Man Takes First Steps on the Moon – The Times of London, 7/21/69

Neil Armstrong became the first man to take a walk on the moon’s surface early today. The spectacular moment came after he had inched his way down the ladder of the fragile lunar bug Eagle while colleague Edwin Aldrin watched his movements from inside the craft. The landing, in the Sea of Tranquility, was near perfect and the two astronauts on board Eagle reported that it had not tilted too far to prevent take-off. The first word from man on the moon came from Aldrin: “Tranquility base. The Eagle has landed.” Of the first view of the lunar surface, he said: “There are quite a few rocks and boulders in the near area which are going to have some interesting colours in them.” Armstrong said both of them were in good shape and there was no need to worry about them. They had experienced no difficulty in manoeuvring the module in the moon’s gravity. There were tense moments in the mission control centre at Houston while they awaited news of the safe landing. When it was confirmed, one ground controller was heard to say: “We got a bunch of guys on the ground about to turn blue. We’re breathing again.” Ten minutes after landing, Aldrin radioed: “We’ll get to the details of what’s around here. But it looks like a collection of every variety, shape, angularity, granularity; a collection of just about every kind of rock.” He added: “The colour depends on what angle you’re looking at... rocks and boulders look as though they’re going to have some interesting colours.”

Armstrong says: one giant leap for mankind
From the News Team in Houston and London

It was 3:56 am (British Standard Time) when Armstrong stepped off the ladder from Eagle and on to the moon’s surface. The module’s hatch had opened at 3:39 am.

“That’s one small step for man but one giant leap for mankind,” he said as he stepped on the lunar surface.

The two astronauts opened the hatch of their lunar module at 3:39 am in preparation for Neil Armstrong’s walk. They were obviously being ultra careful over the operation for there was a considerable time lapse before Armstrong moved backwards out of the hatch to start his descent down the ladder.

Aldrin had to direct Armstrong out of the hatch because he was walking backwards and could not see the ladder.

Armstrong moved on to the porch outside Eagle and prepared to switch the television cameras which showed the world his dramatic descent as he began to inch his way down the ladder.

By this time the two astronauts had spent 25 minutes of their breathing time but their oxygen packs on their backs last four hours.

When the television cameras switched on there was a spectacular shot of Armstrong as he moved down the ladder. Viewers had a clear view as they saw him stepping foot by foot down the ladder, which has nine rungs.

He reported that the lunar surface was a “very fine-grained powder.”

Clutching the ladder Armstrong put his left foot on the lunar surface and reported it was like powdered charcoal and he could see his footprints on the surface. He said the L.E.M.’s engine had left a crater about a foot deep but they were “on a very level place here.”

Standing directly in the shadow of the lunar module Armstrong said he could see very clearly. The light was sufficiently bright for everything to be clearly visible.

The next step was for Aldrin to lower a hand camera down to Armstrong. This was the camera which Armstrong was to use to film Aldrin when he descends from Eagle.
Armstrong then spent the next few minutes taking photographs of the area in which he was standing and then prepared to take the "contingency" sample of lunar soil. This was one of the first steps in case the astronauts had to make an emergency take-off before they could complete the whole of their activities on the moon.

Armstrong said: "It is very pretty out here."

Using the scoop to pick up the sample Armstrong said he had pushed six to eight inches into the surface. He then reported to the mission control centre that he placed the sample lunar soil in his pocket.

The first sample was in his pocket at 4:08 am. He said the moon "has soft beauty all its own," like some desert of the United States...

Greatest moment of time

President Nixon, watching the events on television, described it as "one of the greatest moments of our time." He told Mr. on Ziegler, the White House press secretary, that the last 22 second of the descent were the longest he had ever lived through. Mr. Harold Wilson, in a television statement, expressed "our deep wish for a safe return at the end of what has been a most historic scientific achievement in the history of man." The Prime Minister, speaking from 10 Downing Street, said: "The first feeling of all in Britain is that this very dangerous part of the mission has been safely accomplished."

Moscow Radio announced the news solemnly as the main item in its 11:30 news broadcast. There was no immediate news of Luna 15.

At Castel Gandolfo the Pope greeted news of the lunar landing by exclaiming: "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to men of good will."

In an unscheduled speech from his summer residence the Pope, who followed the flight on colour television, said: "We, humble representatives of that Christ, who, coming among us from the abyss of divinity, has made to resound in the heavens this blessed voice, today we make an echo, repeating it in a celebration on the part of the whole terrestrial globe, with no more unsurpassable bounds of human existence, but openness to the expanse of endless space and a new destiny."

"Glory to God!" President Saragat of Italy said in a statement: "May this victory be a good omen for an even greater victory: the definite conquest of peace, of justice, of liberty, for all people of the World."

President Charles Helou of Lebanon followed the flight and landing with special dispatches from the Information Ministry. A spokesman said she would send an official message later.

In Jordan King Husain sent a congratulatory message to the astronauts and President Nixon.

In Stockholm Mr. Tage Erlander, the Swedish Prime Minister, said he planned to cable President Nixon his congratulations as soon as the astronauts returned to Earth. King Gustav Adolf was watching television at touchdown time and told friends he was "thrilled" by the Apollo performance.

In Cuba the national radio announced the moon landing 12 minutes after it was accomplished.

Sir Bernard Lovell, Director of the Jodrell Bank observatory, said: "The moment of touchdown was one of the moments of greatest drama in the history of man. The success in this part of the enterprise opens the most enormous opportunities for the future exploration of the universe."