

## To the Star - Women Spacefarers' Legacy – Book review

by Tony Quine

This is the second edition of Umberto Cavallaro's comprehensive encyclopaedia about all the women who have flown in Space from 1963 to 2022. It now features seventy-five detailed biographies, fifteen of which have been added since the previous edition. Five of those are the first women to complete sub-orbital flights. These five include Beth Moses, the first woman to complete a sub-orbital spaceflight, and Wally Funk, one of the so-called Mercury 13 whose group story, from 1961, is also explained in the book.



**TO THE STARS**  
 Women Spacefarers' Legacy  
 Umberto Cavallaro



Running to almost 600 pages, it naturally contains a huge amount of information and it is, without doubt, the ultimate source of material on this topic, featuring comprehensive, detailed and fully illustrated biographies of each woman, together with reference sources for each piece of information, which may themselves provide the reader with further sources reading.

Many of the biographies contain original information from the author's own research, interviews or photographic or philatelic collections. There are hundreds of photographs almost all of which are in colour.

The book does not follow a chronological, geographical or alphabetical format. Naturally enough, the book opens with the story of Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman in Space, in June 1963, and then continues with other women who achieved notable firsts; first American woman; first Japanese woman; first European woman, and so on.

The remaining women's stories are grouped in a series of themes, including Spacewalkers, Engineers, Military woman, concluding with Spaceflight Participants. This format makes the book very readable, as each group has their own stories to tell and it helps the reader to appreciate how there are many different routes to space. The majority of space women have carefully planned their education and their career, sometimes for decades, to make themselves promising astronaut candidates when their national agency wanted to recruit astronauts. Others, such as Valentina Tereshkova, Hayley Arceneaux and Yulia Peresild were simply in the right place, at the right time! The individual biographies are very comprehensive and include details of the subject's life before, during and after their spaceflight careers fully illustrated with official portraits and original images from the author's own collection.

The author has made the decision to include the first handful of women who have flown on sub-orbital flights with either Virgin Galactic or Blue Origin and they have equal 'status' in the text with other women who have flown into orbit. I feel that in the case of such pioneers as Moses and Funk this makes sense. However, as more sub-orbital flyers are added, it is questionable whether this will be possible, or appropriate. In the future the number of sub-orbital travellers will eventually exceed those who have been in orbit, and their biographical data will become harder to find, and almost certainly less interesting. But this is really a matter for future editions.

There are full appendices which list the seventy-five women in order of the first spaceflight, and including details of subsequent space missions and any spacewalks. Finally, there is a comprehensive index which I found very useful.

In summary, if you are interested in the people aspect of manned spaceflight, then this beautiful book should be recommended reading. But if your main interest is in women in space then it is essential reading.