On July 20, 1969, near the end of a great decade of near-space exploration, a small craft called Eagle landed on the moons surface. As anyone who watched the televised broadcast of the landing might recall, the astronauts aboard Eagle were guided to their objective by a capable ground crew headed by Chris Kraft, whom his colleagues had long called Flight. Kraft was unflappable on the surface, but, as he writes in this memoir, the Eagles landing had moments of drama that gave him pause, and that few outside NASA knew about--including baleful alarms from the ships on-board computer that warned of imminent disaster. For Kraft, frightening moments were part of his job as director of Mission Control. He encountered many of them in the early years of the space program, when failures were commonplace and all too often caused not by mechanics but by politics. We learn of many in Krafts pages. One such failure was the Soviet Unions Sputnik launch, about which Kraft thunders, We should have beaten them.... We were stopped by anonymous doctors in the civilian world who didnt know what they were talking about, by a bureaucrat in the White House whod been stung when JFK shot down his position on manned space flight, and by our friend the German rocket scientist, who got cold feet when he should have been bold. Plenty of other contemporaries, including John Glenn and Richard Nixon, come in for a scolding in Krafts fiery account, which offers a rare insiders portrait of the challenging work of astronautics--work that, Kraft writes hopefully, is only beginning. --Gregory McNamee

At last I found the ideal person to explain the overall trials and successes of the USA space program: Christopher Columbus Kraft, Jr. A bonus was the success story of a small-town boy with no connections to become the most televised flight director in mission control of NASA, then he moved higher in the ranks of NASA.

Here the politics of our space program, budget cutting as soon as the first moon landing succeeded (if not sooner), according also to the lack of success of the USSR, are all in here. The selection of astronauts, and
the surprising problems with a couple of them, and the fights with panicky flight surgeons in approving any spaceflights at all are all in here. The lack of courage of some NASA officials who were so afraid of blame should there be an accident that they almost killed the program is all in here. As it turned out, the Apollo fire did not kill the program, and pols and press were reasonable about it. Bureaucratic overkill got its just desserts.

The willingness of so many contractors to bid on limited-term projects was an inspiration, as was their desire to innovate and make the space program go ahead was an inspiration, but the tales of shoddy workmanship and design flaws even late in the program was not.

The antipathy of some old NASA personnel, Kraft included, toward the Germans under Wernher von Braun was revealed, which slowly diminished. Kraft seemed to acknowledge that without the German effort in the USA to produce the big Saturn V and other boosters, the Apollo program could not have been accomplished in any reasonable period. And to this day, nobody has made such powerful boosters.

This book was the most inspiring I have ever read on the moon landing program, with all its interim steps, and the reason for each flight. Very well written, fast reading, much thanks to James Schefter. Thankfully, much less sanitized than the early astronauts' efforts. Has index. I could not recommend it more.

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Flight My Life in Mission Control by Chris Kraft - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!