



# A Bunch of Plumbers

*By John Newcomb*

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The Unsung Heroes of the American Space Program A Bunch of Plumbers is the behind-the-scenes story of how NASA engineers, armed with butcher paper, slide rules, and punch card computers, accomplished two of the most successful missions of the 20th century-the Lunar Orbiter Project that placed five spacecraft around the Moon and photographed the proposed Apollo Landing Sites, and the Viking Project that succeeded, against all odds, in placing two landers on the surface of Mars in 1976. John Newcomb's account is a tribute to the Lunar Orbiter and Viking Project Teams and the thousands of other engineers who were the unsung heroes of the space race. Woven throughout this book are stories of extraordinary people like Derwood, who launched rockets from Wallops and continued to play the violin despite losing an arm in a launch accident; superstitions like Lee Scherer's lucky coat; and Newcomb's save-the-day calculation involving rolls of butcher paper. It is a wild ride mixed with sobering realities of sacrifice and dedication. And ...you don't have to be a rocket scientist to enjoy this book.

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## A Bunch of Plumbers By John Newcomb Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #366511 in Books
- Published on: 2015-09-24
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .68" w x 6.00" l, .87 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 298 pages

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## **Editorial Review**

### **About the Author**

John Newcomb While attending Virginia Tech, John had many adventures through the Virginia Tech Cooperative Engineering Program, alternately working in the NASA, Langley Research Center's wind tunnels, laboratories, and at Langley's rocket launching site, Wallops Island. After graduating from Tech, John joined the Langley Research Center as a young engineer and quickly became involved in two of NASA's early space missions - the Lunar Orbiter Project and the Viking Project. After Viking, John headed NASA's Physics and Chemistry Experiments in-Space Program that performed experiments in the free fall environment of NASA's Space Shuttle and The International Space Station. John and his wife, Peggy, live in Gloucester Point, Virginia

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