

Book Tribute to George Low –“The Ultimate Engineer”

[The Ultimate Engineer: The Remarkable Life of NASA's Visionary Leader George M. Low](#)

by Richard Jurek

Foreword by Gerald D. Griffin

From the late 1950s to 1976 the U.S. manned spaceflight program advanced as it did largely due to the extraordinary efforts of Austrian immigrant George M. Low. Described as the "ultimate engineer" during his career at NASA, Low was a visionary architect and leader from the agency's inception in 1958 to his retirement in 1976. As chief of manned spaceflight at NASA, Low was instrumental in the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo programs.

Low's pioneering work paved the way for President Kennedy's decision to make a lunar landing NASA's primary goal in the 1960s. After the tragic 1967 Apollo I fire that took the lives of three astronauts and almost crippled the program, Low took charge of the redesign of the Apollo spacecraft, and helped lead the program from disaster and toward the moon. In 1968, Low made the bold decision to go for lunar orbit on Apollo 8 before the lunar module was ready for flight and after only one Earth orbit test flight of the Command and Service modules. Under Low there were five manned missions, including Apollo 11, the first manned lunar landing.

Low's clandestine negotiations with the Soviet Union resulted in a historic joint mission in 1975 that was the precursor to the Shuttle-MIR and International Space Station programs. At the end of his NASA career, Low was one of the leading figures in the development of the Space Shuttle in the early 1970s, and was instrumental in NASA's transition into a post-Apollo world. Afterward, he embarked on a distinguished career in higher education as a transformational president of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, his alma mater.

From chronicling Low's escape from Nazi occupied Austria to helping land a man on the moon, *The Ultimate Engineer* sheds new light on one of the most fascinating and complex personalities of the golden age of U.S. manned space travel.

- Hardcover: 344 pages
- [University of Nebraska Press](#) (December 1, 2019)
- ISBN-10: 0803299559
- ISBN-13: 978-0803299559

Advance praise for the book:

It took four hundred thousand people for NASA to reach the moon, but one was absolutely essential: a soft-spoken, brilliant engineer named George Low. As this detailed, well-written account reveals, from Apollo's very conception to its recovery from tragedy to its historic triumphs, Low was Apollo's essential man.

— Andrew Chaikin, author of *A Man on the Moon*

*George Low is one of the unsung heroes of spaceflight, but there's never been a thorough examination of his life and the important contributions he made to Apollo and other NASA programs. *The Ultimate Engineer* finally fills this huge gap in human spaceflight history!*

— Peter King, correspondent for CBS News Radio

The real book about NASA and human spaceflight should be about George Low.

Book Tribute to George Low –“The Ultimate Engineer”

— George W. S. Abbey, former director of the Johnson Space Center

This Austrian immigrant, a specialist in aerodynamics, proved to be the perfect leader of the Apollo spacecraft engineering team—as well as a key political operator in America's human space programs from Mercury to the Space Shuttle. In "The Ultimate Engineer" Richard Jurek tells Low's unique and inspiring story, filling a huge hole in the history of that effort.

— Michael Cassutt, novelist, screenwriter, and coauthor of "Deke!" and "We Have Capture"

George Low was a central figure in one of history's greatest engineering projects—the first human voyages to the moon. Even though Apollo was a team effort, it never would have happened without leaders of great dedication and talent. In this valuable new book, Rich Jurek gives us the first full-length portrait of one of the least-known but most important of these Apollo-era giants.

— Tony Reichhardt, senior editor of Air&Space magazine
