



# **The X-15 Rocket Plane: Flying the First Wings into Space (Outward Odyssey: A People's History of S)**

*Michelle L. Evans*

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With the Soviet Union's launch of the first Sputnik satellite in 1957, the Cold War soared to new heights as Americans feared losing the race into space. *The X-15 Rocket Plane* tells the enthralling yet little-known story of the hypersonic X-15, the winged rocket ship that met this challenge and opened the way into human-controlled spaceflight.

Drawing on interviews with those who were there, Michelle Evans captures the drama and excitement of, yes, rocket science: how to handle the heat generated at speeds up to Mach 7, how to make a rocket propulsion system that could throttle, and how to safely reenter the atmosphere from space and make a precision landing.

This book puts a human face on the feats of science and engineering that went into the X-15 program, many of them critical to the development of the Space Shuttle. And, finally, it introduces us to the largely unsung pilots of the X-15. By the time of the *Apollo 11* moon landing, thirty-one American astronauts had flown into space—eight of them astronaut-pilots of the X-15. *The X-15 Rocket Plane* restores these pioneers, and the others who made it happen, to their rightful place in the history of spaceflight.

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