

Landing on the Moon: Fact or Fiction?

by Liz Gibbons

We were living in Rochester, New York, when the first moon landing was reported. Our sons were age six and nine. A friend and I were attending a concert the afternoon of July 20, 1969, and late in the afternoon it was announced that the lunar module, called the "Eagle," had landed on the moon. In discussing with my older son his memories of the moon landing, he said that evening when it got dark he went outside to view the moon with the realization that there are people up there. My husband and I watched the live coverage on TV late that night when Neil Armstrong descended from the space module and stepped onto the moon and uttered the now famous words, "That's one small step for man, one giant step for mankind."

It was probably a year or two later that the Rochester Planetarium had a special display of moon rocks. My sons and I stood in a long line to view them. I was disappointed after that long wait. The rocks were not very large, and to me they did not look much different than any other rocks that might be found on earth.

As I wrote several months ago when the writing topic was "This I Know," I have some doubts that astronauts actually landed on the moon. For years I accepted that there had been six trips to the moon, each a total of 480,000 miles round trip without mishap or dire aftereffects. Then in the last few years I began to see reports on the internet and in some books claiming it was a lie or hoax. Since I believe we have been told many lies by our government about events that have happened, I began to question the moon landings.

One obstacle raised is how were the astronauts able to transit the Van Allen radiation belts that surround the earth. The radiation belts start at an altitude of 310 miles above earth and continue up to 36,000 miles. In the 1950's and 60's the radiation was measured by Geiger counters carried into space, first by rockets, and then by Explorer satellites and Pioneer space probes. The radiation was lethally high and jammed the instruments. Were the space capsule and the astronauts' space suits capable of protecting them from that radiation? I doubt it. I am part of a small percentage of people who question the landings. Nonetheless, it is awesome to think that we possibly did land on the moon. And if not then, probably it will be accomplished in the future.