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Women of Space: Cool Careers on the Final Frontier (Apogee Books Space Series)

Laura S. Woodmansee

Apogee Books

Paperback

250 pages

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5 STARS

“Inoculate your daughter against the dreaded disease of career directionlessness - get this book.”

Oh. Excuse me. I was just looking about for the nearest time machine. Why?

Because I would like to turn the clock back twenty years or so, and have a guidance counselor or perhaps one of my teachers hand me this book.

Twenty-five years ago, I was in middle school. I was taking life sciences, and mathematics, and gym class, and wondering what applicability any one of them had to my aspiration to be - what? Come to think of it, I did not have a clue what I wanted to be when I grew up. I was plagued by directionlessness, and it persisted with me through high school. There were a lot of fanciful dreams, but no real focus on any one particular area of expertise. That plague is still running rampant, it would seem. Perhaps, if someone had handed me Women Of Space then, the science or math classes, or even that gym class, would have appeared to have some relevance to life beyond the school-house doors. I may not have chosen to take the wild ride and actually make orbit, but ground control sounds like it could have been a hoot.

Women of Space: Cool Careers On The Final Frontier explores the many roles that women have played throughout the history of space exploration, not only in America but also around the world. It addresses the challenges women were forced to overcome, including career fields and an educational system in which the strongly held belief that women just could not or should not take part ruled.

Once upon a time, women could not be astronauts because women could not be pilots. On July 23, 1999, Eileen Collins became the first woman to command a space shuttle mission. It was not "one giant leap." A lot of women had to do some serious career trailblazing on Earth before the first women ever made it to space, and there is still some serious ground to be covered and a lot of firsts to be achieved. Women have proven that they have the intelligence and commitment, and that they, like their male counterparts, can obtain the needed education and skills to enable them to be a part of the important milestones yet to come in space exploration. This books makes you want to ask: Who will be the first woman to Mars? Who will be the first woman entrepreneur to set up business in space? Who will be the first woman to answer the question: Is space really the final frontier, or is there another just beyond it?

Today's girls and young women have many positive role models to look to when considering careers in space exploration, and Laura Woodmansee, freelance science writer and life-long space enthusiast, has done an excellent job of compiling a cross-section of those role models here. This book would make an excellent addition to a school library or career counselor's reference shelf. It would also make an excellent reference book for parents who are homeschooling their daughters and who want to help them explore the many educational opportunities available to them and the careers they can aspire to. Inoculate your daughter against the dreaded disease of career directionlessness - get this book.