



The First Space Race: Launching the World's First Satellites (Centennial of Flight Series)

Matthew A. Bille, Erika Lishock

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The First Space Race reveals the inside story of an epic adventure with world-altering stakes. From 1955 to 1958, American and Soviet engineers battled to capture the world's imagination by successfully launching the world's first satellite. The race to orbit featured two American teams led by rival services—the Army and the Navy—and a Soviet effort so secret that few even knew it existed. This race ushered in the Space Age with a saga of science, politics, technology, engineering, and human dreams.

Before 1955, the concept of an artificial satellite had been demonstrated only on paper. The first nation to transform theory into practice would gain advantages in science, the Cold War propaganda contest, and the military balance of power. Visionaries such as America's Wernher von Braun and Russia's Sergey Korolev knew these fields of endeavor would be affected by the launch of a satellite. Moved by patriotism, inquisitiveness, and pride, people on both sides of the Iron Curtain put forth heroic efforts to make that first satellite possible.

Some aspects of this story, like the Navy's NOTSNIK satellite project, are almost unknown. Even some details of well-known programs, such as the appearance of America's pioneering *Explorer 1* satellite and the contributions made by its rival, Project Vanguard, are generally misremembered. In this book, authors Matt Bille and Erika Lishock tell the whole story of the first space race. They trace the tale from the origins of spaceflight theory and through the military and political events that engendered the all-out efforts needed to turn dreams into reality and thus shape the modern world.

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