

52nd IAA HISTORY OF ASTRONAUTICS SYMPOSIUM (E4)

”Can you believe they put a man on the moon?” (3B)

Author: Dr. John M. Logsdon

Space Policy Institute, George Washington University, United States, logsdon@gwu.edu

ONCE WE WENT TO THE MOON WHY, AND WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE
EXPERIENCE?

Abstract

In April-May 1961 U.S. President John F. Kennedy decided to send American to the Moon and return them to Earth “before this decade is out.” The reasons for Kennedy’s decision are well understood; my book *John F. Kennedy and the Race to the Moon* is an authoritative account of not only Kennedy’s decision but what he did in his short time in the White House to implement it. This paper will reflect on what can be learned from both the way the lunar landing decision was made and implemented and from its impact on the course of space affairs since. It may suggest that the decision was unfortunate in terms of the history of human spaceflight, especially it stands alone without a successful sequel. It will ask whether the “Kennedy moment” can come again, or was it a unique occurrence, never to be repeated.