

Before the historic launching of Apollo XI on July 16, 1969, many reporters met with all three of the astronauts. But those who interviewed Neil Armstrong, the commander of the flight, emerged from (A)the experience puzzled and sometimes annoyed. Not that he had been unpleasant or impatient. Not at all. Talking to the press was part of an astronaut's job, just like flying T-38 jets to keep the reflexes sharp, or learning (B)what kind of snakes to eat if you were ever lost in Borneo. It was a duty, and Neil Armstrong was not the kind of man who neglected his duties.

What was it, then that bothered the reporters? Here was their man, who soon would be the (C) human being to disturb the moon's dust — or sink into it; our Hero, our Pride, our Explorer, the Pioneer of the Technological Age, ready to launch into space with all the dreams and fears of humanity:

— Mr.Armstrong, becoming an astronaut must have given you great joy?

— I was already a test pilot for NASA. To me it was (D) being transferred from one office to another.

— Do you mean you don't have a taste for adventure?

— For heaven's sake, I hate danger. Danger is the most annoying aspect of our job... How can a simple technological fact be turned into an adventure?

— But I suppose (E)you would be sorry not to go up?

— Yes, but I would not get sick about it. I don't understand those who get so anxious to be first. It's all nonsense, just romanticism (F) of our rational age.

— I know somebody who would go up even if he knew that he would not come back...

— He is a child, not an adult. I would not agree to go up if I thought I might not come back. Unless it were technically necessary. Testing a jet is dangerous but technically necessary. Dying in space or on the moon is not necessary, and so if I had to choose, I'd choose death while testing a jet. Wouldn't you?

— No, I'd choose to die on the moon; (G) I would have seen it...

— Nonsense! If it were a matter of staying there for a year or two, perhaps... no, no; it would be too high a price to pay. Because it is senseless! I'd better say goodbye now. I have to go into the centrifuge.

— I don't envy you, Mr.Armstrong.

— Yes, it is unpleasant. Perhaps the thing I hate most. But it is (H)...

And so it went. No wonder (I)many reporters found him depressing. Besides, it seemed impossible to sell him to the public. How do you make a folk hero of a man who is unwilling to (J)play the part?

(注) astronaut 宇宙飛行士, reflex 「反射神経」, transfer 配置転換する, centrifuge 訓練用遠心装置, NASA 米国航空宇宙局

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