



*The Apollo 11 crew, from left: Commander Neil A. Armstrong, Command Module Pilot Michael Collins, and Lunar Module Pilot Edwin E. "Buzz" Aldrin Jr. On July 20th 1969 at 4:18 PM, EDT the Lunar Module "Eagle" landed in a region of the moon called the Mare Tranquillitatis, also known as the Sea of Tranquility. Credit: NASA*

That first landing of humans on the Moon back in July 1969 was an "unbelievable, extremely extraordinary period of time in our history," said James Hansen, author of *First Man: The Life of Neil A. Armstrong* (Simon & Schuster, 2005). Hansen's book is the first authorized biography of Armstrong.

Speaking to an attentive audience at Books & Company in Dayton, Ohio last November, and broadcast on CSPAN2's Book TV show, Hansen served up several reflective considerations. "Roughly two-thirds of the Earth's population today was not alive in 1969," Hansen said. For them, "it's just in the history books...they had no first-hand experience" compared to many that watched the unfolding event through television.

Of the 12 human beings that trod across the surface of another heavenly body, Hansen added, only nine are still living today. "Only six commanders have piloted a spacecraft down to a lunar landing," he said, with only four of those people now alive.

Presently, the age of moonwalkers ranges from 71 to 75 years old, Hansen pointed out.

Furthermore, in the year 2019—a moment in time that celebrates the 50th anniversary of Apollo 11's landing—the surviving moonwalkers will be in their mid-to-late 80s.

"Hopefully they will all still be with us," Hansen noted, "to tell us and share their histories."

But Hansen added: "Realistically, it's quite possible that we won't have them all...and it's a sad thought to think."

Even given NASA's plans to dispatch humans back to the Moon, Hansen related, "it is in the realm of possibility that they will part our company, all of them, before we do return. I think it's also possible that the next voices that we hear from the surface of the Moon will be speaking Chinese. The Chinese have a very aggressive program and it's very possible that they might be the next ones there."

