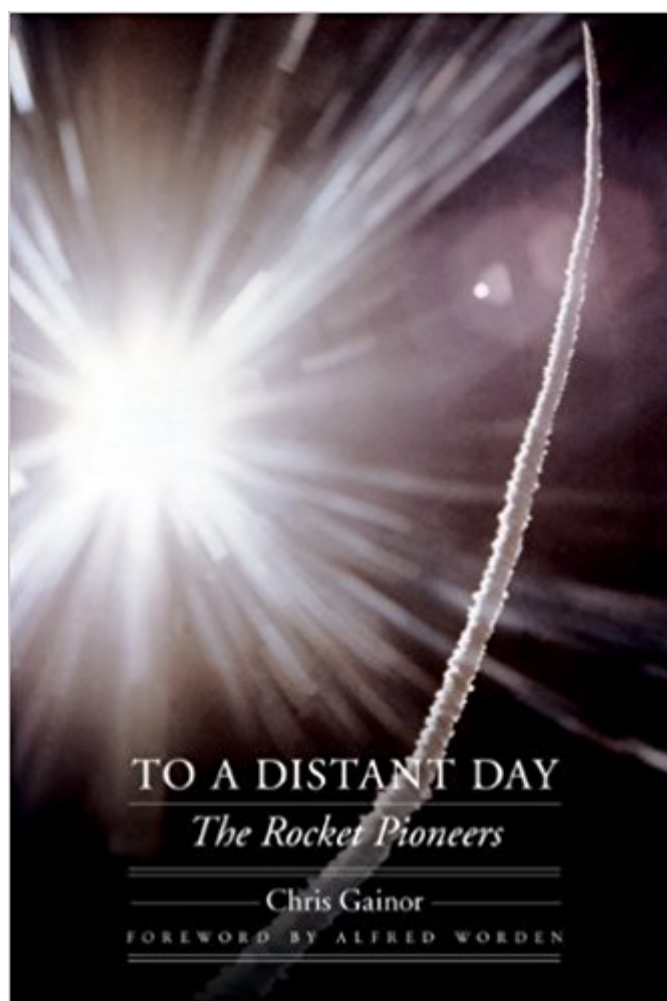


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To A Distant Day: The Rocket Pioneers (Outward Odyssey: A People's History Of Spaceflight)



Synopsis

“Insightful, instructive, and definitely worth the read.”—Greg Andres, Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada
“As someone who has been teaching a course on space exploration for many years and has visited most of NASA’s space centers, I have found plenty of new and valuable material in *To a Distant Day*. . . . I recommend the book to all who wish to know more about the conditions, people, and discoveries between 1890 and 1960 that led to the space age.”—Pangratios Papacosta, *Physics Today*
Although the dream of flying is as old as the human imagination, the notion of rocketing into space may have originated with Chinese gunpowder experiments during the Middle Ages. Rockets as both weapons and entertainment are examined in this engaging history of how human beings acquired the ability to catapult themselves into space. Chris Gainor’s irresistible narrative introduces us to pioneers such as Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, Robert Goddard, and Hermann Oberth, who pointed the way to the cosmos by generating the earliest wave of international enthusiasm for space exploration. It shows us German engineer Wernher von Braun creating the V-2, the first large rocket, which, though opening the door to space, failed utterly as the “wonder weapon” it was meant to be. From there Gainor follows the space race to the Soviet Union and the United States, giving us a close look at the competitive hysteria that led to Sputnik, satellites, space probes, and finally human flight into space in 1961. As much a story of cultural ambition and personal destiny as of scientific progress and technological history, *To a Distant Day* offers a complete and thoroughly compelling account of humanity’s determined efforts—sometimes poignant, sometimes amazing, sometimes mad—to leave the earth behind.

Book Information

Series: Outward Odyssey: A People’s History of Spaceflight

Paperback: 264 pages

Publisher: University of Nebraska Press; 0th edition edition (July 1, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0803245211

ISBN-13: 978-0803245211

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.6 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 1 customer review

Best Sellers Rank: #618,839 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #54 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Aerospace > Propulsion Technology #99 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Aerospace > Aircraft Design & Construction #338 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Aerospace > Astronautics & Space Flight

Customer Reviews

"To a Distant Day "is not simply about scientific and technical developments. It provides insight into the social and political context of the early rocket pioneers and how progress emerged amidst competing egos, political pressures, and technical challenges. . . . Insightful, instructive, and definitely worth the read."--Greg Andres, "Journal of The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada"--Greg Andres "Journal of The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada" (08/01/2009)"As someone who has been teaching a course on space exploration for many years and has visited most of NASA's space centers, I have found plenty of new and valuable material in "To a Distant Day". . . . I recommend the book to all who wish to know more about the conditions, people, and discoveries between 1890 and 1960 that led to the space age."--Pangratios Papacosta, "Physics Today"--Pangratios Papacosta "Physics Today ""Let us hope for as good a companion volume taking the story to the shuttle and space-station era and the emergence of space powers other than Russia and the U.S."--Roland Green, "Booklist"--Roland Green "Booklist" (03/15/2008)"Since the dawn of time, mankind has looked skyward and longed to travel the heavens, to feel the glow of distant stars, to explore the celestial bodies of our galactic neighborhood, and to venture beyond this earthly cradle. Chris Gainor's work, "To a Distant Day", tells of the engineers, the scientists, and the explorers who realized the ancient dream and ventured from Earth."--David R. Self "Technology and Culture ""Chris Gainor's new book, "To a Distant Day", recreates the colorful history of how rocketry came to be."--David Reneke, davidreneke.com--David Reneke "davidreneke.com "

Chris Gainor, a historian of technology, is the author of *Arrows to the Moon: Avro's Engineers and the Space Race*, *Who Killed the Avro Arrow?*, and *Canada's Role in the Exploration of Space*. Alfred Worden was an Apollo 15 astronaut.

Author/historian Dr. Chris Gainor accomplishes a remarkable feat in "To A Distant Day: The Rocket

Pioneers." He relates the wide-ranging and extremely interesting history of many of the most important theoretical and practical milestones of rocketry and spaceflight technology in this fast-paced, highly readable, technically accurate volume, and he does so in only 210 pages of main text (plus Source Notes, Index and Apollo 15 Astronaut Alfred Worden's Foreword). His narrative begins with the astronomical observations and philosophical speculations of the ancient Egyptians and Greeks. In 11 bite-sized but meaty chapters, the story advances through the early theoretical work of Konstantin Tsiolkovsky and Hermann Oberth to the hands-on rocket engineering and development breakthroughs of Robert Goddard, Wernher von Braun and Sergei Korolev. Dr. Gainor's tale ends where many other spaceflight books begin, with the April 12, 1961, launch of Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin in the spacecraft Vostok 1 on his pioneering orbital flight. The most remarkable part of "To A Distant Day," in my opinion, is the incredible efficiency with which Dr. Gainor covers the complex and esoteric subject matter. His treatment is amazingly broad and deep considering the brevity of his work (at least as compared to other typical books in the genre), and there is not a wasted or unnecessary word anywhere in the text. Every syllable contributes to conveying important information to the reader. The 30 well-chosen black-and-white drawings and photos supplement the text perfectly. My library of spaceflight books contains several hundred volumes, and I can't recall the last time I enjoyed a book on the subject as much as I did "To A Distant Day." Even though I was already familiar with almost all the history it presents, I found Dr. Gainor's book to be an informative, engaging and page-turning read. Definitely not a dry technical treatise, "To A Distant Day" is as good a single-volume "big picture" history of rocket development as any I've seen. I recommend it most highly to spaceflight enthusiasts and casual readers.

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