got a call from NASA's public relations chief.

"He said 'You know, on the Christmas Eve broadcast you'll have the biggest audience ever,'" said Borman.

They weren't sure what to do on the broadcast, so they asked friends for ideas and finally got a suggestion the three all thought was fitting.

That's how Lovell and Borman ended up typing the first verses of the Book of Genesis on the fire-resistant paper of their flight plans. And on Christmas Eve, in a live broadcast heard by millions of people on the pale blue dot they had left behind, the crewmates took turns reciting the first 10 verses from the Bible. Anders spoke first, then Lovell.

Borman finished:

"And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters he called the Seas: and God saw that it was good.

"And from the crew of Apollo 8, we close with good night, good luck, a Merry Christmas - and God bless all of you, all of you on the good

Earth."

"I can't speak for Bill and Jim," Borman said, "But I was looking out on a very desolate landscape and I thought this must have been how it started at the beginning of Earth."

Borman was raised in Arizona. After graduating from West Point, he joined the Air Force, became a fighter pilot and later a test pilot, taught thermodynamics at West Point and became an instructor at the Air Force Aerospace Pilot School before being selected for NASA's second group of astronauts in 1962. His motivation? Beating the Soviets to the moon.

"The space program was essentially a battle in the Cold War. Vietnam - we lost. Korea - we tied. And the space business - we won," Borman said.

Though Borman was offered a chance to command one of the missions that landed on the moon, he decided to retire from NASA instead. He has no regrets.

"I may have been different from others. My goal wasn't to be the first man or the 10th man to step on the moon. My goal was to beat the Russians," said Borman, who later joined Eastern Airlines and eventually became the company's CEO.

Borman is a bit surprised NASA's missions to the moon ended abruptly, just four years after his Apollo flight. America's space mission is now concentrated on the International Space Station, which Borman called an engineering marvel, with plans to eventually go to Mars. Borman isn't sure whether that will happen soon.

"My opinion is we should have gone back to the moon and established a permanent base there like we have in the Antarctic," he said. "I think

NASA is pointed to Mars, but when people see the cost and problems associated with Mars, I'm not sure it's feasible."

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Citation: Apollo astronaut Frank Borman remembers the view (2016, October 7) retrieved 28 March 2023 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-10-apollo-astronaut-frank-borman-view.html>

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