

BOOK REVIEW

WOMEN SPACEFARERS: SIXTY DIFFERENT PATHS TO SPACE

Books on space travel are not rare nowadays, and neither are stamps that depict individual astronauts or space-vehicle crews, but this book by an “astro-philatelist” and space-travel enthusiast brings the two together in a rather intelligent way.

Women Spacefarers is a detailed Who’s Who guide to the first 60 women (and just the women) who have taken part in a space mission.

A detailed *Preface* recounts the full history of the roles of women within both the Russian and the American space-flight organizations, and the added burdens laid on them by political propaganda. That emphasis on the personal story of the individual sets this book a little aside from other histories of Space Travel. Often including quotations from statements or interviews, it dwells on what brought those women into the world of space travel, where their most effective mentoring and support came from, and – especially – what biases or extra hurdles they had to overcome as women, adding juicy tidbits to the history of *Equal Opportunity*. (One learns now that the UK, through the BNSC, did not support a manned space programme, despite unchecked wide-spread belief to the contrary. Was it only a coincidence that the first Briton in space was a woman?)

The book is well written, the amount and depth of detail is constant, and each chapter is tastefully illustrated with at least one astronomical stamp (from whichever country). The book certainly deserves a place in libraries of history of science, popular science, and gender studies or in one’s private collection; there is ample quality reading for everyone.

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