NORMAN LANE JR.
MEMORIAL PROJECT

"FOR THOSE WHO FIGHT FOR IT, LIFE HAS A FLAVOR THE PROTECTED NEVER KNOW."

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Official NASA photo ID S68-56001. "Launch of Apollo 8 lunar orbit mission." The legend states, "The Apollo 8 . . . space vehicle launched from Pad A, Launch Complex 39 . . . at 7:51 a.m., December 21, 1968." All three stages of the Saturn V rocket, the "spacecraft-LM adapter," and the command and service modules are shown. A thin sliver of the crescent Moon appears on the horizon.

December 21, 2018

To Friends of Norman Lane,

Thanksgiving Day, 1968, would come on Thursday, November 28. Absent the names of any crew members or other personnel, the death of Marine CH-46 helicopter "EP-8" (https://tinyurl.com/Nov-20-1968, pages 13-20) was reported on the front page of the *Richmond News Leader* on Thursday, November 21 – one day after the incident:

> [Among] the aircraft lost were a big Marine CH46 helicopter . . .
> The helicopter was shot down Wednesday as it was landing infantrymen 14 miles south of Da Nang . . . Six Americans were killed and 12 were wounded in the helicopter crash. The chopper was the 926th helicopter downed in combat . . .

Elsewhere, the story continued:

> The weekly casualty summary raised the totals for U.S. forces since Jan. 1, 1961, to 29,477 killed in action . . .
>
> On the political front . . . U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker conferred with [South Vietnamese] President Nguyen Van Thieu for an hour and a half, but there was no . . . modification in Thieu's refusal to send a representative to the Paris peace talks. [see https://tinyurl.com/Nove-1-1968, pages 9 and 10]

Two days later, on Saturday, November 23, the human cost involved in the crash of EP-8 struck home in Richmond, as reported by the *News Leader*:

> **John Harrell Of Richmond Dies in Action**
>
> A Richmonder whose wife is expecting their first child next month was reported killed in action in Vietnam . . . [see https://tinyurl.com/Nov-20-1968, page 7]

Four more days would pass before the weekly *Concord (MA) Free Press* could carry the news that a great-great-grandson of poet Ralph Waldo Emerson had also given his life in the crash of EP-8 (Ibid., pages 7,8,21, and 22):

> **William Emerson Killed In Vietnam**

The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* had announced on Tuesday, November 26, 1968, that Jack Harrell's funeral services would be held at 10:45 a.m. on Friday, the 29th, in Arlington National Cemetery. On the next day, the 27th, the *Boston Globe* reported that services for Bing Emerson would be held that same Friday, the 29th, at 1:30 p.m. in Memorial Church in Harvard Yard, Cambridge. He would be buried in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord, where his great-great-grandfather had spoken on its dedication in 1855 (Ibid., page 21).

* * *

And as mourners walked away, under the darkened skies that covered Sleepy Hollow Cemetery that Friday afternoon, the day after Thanksgiving, Jesus' words, spoken to his disciples on the Mount of Olives during the last days before his own betrayal and crucifixion, drove the symbolic landscape:

> St. Matthew 24:29 (King James Version)
>
> Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: [see https://tinyurl.com/Aug-11-1968, page 6]

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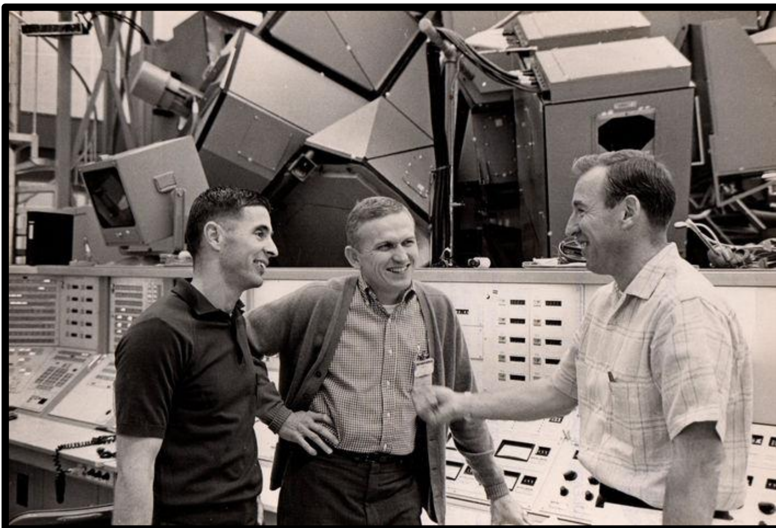


Apollo 8 crew taking a break during simulator training. Bill Anders (left), Frank Borman, and Jim Lovell. *NASA*

As Robert Kurson writes in *Rocket Men: The Daring Odyssey of Apollo 8 and the Astronauts Who Made Man's First Journey to the Moon* (Random House, 2018):

> THANKSGIVING WAS JUST THREE DAYS AWAY, AND LESS THAN four weeks remained until the scheduled launch of Apollo 8. While most Americans got ready to celebrate the holiday, Borman, Lovell, and Anders were hard at work with the SimSup.
>
> The focus during these pre-Thanksgiving sessions would be on two key aspects of the flight.

On Monday, November 25, Thanksgiving, 1968, was just three days away. The Apollo 8 crew – Frank Borman, Jim Lovell, and Bill Anders – were hard at work on critical mission simulations. The focus in that time frame was on the Service Module Service Propulsion System (SPS) engine and two of its life-or-death functions – Lunar Orbit Insertion (LOI) and Trans Earth Injection (TEI).

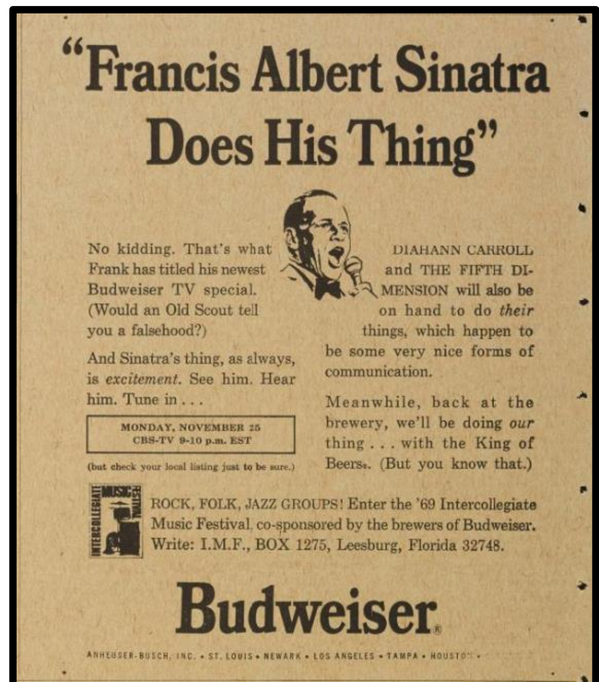
On that Monday, the launch of Apollo 8 was less than four weeks away (Ibid., pages 17,18, and 20).

* * *

Almost two years before, legendary performer Frank Sinatra had befriended the doomed Apollo I astronauts – Gus Grissom, Ed White, and Roger Chaffee – only ten days before that tragic fire (http://tinyurl.com/lt-bird-1967, pages 17 and 18). During one of his shows in Las Vegas, Sinatra had reportedly teared up on stage, after Grissom had given the entertainer his astronaut flight jacket.

Now, on the evening of Monday, November 25, 1968, after the Apollo 8 crew had spent the day simulating the SPS engine firing sequences, Frank Sinatra's fourth annual hour-long special happened to be broadcast on CBS. Titled *Francis Albert Sinatra Does His Thing*, the program also featured singer-actress Diahann Carroll and the Fifth Dimension. In all previous specials of the series, Sinatra had ended the programs with upbeat selections from his standards: in 1965, there were songs from the Capitol years ("You Make Me Feel So Young"), in 1966 there were more recent hits from his Reprise label ("That's Life"), and in 1967 there had been a medley with Ella Fitzgerald, followed by a closing duet ("The Lady Is A Tramp"). All upbeat, and the entire 1967 special is a true classic from the golden age of television (http://tinyurl.com/Nov-13-1967, pages 1 and 2).

But in this, his fourth such special, Sinatra made a dramatic departure from those earlier, upbeat finales. Seated alone, dressed in a black tuxedo, on a darkened set above the orchestra pit, the artist performed "Lost in the Stars," written by Kurt Weill and Maxwell Anderson as the title song for their late 1930s musical, *Ulysses Africanus*. The play was never completed and performed. The original manuscript is held at the University of Texas, and the only known copy is kept by the Weill-Lenya Research Center in New York. Professor Robert Rabel, University of Kentucky, published an analysis of *Ulysses Africanus* in 2007, based on research he conducted during several visits to the Research Center.



The Michigan Daily, Sunday, November 24, 1968, page 6.

* * *

Kurt Weill (1900-1950) had studied music in his native Germany from the age of fourteen. His best-known collaboration in pre-war Germany was with Bertolt Brecht; the team produced *The Threepenny Opera*. The play's song list included "Mack the Knife," composed by Weill with original German lyrics by Brecht. The song would later be popularized in the US by Louis Armstrong, Bobby Darin, Ella Fitzgerald, and others, beginning in the mid-1950s. Weill himself had left Germany in 1933 to escape the growing Nazi threat, and he came to America in 1935. He soon teamed up with, among others, the successful playwright Maxwell Anderson (e.g., *Key Largo*, later adapted as the successful John Huston film starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall).

Between late 1938 and early 1939, the Weill-Anderson team began work on *Ulysses Africanus*. From the 2007 Robert Rabel article:

> In Anderson's own description, the musical *Ulysses Africanus*, based on the *Odyssey*, concerns "a man in a chaotic world in search of his own manhood and his rules of conduct." The man in this case is a Southern black slave named Ulysses, who leaves the plantation in time of war, entrusted by Colonel Beauregard, the plantation's owner, with valuable family jewels and heirlooms in danger of falling into the hands of encroaching Union forces from the North. After becoming lost and wandering the American South for years, he returns just in time to restore prosperity to the plantation . . .

In Rabel's analysis, the never-completed work is:

worthy of notice because of its intricate and ingenious web of connections with Homer's *Odyssey*, especially regarding Anderson's clever employment of the Homeric idea that a . . . "journey down" to the Underworld may play an important role in the "death and rebirth" and thus the maturation of character of a hero . . .

* * *

Homer's (800s B.C.?) *Odyssey* (Professor Richard Janko has suggested that the *Odyssey* was composed about 735 B.C.), as summarized in Edith Hamilton's *Mythology*, tells the legend of Odysseus (in Latin, Ulysses), a Greek king and a hero of the Trojan War, and his trials at the hands of Athena and Poseidon, following the conquest of Troy. In particular, Athena had been angered by the kidnapping of Cassandra, a prophetess and daughter of Priam, King of Troy, during the pillaging of the city after its defeat. As punishment, and in concert with Poseidon, ruler of the sea, the battle-goddess took vengeance on the Greek fleet as it set sail for home. Odysseus would not die, but he would wander for ten years before reaching his home on the island of Ithaca, his wife Penelope, and his son, Telemachus. Among the trials that would face Odysseus and his men would come:

1) their encounter in the land of the Lotus-eaters, whose flower-food once eaten caused the Greek sailors to lose their longing for home, 2) Cyclops Polyphemus, son of Poseidon, who would cause the deaths of many of Odysseus' men, 3) their visit to King Aeolus and his Country of the Winds. While the King had been gracious and had helped Odysseus by securing all of the dangerous Storm Winds in a special leather sack, which he had given Odysseus, Odysseus' men opened the sack, in an act of foolish curiosity, and 4) following the terrific tempest that ensued, their ships came to shore in the country of the Laestrygons – giant cannibals – who destroyed all but one of Odysseus' ships.

Odysseus' ships are destroyed by giant cannibals, the Laestrygons. Roman fresco, circa 1st century B.C.

Escaping that threat, Odysseus and his remaining men came to the island of Aeaea, the realm of the beautiful witch-enchantress Circe. But drawn to her beauty, those who approached her were turned into swine. Fortunately, Odysseus himself was warned of this, and Hermes (Zeus' messenger; in Latin, Mercury) intercepts the hero, giving him an herb drink that will protect him from Circe's curse. Thus protected, Circe falls in love with Odysseus and returns the swine to their human forms. After entertaining him and his men for a year, Circe uses her magical knowledge to tell Odysseus the trial he and his men must pass before they can return to their homes and families.

This trial will involve Odysseus' "journey down" to the Underworld, referred to above. First, he must cross the river Ocean and land his ship on Persephone's shore, near the entrance to the dark realm of Hades. The Ocean was a great river that encircled the earth. In the *Odyssey*, the way to the kingdom of the dead, the Underworld, or Hades, led over the edge of the world, across Ocean. Hades, King of the Dead, ruled the Underworld with his wife Persephone, Queen of the Lower World, whom he had carried away from the earth.

Circe instructs Odysseus that he must then go down and find the ghost of Teiresias; in life, the old blind prophet had been the holy man of Thebes, knowing "as no one else the will of the gods." He had died during the fall of the city (Thebes), during the assault by the sons of the seven champions. Teiresias' spirit would tell Odysseus the way back to Ithaca. But first, as instructed by Circe, Odysseus must dig a trench down in the Underworld. He must fill the pit with the fresh blood of slaughtered sheep, in order to draw the ghosts near. Still, he would have to draw his sword to keep the spirits away from him, while he sought Teiresias out in order to hear his instructions.

Having left Circe and sailed for Persephone's shore, across the river Ocean, over the edge of the world, Odysseus follows her instructions. Going down in the Underworld to Erebus, where Hades and Persephone rule, the trench is dug, the sheep are slaughtered and their fresh blood taken to fill the pit, and the dead have flocked to it. The spirit of Teiresias comes, and after he has drunk of the black blood, he speaks to Odysseus. When the warrior and his men reach the Island of the Sun, under no circumstances are they to harm the oxen of the Sun, lest certain doom come to them. After encountering a long procession of the dead – including great heroes like Achilles and Ajax and other warriors who fell at Troy – Odysseus and his men leave, on their way home.

"Odysseus questions the seer Tiresias," from the Ulysses Cycle, by Alessandro Allori (1535-1607).

Circe had warned them of the island of the Sirens and of the dangerous passage between Scylla and Charybdis. Though several men were lost, their ship safely reached the Island of the Sun. But while Odysseus was tending to other matters, his hungry crew foolishly ignored Teiresias' warning and slaughtered some of the sacred oxen to eat. As Teiresias had said, the vengeance of the Sun was terrible and swift. As Odysseus' ship left the island, a thunderbolt shattered it to pieces, drowning every man except Odysseus. He was rescued by the nymph Calypso on her island, where his benevolent lover forced him to stay for several of the ten total years of his journey. As Athena at last changes her heart in Odysseus' behalf, she obtains help from the gods – excepting the absent Poseidon – to free him from Calypso's captivity.

Finally, Odysseus reaches the bountiful land of the Phaeacians, who provide for his return to Penelope and Telemachus and their home on the island of Ithaca. In Edith Hamilton's words, as Penelope comes to recognize the true identity of the princely-looking stranger sitting by the hearth in her hall as her husband, who has come home after twenty years:

> "My son," she answered [to Telemachus], "I have no strength to move. If this is in truth Odysseus, then we two have ways of knowing each other." At this Odysseus smiled and bade Telemachus leave her alone. "We will find each other out presently," he said.

* * *

With this brief synopsis of part of Homer's *Odyssey* in context, we return to Robert Rabel's analysis of the 100-page Weill-Anderson manuscript for *Ulysses Africanus* (written over 1938 and 1939):

> *Ulysses Africanus* is heavily indebted to the more temporally remote but significant influence of Homer's *Odyssey*. The major events, characters, and settings of the play have general Homeric prototypes. First, the Civil War corresponds to the Trojan War. Ulysses reprises the role of Homer's Odysseus, and his faithful wife Pennie represents Penelope. Cincinnati, Ohio, where Ulysses stages his own version of the *Odyssey* before his eventual return home, represents the land of the Phaeacians in the *Odyssey*, where Odysseus tells the story of his wanderings before returning to Ithaca. Ithaca, the hero's home, is represented by the Beauregard plantation, where Ulysses, though, is a slave and not, like Odysseus, a king. We first learn important information about Ulysses' character by hearing of him through the observations of others, much as Homer uses the first four books of the *Odyssey* to filter our understanding of his poem's hero through the regard of his familiars.

And, as mentioned on page 4:

> Anderson introduces a ghostly element into the play that in subtle fashion draws upon and serves the same

purposes in regard to the story as Odysseus' trip to the Underworld in Book 11 of the *Odyssey*. Anderson employs a motif that, following Homer, has become a commonplace in the literature of the West: a confrontation with the ghosts of the past may play an important role in the development of a mature character and also in the making of a literary artist. . . .

Anderson constructs Ulysses' . . . [journey to the Underworld] along lines that are somewhat similar if simplified in comparison with the Odyssey. First, Judy, his Circe-figure, threatens to set the so-called "White Sheets," the Ku Klux Klan, against him when he decides to leave her and continue with his journey (p. 33) [page numbers in parentheses appear in Rabel's article and refer to the manuscript for *Ulysses Africanus* that he has studied]—a plot element that resembles Circe's declaration that Odysseus must first visit the Underworld should he wish to return home. Like the *Odyssey*, Ulysses' . . . ["journey down" to the Underworld] turns out to be the pivot around which the drama of *Ulysses Africanus* revolves (pp. 35-38). The members of the Klan who appear on stage to menace Ulysses represent as a collective the various spirits Odysseus meets during the course of his Underworld journey. Inasmuch as they threaten Ulysses with "Death," "A place in the earth," "A grave" (p. 36), the members of the Klan most closely resemble that threatening band of spirits that causes Odysseus to grow pale with fear and retreat at the end of Book 11. The eerie cry of the final ghosts who appear in Book 11 of the *Odyssey* thus corresponds to the entrance song that ushers in the Klan as they pursue the fleeing Ulysses:

Ku Klux! Ku Klux!
Turn the man loose!
Let the man run!
Cause it ain't no use!
Ku Klux! Ku Klux! Ku Klux! (p. 36)

In Robert Rabel's analysis, the pivotal scene in *Ulysses Africanus*, in which the title character is threatened by the Klan, "strikingly anticipates the use . . . of the same theme" in the 2000 film, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* There, a similar nighttime scene with Klansmen threatens death to a still later Ulysses-figure, Ulysses Everett McGill, as he tries to save Tommy Johnson.

For comparison, a highly-regarded translation of the *Odyssey* describes the scene at the end of Book 11 and the "eerie cry of the final ghosts:"

And I [Odysseus] should have seen yet others of the men of former times, whom I was eager to behold, Theseus and Peirithous, glorious children of the gods, but before that the myriad tribes of the dead came thronging up with an eerie cry, and pale fear seized me, that august Persephone might send upon me out of the house of Hades the head of the Gorgon, that terrible monster.

At once then I went to the ship and told my comrades themselves to embark, and to loose the stern cables. So they went on board quickly and sat down upon the benches. And the ship was borne down the river Oceanus by the swell of the current, first with our rowing, and afterwards the wind was fair.

Continuing with Rabel's analysis of Ulysses' encounter with the Klan:

In a nighttime scene redolent of images of the spirits of the Homeric Underworld—the ghostly white sheets of the Klan providing stark contrast to the surrounding darkness—Ulysses meets up with a certain Nicodemus, a former slave like himself, recently freed through President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Nicodemus, chased by the Klan for perpetrating violence against his former master, becomes Ulysses' Tiresias-figure, offering him . . . rather what we might call a kind of roadmap of the soul (pp. 35-38). In a comically burlesque scene the two first don white sheets ripped from a nearby clothesline and, adopting disguise, blend in with and thus escape the notice of their pursuers (pp. 26-37). After their escape, Nicodemus begins to lament that, while nominally now free, he has nowhere to turn for the help and guidance he still requires and seeks (p.

37). When Ulysses in response urges him to trust in God and pray, Nicodemus refuses, saying that he has tried prayer, but, when he looks up into the sky in the moonlight, he feels that God is not listening. Nicodemus then sings a song as pregnant with significance for the later stage of Ulysses' journey home as the prophecy of Tiresias is for Odysseus:

Before Lawd God made the sea or the land
He held all the stars in the palm of his hand
And they ran through his fingers like grains of sand
And one little star fell alone.

Then the Lawd God hunt through the wide night air
For the little dark star on the wind down there
And he state and he promise he take special care
So it wouldn't get lost no more.

Now a man don't mind if the stars gets dim
And the clouds blows over and darkens him
So long as the Lawd God's watching over them
Keeping track how it all goes on.

But I been walking through the night and the day
Till my eyes gets weary and my head turns gray
And sometimes it seems maybe God's gone away,
Forgetting his promise, and the word he say,

And we're lost out here in the stars.
Little stars, big stars,
Blowing through the night,
And I'm lost out here in the stars. (p. 38)

Nicodemus' lyrics in the song "Lost in the Stars" reinforce and give striking poetic expression to a motif conveyed earlier in the play, albeit less dramatically and artistically, in a poem composed by Melissa, the daughter of Colonel Beauregard, Ulysses' former owner, as she reflects on the loss of her fiancé, who went off to war and was eventually killed:

When unto earth my one love be given
Then let my earth be earth again,
No fear of hell be left, nor hope of heaven,
My tears go back to the wind and rain. (p. 15)

For both Melissa and Nicodemus . . . the ravages of war stand in the way of any rational belief in a benevolent God watching over his creation and ordering the universe with concern for human happiness.

Nicodemus' plight, that of being lost in the stars, becomes in these lyrics a metaphor for the spiritual condition of humanity in general.

* * *

And so, on Monday night, November 25, 1968, CBS had broadcast the fourth annual one-hour Frank Sinatra television special. In *Ulysses Africanus*, following their escape from the Klan, Nicodemus had refused Ulysses' urging to trust in God and pray, "saying that he has tried prayer, but, when he looks up into the sky in the moonlight, he feels that God is not listening." And now, a century after Nicodemus' time, the legendary entertainer – seated alone, dressed in a black tuxedo, on a darkened set above the orchestra pit – would repeat that statement:

Now, a man don't mind if the stars get dim
And the clouds roll over and darken him
So long as the Lord God's watching over him
Keeping track how it all goes on.

But I've been walking through the night and the day
Till my eyes get weary and my head turns gray
And sometimes I think maybe God's gone away,
Forgetting his promise and the words he'd say,

And we're lost out here in the stars.

It was three days before Thanksgiving, 1968 . . .

* * *

"And . . . the crescent moon went dark, and ceased to give her light, and the last remaining stars fell from heaven, and the powers of the heavens were shaken: . . . and as evening fell across the land, the nation was absorbed in a sea of total darkness." [see https://tinyurl.com/Aug-11-1968, page 13]

"And the people had begun to wonder: would the Moon ever regain her light; would the stars ever shine from the heavens again?" [Ibid.]

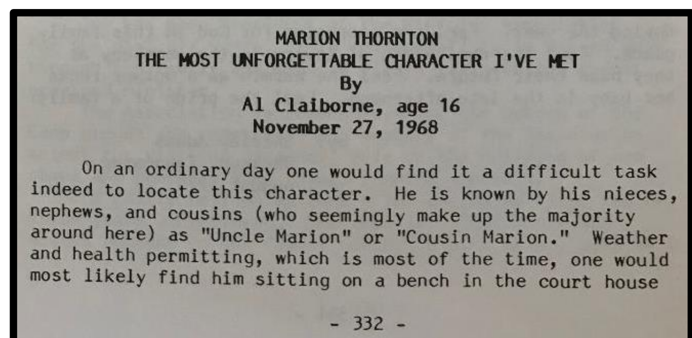
* * *

As the Thursday holiday approached, my best friend Richard Carlton was the starting center for the Haywood High School (HHS) Tomcats, who had finished the regular season undefeated and would play against the Jackson High Golden Bears on Thanksgiving Day for the Big Ten Conference championship, on a very cold and muddy Rothrock Field in Jackson (https://tinyurl.com/Nov-20-1968, page 2). That year, in addition to Mr. Bennett's Chemistry class, Richard and I were both in Mrs. Mary Ann Shaw's English III (American Literature) class. Mary Ann's husband Lynn had been one of Norman Lane's very best friends, certainly as teenagers and probably before. During Norman's year teaching at HHS, Mary Ann later recalled that he had come over to their house "almost every night during the week." Lynn had served as a pallbearer for Norman's funeral, and Norman had left Lynn his Marine Corps officer's sword.

That fall of 1968, probably earlier that November, Mrs. Shaw had given the class an essay assignment. I do not remember exactly how the writing assignment was worded, but my recollection is that we were instructed to write an essay about someone we knew. I wrote my essay about my great-uncle, Marion Thornton, then seventy-eight years old. He and Aunt Lib (https://tinyurl.com/Nove-1-1968, photo, page 3; https://tinyurl.com/unfinished-2016) had lived in their house on North Washington since soon after World War II, and I had spent many hours there growing up. Of course, they had been Norman Lane's grandparents as well. So I wrote the essay and turned it in. Beyond that, the only thing I remember is that Mrs. Shaw made a favorable comment about the paper in class one day. Somehow, the essay (Ibid., pages 14 and 15) was later published in the 1983 volume of the Taylor family history, *The Taylors of Tabernacle*. As published, the title was followed by my name and age (sixteen) at the time. The date printed below my name is given as November 27, 1968 . . . the Wednesday before Thanksgiving Day.

There are two paragraphs in the essay that are still especially relevant today. One refers to a framed color print that I often saw in Uncle Marion's den – one of a young Confederate soldier, probably not unlike Melissa Beauregard's fiancé, saying good-bye to his family – possibly, or likely, for the last time:

> The room is nothing out of the ordinary. A television, a few chairs and a sofa, and some family pictures add to the atmosphere of the room. One par-



MARION THORNTON
THE MOST UNFORGETTABLE CHARACTER I'VE MET
By
Al Claiborne, age 16
November 27, 1968

On an ordinary day one would find it a difficult task indeed to locate this character. He is known by his nieces, nephews, and cousins (who seemingly make up the majority around here) as "Uncle Marion" or "Cousin Marion." Weather and health permitting, which is most of the time, one would most likely find him sitting on a bench in the court house

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ticularly appropriate picture depicts a young Southerner bidding his family farewell before joining the Confederate Army. Two young men have bade this man farewell before going to war. One was his son who joined the Air Force in World War II. The other was his grandson who fought in Vietnam. Both died in the service of their country.

Another paragraph, equally appropriate today, reads:

> Behind the glasses he wears, his eyes are brown-tinted mirrors reflecting a life in which both happiness and sadness have played leading roles in their own times. His ears are channels through which both happy and touching words have traveled, on many occasions bringing tears flowing from the soft eyes and moistening the cheeks made rough and wrinkled through years of hard work.

* * *

The date on the original essay, November 27, 1968, came one year and four days after Thanksgiving Day, 1967 – when Marine Corps 2ndLt. Norman Lane had saved a can of turkey out of C-rations and leftover cranberry sauce for his friend and brother-in-arms, Cpl. Allen Willyerd, of Kilo Co., 3/4 Marines, and Brownsville, Tennessee, who was late getting back from a Thanksgiving Day patrol into the DMZ.

> I wanted you to have as good a meal today as we had,

Norman had told Allen that late November afternoon, almost 9,000 miles from home, in 1967 . . .

* * *

When Aunt Lib sold the house on North Washington Avenue after Uncle Marion died in 1976, I asked for the framed color print, and I still have it. I am looking at it now. The original oil on canvas painting resides today in the collection of the Birmingham (AL) Museum of Art. It is titled, *Leaving Home*, it is dated 1907, and the artist is Gilbert Gaul. The Museum website describes the painting:

> *Leaving Home* reminds us all of the heartache and fear a family has as it sends a loved one off to war. Here the father bravely wishes his son well as those near and dear to him gather round. . . .

The following verses are excerpts from a poem that, according to *War Poetry of the South*, was found on the body of a young soldier from one of the Alabama regiments under General Robert E. Lee. It is believed that the soldier's mother wrote the poem.

> I know the sun shines, and the lilacs are blowing,
> And the summer send kisses by beautiful May.
> Oh! To see all the treasures the spring is bestowing,
> And think my boy Willie enlisted today.
>
> I sit in the window and see the flags flying
> And drearily list to the roll of the drum,
> And smother the pain in my heart that is lying
> And bid all the fears in my bosom be numb.

* * *

As Robert Kurson writes, in *Rocket Men*:

Even at NASA, Thanksgiving was a day for family, and Borman, Lovell, and Anders found their way home just in time to celebrate the holiday. Apollo 8 was scheduled to launch in just twenty-three days, so Thursday was the only day off the men were allowed.

* * *

My own recollections of that Thanksgiving Day, fifty years ago, bring up only two or three events. On the Wednesday night, I remember having attended a service at the Baptist Church with some high school friends. The Brownsville newspaper described this as a community-wide Thanksgiving service that began at 7:30 that night, led by Reverend Williamson, pastor of the Presbyterian Church. The Big Ten Championship game would begin at 2:00 Thanksgiving afternoon, in Jackson. The HHS team traveled the thirty-mile distance in a chartered Greyhound bus for this special game, and I went with them. Robert Rooks' encyclopedic history of Haywood Tomcat football reminds me that the Tomcats won by the score of 26-12. For unknown reasons I associate the song "White Room," by Eric Clapton and Cream, with the bus ride back. Even though HHS had held the #1 spot in the statewide Associated Press prep football poll (there was no playoff system) for five straight weeks, they dropped to third place in the final poll, despite their season-ending victory and conference championship.

Tomcat sophomore Walter Walker (#87) has blocked a Jackson punt, and seniors Robert Rooks (#14) and Randy Pendergrast (muddy jersey) are in pursuit.

It would be late afternoon or early evening before the team returned to Brownsville. Somehow, since the game had interrupted our family's usual Thanksgiving dinner plan, I wound up having dinner at the house of classmate Nancy Williamson. Her aunt and uncle, the John Harvey Williamsons, were good friends of mine as well, and they joined Nancy, her younger sister, and their mother that night. I don't recall Nancy's older brother Read, then a student at Vanderbilt, being there. It was their family's second Thanksgiving since the sudden passing of Nancy's father, the previous fall. I was glad to be there and enjoyed their company. My only other recollection of that evening is getting home early enough to watch at least part of the Thanksgiving Day game between Don Meredith and the Dallas Cowboys and the Washington Redskins. History tells me the Cowboys, still working to erase the memory of their last-minute loss to the Green Bay Packers in the "Ice Bowl" almost eleven months before (https://tinyurl.com/Jan-1968-Hill-28, photos, page 1), won the game.

* * *

As the second week of December, 1968, began on Monday, the 9th, ten days had passed since Bing Emerson and Jack Harrell had been laid to rest in Concord and in Arlington, respectively. Operation Meade River (https://tinyurl.com/Nov-20-1968, pages 2-20), in which both men had given their lives on November 20, would officially end at 6 p.m. local time in Quang Nam Province, South Vietnam.

* * *

Also on that second Monday in December, exactly two months had passed since a mighty mechanical behemoth (https://tinyurl.com/Aug-11-1968, photo, page 20) had left the Vehicle Assembly Building at Cape Kennedy, strapped on the back of the 3,000-ton Crawler-Transporter. Traveling at less than one mile per hour, the tractor would deliver its monstrous cargo to Launch Pad 39A. This three-and-a-half mile journey would take about seven hours and would be the first tiny step in a 240,000-mile itinerary that, if successful, would deliver the manned Apollo 8 spacecraft into orbit, around the moon.

The giant behemoth was the Saturn V rocket, designed and developed under the guiding genius of the German World War II rocket scientist Dr. Wernher von Braun, now director of the NASA Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama. This would be only the third launch of a Saturn V – but most significantly, this would be the first time the launch vehicle had been used with a manned spacecraft. The Saturn V had been designed and built for the expressed purpose of fulfilling the dream of that young President, now, five years gone – to land American

astronauts on the Moon, and to return them safely to Earth, all before the end of the decade of the 1960s. The November, 1967, and April, 1968, unmanned missions had been designed to test all aspects of the Saturn V with an Apollo Command and Service Module (CSM) payload of over forty tons. The first Saturn V test mission the previous November (Apollo 4) had been an unqualified success, but the second test mission in April had failed to meet two crucial benchmarks regarding the propulsion systems. The Apollo 6 mission had included a boilerplate Lunar Module in addition to the unmanned CSM, with a combined payload weight similar to that of Apollo 4. Similarly, since a Lunar Module (LM) was not needed on the Apollo 8 mission, a "Lunar Module Test Article" (LTA), equivalent in weight to an operational LM, was installed in the spacecraft/launch vehicle adapter area of the Saturn V.

At 363 feet in height the Apollo-Saturn assembly for the Apollo 8 mission was approximately twice the height of the later Space Shuttle, coupled with its external fuel tank and twin solid rocket boosters. As fully fueled for the lunar orbital mission, Saturn V would weigh 6.2 million pounds – 3,100 tons – and its three stages would be filled with propellant: 437,000 gallons of liquid oxygen, 209,000 gallons of highly refined kerosene, and almost 330,000 gallons of liquid hydrogen. On lift-off, the five first-stage engines would provide 7.6 million pounds of thrust and would burn fifteen *tons* of fuel per second. Nearly two-and-a-half minutes into the mission, the first stage would shut down and would separate, falling back into the Atlantic Ocean.

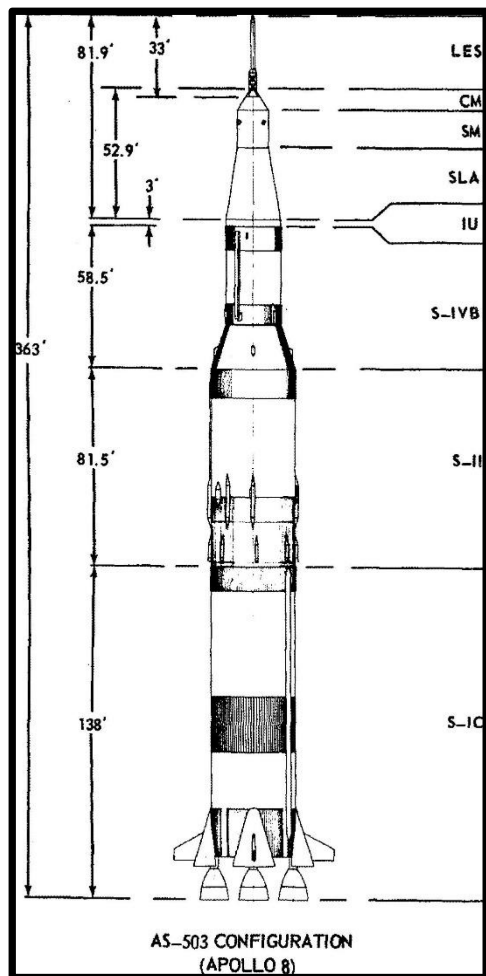


Diagram from the original NASA Apollo 8 Press Kit.

The five second-stage engines would then kick in, accelerating the spacecraft toward the speed of approximately 17,425 miles per hour required for earth orbit. Its job done, the second stage would follow the plan executed by the first: shut down, separate, and fall into the ocean.

The ultimate task of boosting the spacecraft into true Earth orbit would then fall to the single engine of the S-IVB third stage, which would fire promptly, on cue. Eleven minutes and twenty-five seconds into its burn, the S-IVB would shut down – but the work of the third-stage engine would by no means be done. It would not separate, and its most important function – one never before performed for any manned mission – would come later.

* * *

That Monday night, December 9, the Apollo 8 crew – astronauts Borman, Lovell, and Anders – and their wives had been toasted at a black-tie White House dinner with President Johnson and other invited guests, including the flight pioneer Charles Lindbergh. The next day, the astronauts returned to Cape Kennedy, where they would live, training in the simulator, studying the flight plan, and jogging, for the eleven days remaining until the planned December 21 launch date.

* * *

From the 1978 NASA Special Publication, "Moonport: A History of Apollo Launch Facilities and Operations:"

> The launch countdown for Apollo 8 began at 7:00 p.m. on 15 December and headed for a launch on the 21st. The following day, a three-hour physical examination found the crew in good health. Both the men and the machine appeared ready.

* * *

The finale of the triumphant 1968 HHS Tomcat season would come at the annual football banquet which would be held Thursday night, December 19, in the high school cafeteria in Brownsville. As senior Camille Gaffron wrote in her weekly "Tomcat Tale....." column for the local newspaper:

> The . . . banquet . . . will honor the varsity boys and cheerleaders and their dates, the freshman squad and cheerleaders, the parents of the seniors, the coaches and their wives, and all the men who work with the team. Dinner will be served . . . after which the awards will be given.

The photograph below provides a synopsis of that award ceremony. Pictured from left to right are our classmate Harry Baddour, seniors David Stewart, Robert Rooks, Bobby Garland (front) and Steve Stoots (back), sophomore Rocky Felker, and senior Randy Pendergrast.

The British poet A.E. Housman (1859-1936) published *A Shropshire Lad*, his first collection of verse, in 1896. One of the few titled poems in that publication is No. XIX, "To an Athlete Dying Young." The next year at HHS – our senior year, 1969-1970 – after Richard Carlton and I had studied American Literature with Mary Ann Shaw, we were in the English Literature class taught by longtime faculty member, Miss Nina Curlin. She taught us *Macbeth* and introduced us to the Romantic poets, who were my favorites. Another poem that we studied in her class, and one that I have remembered over the years from time to time, is "To an Athlete Dying Young," by A.E. Housman:

> To-day the road all runners come,
> Shoulder-high we bring you home,
> And set you at your threshold down,
> Townsman of a stiller town.
>
> Smart lad to slip betimes away
> From fields where glory does not stay,
> And early though the laurel grows
> It withers quicker than the rose.

Over the years, four of the young athletes in that photograph have slipped away, now townsmen of that stiller town . . .

Godspeed Harry, David, Steve, and Randy . . .

> Now you will not swell the rout
> Of lads that wore their honours out . . .

* * *

At 7:51 a.m. EST, on Saturday, December 21, 1968, Jack King, NASA's "voice of launch control," had called it: "We have lift-off." The massive Saturn V rocket began to move (see photo, page 13, top).

Almost three hours into the flight, the third-stage S-IVB engine, which would flawlessly push the spacecraft out of its "parking" orbit and on its way to the Moon, cut off as scheduled. As recorded by author Robert Kurson, in *Rocket Men*:

> In Mission Control [Houston], Gene Kranz, who'd been a flight director for Apollo 7 [and would be again, famously, for Apollo 13], got up from his seat, left the room, and broke down in tears at the magnitude of the moment.

Apollo 8 was 215 miles above Earth, traveling toward the Moon at 24,208 miles per hour. Back at Cape Kennedy, it was almost 11 a.m. EST, four days before Christmas, 1968.

* * *

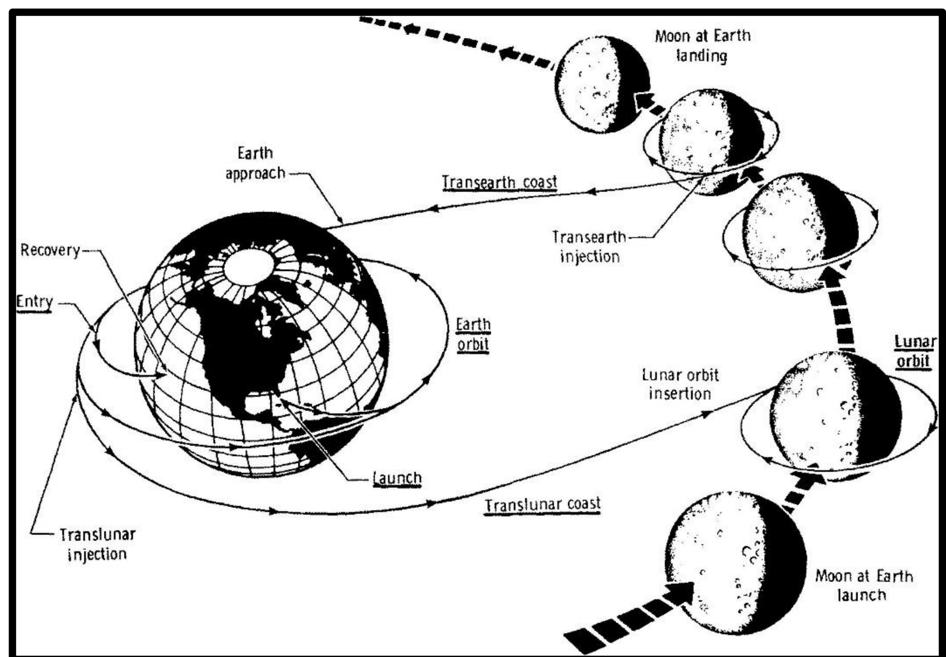
The launch of Apollo 8, mankind's first journey to the Moon. *NASA*

Now, almost sixty-nine hours into the flight, it is close to 5 a.m. EST, Christmas Eve – December 24 – at the Cape. Jim Lovell's confidently optimistic word to Houston: "We'll see you on the other side." Apollo 8, now moving in excess of 5,000 miles per hour, was like a BB-sized metal ball hurling toward the Moon – a gigantic bowling ball almost 2,200 miles in diameter (see diagram, below). The Moon was traveling at over 2,000 miles per hour. NASA planners, and the spacecraft, had to thread the needle in order to avoid a disastrous collision, while at the same time providing a suitable altitude above the lunar surface for LOI – Lunar Orbit Insertion. Furthermore, as the spacecraft disappeared, according to the plan, behind the Moon, all communications with Houston would be blocked – for about thirty-five minutes.

Robert Kurson's account of what happened next, follows:

> Outside Anders's [Apollo 8 crewman Bill Anders] window, any trace of sunlight had disappeared, and as his eyes adapted to the intense darkness he began to see stars, it seemed like a million of them, so many he couldn't even pick out constellations. The sight took his breath away. He looked to his right, through the window beside him, hungry for more, but suddenly there were no stars anymore—all of them had gone dark. There was just a giant black hole, as if part of the universe had vanished. The hair on the back of Anders's neck stood up, and for a moment it felt as if his heart had stopped, until he realized that he wasn't looking at a missing piece of the universe at all.
>
> He was looking at the Moon [see photo, page 14, top].

Chris Kraft had joined NASA's precursor agency, the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA), in 1944. Now, twenty-four years later, he had served for two years as the Director of Flight Operations at the Manned Spacecraft Center in Houston. When he had joined NACA at twenty years of age, rockets had been, in Robert Kurson's words, "the stuff of comic book covers and science fiction" (Kurson's comment represents a tragic misstatement. On September 8, 1944, the first of more than 1,300 German V-2 rockets were fired at England. By the war's end, an estimated 2,700 people would be killed, in Britain alone, by Dr. von Braun's weap-



Apollo 8 mission summary, from the original NASA Press Kit.

The view through astronaut Bill Anders's camera. Until Apollo 8, no human had ever laid eyes on the far side of the Moon. *NASA*

ons of destruction). Bob Gilruth, now the fifty-five-year-old Director of the Manned Spacecraft Center, had joined NACA in 1937. Just a few seconds before sixty-nine hours and thirty-four minutes had elapsed on the mission clock, communications between Apollo 8 and Houston were reestablished. As described in *Rocket Men*:

> Mission Control exploded in cheers and applause. Apollo 8 had come around to the near side of the Moon. The contact had occurred within one second of NASA's estimate.
>
> Chris Kraft's eyes began to mist over. He could see Bob Gilruth, the director of NASA's Manned Spacecraft Center, wiping away his own tears, hoping no one would see him cry. The two men embraced but couldn't speak; their throats were too swollen with emotion to talk.

* * *

The Christmas Eve telecast from the Moon had been scheduled to begin at 9:34 p.m. EST, December 24, or a few seconds past eighty-five hours and forty-three minutes on the mission clock. An hour before the broadcast, Apollo 8 again disappeared behind the Moon.

At 9:30 p.m. EST, CBS cut away from its regularly scheduled programming to Walter Cronkite and CBS News. The other networks did likewise. Four minutes later, Frank Borman appeared on television screens around the country and, where practical, around the world: "This is Apollo 8, coming to you live from the Moon." For almost twenty-four minutes, he and the other astronauts explained how they had spent their first sixteen hours in lunar orbit, and they gave their visual and scientific impressions of the Moon. Bill Anders added:

> The sky up here is also a rather forbidding, foreboding expanse of blackness, with no stars visible when we're flying over the Moon in daylight.

They continued with a guided tour, from a geologist's perspective, of some future Apollo landing sites that had been identified. And then, remembering the NASA official's advice from that mid-November meeting: "Do whatever's appropriate," Frank Borman, Jim Lovell, and Bill Anders took the final 100 seconds of their telecast to send the people of Earth a special message (The link provides a 10:18 video clip including the last 7:09 of the live broadcast, followed by 3:09 of reporting by Walter Cronkite. There is a technical issue with the first 20 seconds of the Cronkite report, but the final 2:49 is clear). Anders began, followed by Lovell, and then Borman:

> In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light." And there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good, and God divided the light from the darkness.
>
> And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. And God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters." And God made the firmament and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. And it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.

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 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.

The following is recorded by Robert Kurson, in *Rocket Men*:

Inside Mission Control, no one moved. Then, one after another, these scientists and engineers in Houston began to cry.

The message from the crew of Apollo 8 had been personally selected by them. Their words had come as a complete surprise to everyone at NASA, at every level.

Robert Kurson continues:

In his studio at CBS, Walter Cronkite fought back tears as he came back on the air.

Earthrise, as photographed by Bill Anders on Christmas Eve, 1968. Fifty years later, this photograph remains among the most influential and impactful of all time. To Anders, it seemed strange—the astronauts had come all this way to discover the Moon, and yet here, they had discovered the Earth. *NASA*, text from *Rocket Men*.

* * *

American novelist William Styron (1925-2006) had been commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Marine Corps in 1945 and had been assigned to participate in the planned invasion of Japan. Spared that fate by the atomic bomb attacks that August that forced Japan's surrender, the Duke University (Class of 1947) graduate went on to become one of the leading literary figures of the post-World War II generation in America. His early work, as characterized in the *New York Times*, "won him wide recognition as a distinctive voice of the South and an heir to William Faulkner." Though controversial, *The Confessions of Nat Turner* won Styron the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1968 – the year of the Apollo 8 mission. He went on to write *Sophie's Choice* (1979); the 1982 film was nominated for five Academy Awards, with Meryl Streep winning the Best Actress award for her portrayal of the title character.

Styron later provided the 1,900-word Foreword to a descriptive anthology of space photographs taken by American astronauts over 1962-1972. *The View from Space: American Astronaut Photography 1962-1972*, coauthored by Ron Schick and Julia Van Haaften, was published in 1988 – twenty years after the Apollo 8 mission. In his Foreword, Styron recalled that first lunar orbital flight and the first Moon landing (Apollo 11) as the most memorable of all the manned voyages to the Moon. And yet, witnessing astronaut Neil Armstrong's first step on lunar soil – witnessing an event that "men had dreamed about for thousands of years . . ."

> Yet even this moment was for me eclipsed by the first flight around the moon at Christmastime in 1968. It was an icy Connecticut evening in a house filled with noisy festivity. My host—a teacher of renown whom I greatly esteem—has a mind of generous curiosity and of eclectic concern, but is a man with a blind spot, at least at that time; he had found the space program a technocratic scam, overblown, financially extravagant, and basically a bore. As close as we always had been we rarely spoke of the astronauts and their flights. I had trouble that evening making him interrupt the party so that we could turn on the television set and follow the progress of the Apollo 8 module as it began its circuit around the moon. Suddenly, there before us was that stark sphere, the craters, the jagged shadows that one knew to be chaotic mounds of rubble, the glistening white landscape projected against a backdrop of unfathomable darkness. The murmur and laughter of the party diminished and died, and we watched in silence while William Anders spoke the words from *Genesis:*
>
> *In the beginning God created*
> *the Heaven and the Earth,*
> *And the Earth was without*
> *form and void . . .*
>
> Ceremonial words tend to sound hollow and inappropriate, generally because they are predictable, touched by the stale hand of prearrangement. But these words, spoken at one of history's truly heroic ceremonials, seemed entirely appropriate, and I remember that a chill coursed down my back and an odd sigh went through the gathering like a tremor or a wind. Then how was it possible to be more deeply affected, to discover a pitch of eloquence more grand than those incantatory lines? Simple. Listen to Frank Borman, whose cheery valedictory brought home the reality, nearly lost in the sheer awesomeness of the occasion, that we were witnessing the exploit not of some crew of demigods or archangels but of mortally fleshed men like those of us gathered around a winter's fire: "Good-by, good night. Merry Christmas. God bless all of you, all of you on the good earth."
>
> I glanced at my host, the mistrusting and scornful teacher, and saw on his face an emotion that was depthless and inexpressible.

The Service Module SPS engine ignition for Trans Earth Injection came less than four hours after commander Frank Borman had closed the special Christmas Eve message from the Moon, and the Apollo 8 crew would splash down safely in the Pacific Ocean at about 11 a.m. EST on Friday, December 27, 1968.

* * *

"And . . . the crescent moon went dark, and ceased to give her light, and the last remaining stars fell from heaven, and the powers of the heavens were shaken: . . . and as evening fell across the land, the nation was absorbed in a sea of total darkness."

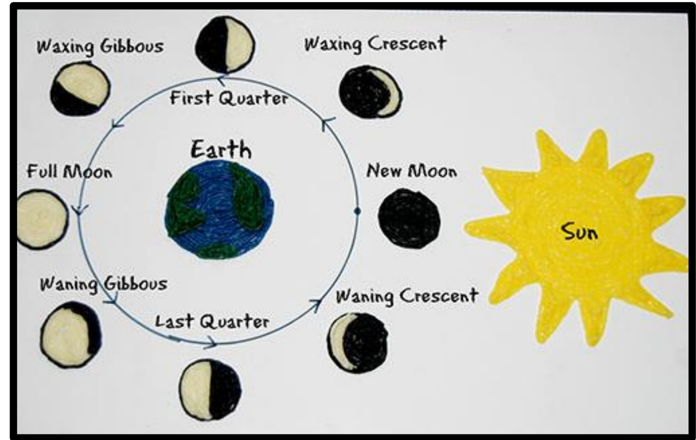
"And the people had begun to wonder: would the Moon ever regain her light; would the stars ever shine from the heavens again?"

Man's first journey to the Moon had been planned, in part, to answer the question of what had happened – what had caused the Moon to suddenly go dark, now over six months before (https://tinyurl.com/Aug-11-1968, pages 13 and 17). In discovering the Moon, the crew of Apollo 8 had now answered the question.

* * *

Astronomers and even casual observers of the night sky all agree that there are four primary phases of the Moon, defined by the Moon's position relative to the Earth and the Sun and by the resulting extent of its visible illumination (see page 17, top). The first two primary phases are the New Moon (there is no visible illumination by direct sunlight, because the Moon, with its dark side facing us, is "between" the Earth and the Sun), and the First Quarter Moon. At the latter phase, fifty percent of the Moon (Half Moon) appears to be illuminated by the Sun, and the Moon has completed one-fourth of its full orbit around the Earth. On average, there is a period of approximately

seven days of increasing visible illumination between zero (New Moon) and fifty percent (First Quarter Moon). This corresponds to the intermediate Waxing Crescent phase. Beyond the First Quarter Moon there is a second intermediate Waxing Gibbous phase, during which visible illumination increases from fifty to 100 percent (Full Moon).



In December, 1968, the New Moon would have occurred at 1:19 p.m. EST on Thursday, December 19. The Moon was not visible. And then, sometime during the evening of Sunday, December 20, it had happened . . . it was equivalent to the thinnest sliver of a crescent moon, but the fact was unmistakable: the Moon had regained a small portion of her light. And though no one could be certain, some had suggested that they could now see the faint outline of Norman Lane's favorite constellation in the night sky. Maybe a benevolent God was offering this celestial glimmer to them, as the bright crescent continued to grow. Lift-off for the Apollo 8 spacecraft had come at 7:51 a.m. EST on Saturday, December 21, or about eighteen-and-a-half hours into the Waxing Crescent phase (see photo, page 1). At the hours of 12:00 midnight (beginning of the day) and 12:00 noon EST on December 21, 1968, the Moon appeared illuminated to the extent of three and six percent, respectively, of a Full Moon.

The special Christmas Eve message from Apollo 8 was telecast at 9:59 p.m. EST on Tuesday, December 24. Eighty percent of the intermediate Waxing Crescent phase would have been complete, and thirty-one and thirty-six percent of the Moon, respectively, appeared illuminated at 12:00 noon EST, December 24, and 12:00 midnight EST, December 25. This phase would continue until the First Quarter Moon occurred, at 9:14 a.m. EST on Thursday, December 26. At that time, fifty percent of the Moon would appear illuminated. The elapsed time between New Moon and First Quarter Moon was six days, nineteen hours, and fifty-five minutes, or very close to 164 hours.

Finally, the Apollo 8 crew would splash down safely in the Pacific at 10:51 a.m. EST on Friday, December 27, a full day after the First Quarter Moon. Between fifty-six percent (midnight, EST) and sixty-one percent (noon, EST, December 27) of the Moon would appear illuminated. As Robert Kurson describes the crew's very early morning homecoming reception, approximately forty hours after splashdown, at Ellington AFB, near Houston, after 2:00 a.m. CST on Sunday, December 29:

> Hundreds from NASA, and three thousand well-wishers, many holding banners . . . were there to greet the astronauts . . . Under a *half Moon* [italics mine], Borman, Lovell, and Anders found their wives and children . . . and pulled them close.

And sixty-nine hours later, as calendar year 1968 came to a close at midnight EST, the Moon had regained ninety-four percent of her full visible illumination. In discovering the Moon, some would later say that the crew of Apollo 8 had also fulfilled their objective of answering the question of why the Moon had gone dark.

* * *

For the sake of discussion, perhaps especially for the calendar year 1968 in America, it is possible that the adult population could be classified according to two contrasting thoughts about the concept of hope (https://tinyurl.com/Aug-11-1968, pages 13 and 14). One group would agree with the philosophy that hope is the anchor of life, that hope is man's greatest blessing. The second group would instead align itself with the philosophy that hope in reality is the worst of all evils, because it prolongs the torments of man.

The first group might prefer the faith, through human suffering, that William Wordsworth had expressed in his 1807 *Ode* (https://tinyurl.com/Mar-29-1968, page 5):

What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind,
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be,
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering,
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

Edith Hamilton's 1930 analysis of one stanza from Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, "knowledge won through suffering . . . comes wisdom by the awful grace of God," seems to support this thought, and might also have been accepted by this first group. But the second group would eschew the "faith and wisdom through suffering" mantra of Aeschylus and Wordsworth, preferring instead the darker tones of Alfred, Lord Tennyson's "Tears, Idle Tears:"

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remember'd kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more!

The first group, like the slave Ulysses (see pages 6 and 7) in *Ulysses Africanus*, might believe in a benevolent God, who watches over his creation and orders the universe with concern for human happiness. The second group, like the freed slave Nicodemus, might defy any rational belief in such a God.

Along similar lines, maybe some were convinced that the Moon had regained a portion of the light that she had now been missing for more than six months. Perhaps these same people were equally confident that yes, the stars were coming back to the heavens, and that now the faint but unmistakable outline of Norman Lane's favorite constellation had reappeared on its black canvas. Maybe there was a benevolent God, offering this celestial glimmer for them to behold. "Ok, watch in the sky right over there. There's a meteor shower. . . ."

Then, there were others who still, when they peered out into the night sky of late December, 1968, saw nothing but a sea of total darkness, void of any expectation of desires to be fulfilled. The story that William Styron relates about his host's emotional response ("depthless and inexpressible," see pages 15 and 16) to astronaut Frank Borman's words: "God bless all of you, all of you on the good Earth," does suggest that some could have been moved beyond the bounds of their preexisting thoughts about hope, or God.

* * *

I do not know when the headstone that Norman Lane's mother had ordered in April of that year was actually placed at his grave in Tabernacle Cemetery. I did attend the Taylor family Camp Meeting that began that August 9, 1968, but I did not attend the Sunday afternoon memorial services until many years later, when my father died in 2007. Allen Willyerd was six years ahead of me at HHS, and I had never known him or the fact that he had returned from Vietnam that same month (https://tinyurl.com/Aug-11-1968, pages 18 and 19).

The record suggests that I had completed that essay for Mrs. Shaw's English III class the day before Thanksgiving,

and I did travel to Jackson with the football team for the Thanksgiving Day conference championship game, won by the Tomcats, 26-12. I doubt that I knew who Frank Sinatra was then, so I am pretty certain I did not see his television special that week.

Strangely, I have almost no recollection of the Apollo 8 mission. After football season I had resumed my job at Mr. Shane Roy's drug store (http://tinyurl.com/may-15-1968, pages 1 and 2), after school and on Saturdays and every third Sunday. He was one of two pharmacists, and I am pretty certain the store remained open until 9:00 p.m., six nights a week, there on Court Square in Brownsville. Frequently, near closing time, friends of Mr. Shane's would stop by, and they would chat in his pharmacy area, near the back of the store. He had a small portable black and white television set back in the pharmacy, up on a high shelf as I recall. I suspect the news reports and the live telecasts from Apollo 8 had kept his attention, during store hours.

Two neighbors of Mr. Shane's, across Key Corner Street on the same residential city block where we lived, were Mr. Bert Mathis and Mr. Carl Mann. One night, at some point during the Apollo 8 mission, Mr. Bert and Mr. Carl stopped by. I was near the cash register close to the pharmacy. They were sharing the local spin on the news from man's first journey to the Moon. Mr. Carl looked at me and half-seriously asked me how far I thought it was to heaven. You would need to have known Mr. Carl to understand, but when I jokingly suggested that I didn't think he had anything to worry about, the three men laughed out loud.

I don't remember watching the special Christmas Eve broadcast from the Moon. Our friend John Burgess and his family attended services at the Episcopal Church in town; the church was very close to the Marion Thorntons' home on North Washington. I went there for a late Christmas Eve communion service with some friends that night; the *Brownsville States-Graphic* record gives the time for the service as 11:30 p.m. About 240,000 miles away, Apollo 8 was only forty minutes away from the Trans Earth Injection that would start the crew on their journey home.

While other recollections – for example, can I remember one gift that I received for Christmas, 1968? – are lost, one remains clear. As I left our house for the Christmas Eve communion service late that night, I was wearing the hand-wound silver Wittnauer wristwatch with the Speidel Twist-O-Flex band that my parents had given me the Christmas before – the watch with "AL CLAIBORNE 1967" engraved in two lines on the back (https://tinyurl.com/unfinished-2016, page 8; https://tinyurl.com/Jan-1968-Hill-28, pages 3 and 4). At some point during the communion service, the long minute hand and the short hour hand both simultaneously signaled midnight. The tiny hand on the sub-seconds dial, which had first started reporting time on Christmas Day, 1967, gave the exact second. At that moment, the date display changed to December 25.

* * *

It is no small coincidence that the title selected by Robert Kurson, for his book describing man's first journey to the Moon, refers to Homer's legendary epic of Odysseus' trials and tribulations on his ten-year journey home after the Trojan War. The Command Module for the ill-fated Apollo 13 mission would also be named, "Odyssey." Three years to the date before Apollo 8 had lifted off for its "daring odyssey," HHS English teacher Norman Lane had written a 1965 Christmas card to his close Vanderbilt friend Lynn Schiro, then in her senior year. Norman had chosen a card that reflected some of his own fascination with the night sky, with the stars and planets, with the constellations, and with everything else about the heavens. The inside left panel of the card carried the printed inscription:

> Now take these stars
> Down to the world,
> It needs some warmth
> And light,
> Go make them shine
> In every home
> And every heart tonight.

Two years later, also on December 21, Marine 1stLt. Norman E. Lane had written a 1967 Christmas card to his Taylor family relative and contemporary, Nicholas Thornton, and his young wife, Jerilyn

(https://tinyurl.com/Dec-21-1967). Norman's commanding officer had noted that December 21, 1967, had been "a very nice day" at the Marine combat base, south of the DMZ, called Charlie 2. Probably Norman had written the card in his bunker that night, by the electric lights. "I'll be in Brownsville next Christmas ('68). Love to all," Norman had cheerfully promised Jerilyn and Nicholas Thornton. It was a promise that had been kept, but one that involved a different home, like Emily Webb's in *Our Town* (https://tinyurl.com/Aug-11-1968, pages 8 and 9), among the dead – as a "Townsman of a stiller town."

I was very fortunate to have met the late Jan Voogt (http://tinyurl.com/jan-voogt-2015) in Brownsville in 1996, and we exchanged e-mails and had at least one phone conversation in the year before his death, in January of 2015. I had learned of "Burnt Norton," the first poem of T.S. Eliot's "Four Quartets," in the preface to Jan's 2005 doctoral dissertation in history and literature (Leiden University, The Netherlands), *The War in Vietnam: The View from a Southern Community. Brownsville, Haywood County, Tennessee*:

> Time present and time past
> Are both perhaps present in time future,
> And the future contained in time past.

The first stanza concludes with,

> Time past and time future
> What might have been and what has been
> Point to one end, which is always present.

In 2014, Norman's close Brownsville friend and contemporary, Taylor family relative, and fellow Vanderbilt student, Lynne Thornton Mann, shared this recollection from time past:

> In my memory there were a couple of months between Norman's death and burial – I remember many times – seeing someone whose back, shoulder, or head looked like Norman's going around a corner in downtown Nashville and hastening my step to catch Norman (who was frequently in Nashville) – only to remind myself that he had been "killed in Vietnam" or hearing his laugh in a restaurant and starting to rise to find him . . . His was the only open casket that ever made sense to me – he really was gone . . .

The piercing sentiment that Lynne expresses reminds me of the lyrics of a Simon & Garfunkel composition that appeared on one of their 1966 albums:

> What a dream I had
> Pressed in organdy
> Clothed in crinoline of smoky burgundy
> Softer than the rain
> I wandered empty streets
> Down past the shop displays
> I heard cathedral bells
> Tripping down the alley ways
> As I walked on
>
> And when you ran to me
> Your cheeks flushed with the night
> We walked on frosted fields
> Of juniper and lamplight
> I held your hand

But still, it is better for us to hear from Norman himself. Lynn Schiro Fitzwater provides a short introduction: "It is not like anything I can ever remember Norman writing or saying. I see it as a vision, a sort of peering into another, more beautiful world:"

I stoop and peer at a tiny fragile web in the crotch of a twig and
it is as beautiful to me as the 18th Century Chinese
porcelains in the Basement of the museum in Washington
those porcelains I find almost as lovely as the soft gray
mockingbird singing in a real Chinese pear tree just
beginning to bloom that cool incredible spring day when
Gursel sits reading in the cold sunlight warming him
while I bounded across the meadow rejoicing —
that fragile little web has some meaning the explanation
of which would destroy its explication and its being
and I peer at it not seeing it so much as wondering
in the manner of the Magi perhaps; becoming for a brief
time a part of the world of mosses and lichens and tiny
orb-webs, of perfect little flowers in the grass so small
that no one but me ever sees them and I am alone
crying maybe or smiling through my tears or rejoicing it is
all the same to me in my crystal sphere at the beauty
and the inexpressibleness of it. Pause. . . .

Of late (since you have known me at least) I
have adapted to the known world and am perhaps even
submerged within it mostly but my self my true self
is not ~~off~~ of it but of the world of lichens & easter
eggs and the tongues of butterflies (which are the mainsprings
of fairy's watches).

* * *

So it had been – in Brownsville, Tennessee, in Vietnam, in America, and in orbit around the Moon – over the 366 days since that silver Wittnauer wristwatch had first begun reporting time. . . .

Time past and time future
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.

And the calendar year 1968 came to a close. . . .

* * *