

Apollo 13's most famous quotes originated in Hollywood

April 9 2020, by Marcia Dunn



In this April 21, 1970 file photo, Apollo 13 commander James A. Lovell Jr., left, opens the astronauts televised news conference at the Manned Spacecraft Center, Houston, by saying "I'm not a superstitious man" alluding to the number 13 and the trouble that befell the flight. With Lovell are his fellow crew members, command module pilot John Swigert, center, and lunar module pilot Fred Haise. With their moon-bound spacecraft wrecked by an oxygen tank explosion on April 13, 1970, the astronauts urgently radioed, "Houston, we've had a problem here." Screenwriters for the 1995 film "Apollo 13" wanted to punch that up. Thus was born "Houston, we have a problem." (AP Photo)

Apollo 13's best known quotes originated not in space or Mission Control, but in Hollywood.

Their moon-bound spacecraft wrecked by an oxygen tank explosion on April 13, 1970, the astronauts urgently radioed, "Houston, we've had a problem here."

Screenwriters for the 1995 film "Apollo 13" wanted to punch that up. Thus was born "Houston, we have a problem."

Even more artistic license was taken with NASA flight director Gene Kranz' mobilizing speech to his team in Houston.

Kranz never declared, "Failure is not an option."

Ask Kranz what he actually told [flight controllers](#), and he rattles it off without a moment's hesitation a half-century later.

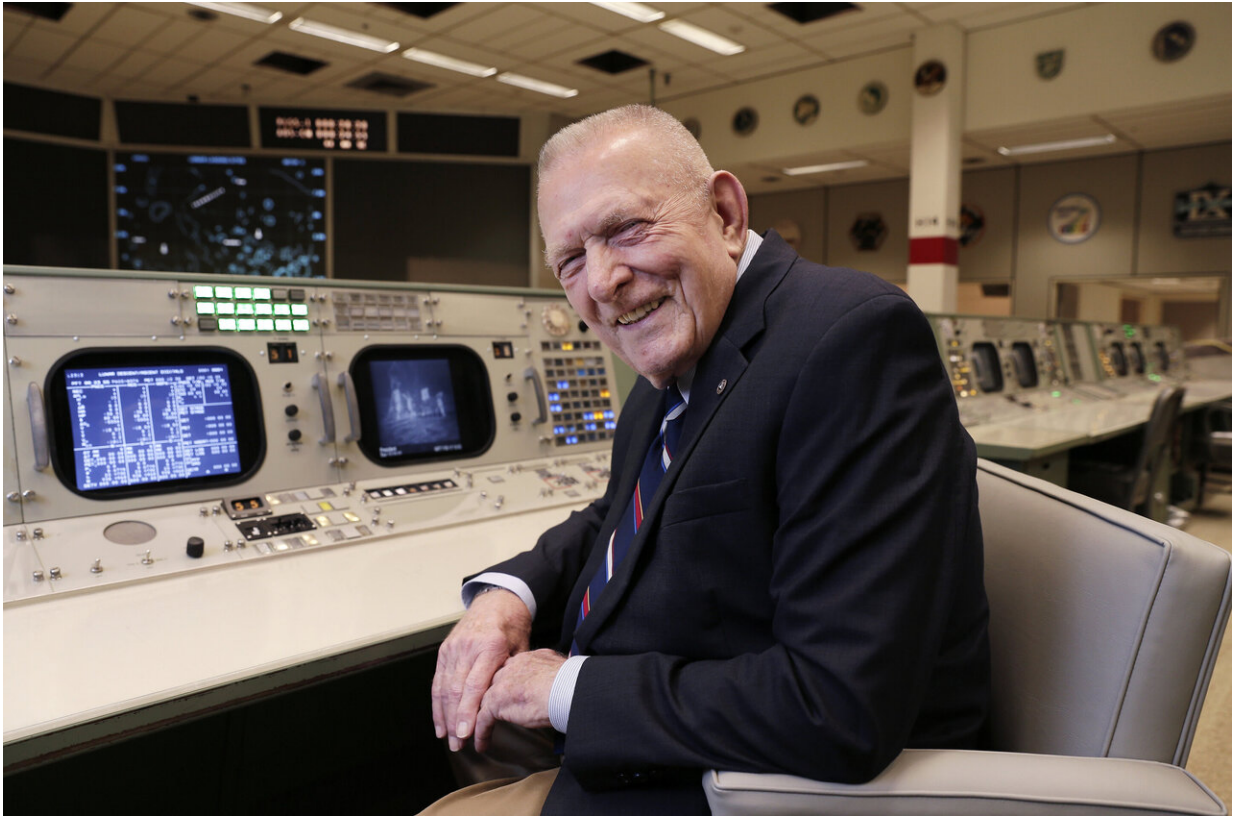
"I have never lost an American in space, sure as hell aren't going to lose one now. This crew is coming home. You got to believe it. Your team must believe it. And we must make it happen."

Kranz said the moviemakers came up with "Failure is not an option."

Does he wish he'd said it? "No—I'm satisfied with what I said."

Kranz constantly finds himself setting the record straight—"in fact, every time I speak."

"I try not to plagiarize," he said with a laugh.



In this Monday, June 17, 2019 file photo, Gene Kranz, aerospace engineer, fighter pilot, an Apollo-era flight director and later director of NASA flight operations, sits at the console where he worked during the Gemini and Apollo missions at the NASA Johnson Space Center in Houston. Kranz says the makers of the 1995 "Apollo 13" film came up with the line "Failure is not an option." Ask Kranz what he actually told flight controllers, he says, "I have never lost an American in space, sure as hell aren't going to lose one now. This crew is coming home. You got to believe it. Your team must believe it. And we must make it happen." (AP Photo/Michael Wyke)

He did borrow the phrase for the title of his 2000 autobiography.

Director Ron Howard's film starring Ed Harris as Kranz and Tom Hanks

as mission commander Jim Lovell was based on Lovell's 1994 autobiography, "Lost Moon." Actors Bill Paxton and Kevin Bacon portrayed Apollo 13 astronauts Fred Haise and Jack Swigert.

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