

Mac Jones
The Plumber-Astronaut who Saved the World

Book 1

By

S. Pflueger

Because even a plumber can save the world...

When plumber Mac Jones wins NASA's best essay contest awarding the winner an opportunity to be a passenger on the next space shuttle mission—his humorous escapades and world-saving adventure begins.

Unbeknownst to Mac, the mission is discovered to be *Top Secret* and Mac's approached by a secretive government agency. Fearlessly calling upon his plumber skills, he successfully saves Earth but his under-cover secret agency status is only just beginning.

Before launch, Mac endures various 'homemade' training exercises that push him to the brink of nutty insanity. Hooking himself up to a high-powered shop-vac to create the feeling of passing through a potential black hole, being connected to a heavy-duty truck battery in order to replicate the possibility of flying into the sun and driving an old tractor into a house with hopes of better understanding the power of lift-off is only the beginning of Mac's wild antics.

Helped, or hindered, by two of the supporting characters. Mac's ex brother-in-law, Frankie, struggles with reality and offers Mac uniquely outrageous guidance. Additionally, one of Mac's astronaut crew members is suddenly transformed into a Russian caveman-cosmonaut who's capable of time travel and other outrageousness. Together, they must become partners to battle the alien force that might destroy Earth with a Super-Dooper-Zap gun that can turn planets into space dust.

Via the uncanny humor of Mac and Mac's understanding of the world, the reader is launched into a galactic romp and adventure that will finally allow a failed plumber to save the world. *Book 1* of the Mac Jones comedy-adventures series is complete at 55,000 words.

Prelude

I share with you now the application essay submitted to NASA's *Working-Man Space Program*. Potential astronaut candidates from around the country were initially screened according to essay originality, desire and commitment. The field was eventually narrowed to approximately five candidates who were given Hollywood screen tests to better determine the extent to which the candidate would be most agreeable to a television audience. Concurrently, the five candidates were subjected to extensive focus group and social skills testing which finally determined the ideal *Working Man In Space* candidate. (I should add here that we were given an intelligence test but for reasons I only later understood, this didn't carry much weight in terms of the final decision-making process, etc.) And so, based on the cumulative and rather elaborate testing, it was NASA's unanimous conclusion that Mr. Mac Jones (me) was ideally suited for the position of Astronaut and would be the official *Working Man In Space*... here is my essay.

Dear NASA:

I have three issues and concerns that I would like to bring to the forefront. As a plumber turned *Toilet Partition Installing Executive*, it goes without saying that your other 'candidates' are not likely anticipating the following

challenges and are most certainly not engaged in the extensive pre-launch training schedule that I've embraced with a passionate fervor.

So let's begin.

Issue #1: Likelihood of space shuttle drifting into the sun. Let's be honest; it's possible, maybe even likely. I want you to know I'm already preparing for that very scenario. I've devised a number of uniquely progressive training methods which include the use of heavy-duty truck batteries specifically designed to maximize high-heat situations via strategic and high-powered electrical surges coursing through my body, etc. (details to follow) Thus, by launch time I should be fully prepared to drift near the sun and if the admittedly unique situation arose I'm confident I could briefly land on the sun. In short, I am anticipating every imaginable high-heat event.

Issue #2: Black holes. Again, let's face facts - it happens. We all know that the Russians sent two monkeys into space and only one came back. I think we all know *exactly* what happened there. The good news? I'm mentally prepared and will not hesitate. By uniquely utilizing a high-powered Shop-Vac, I've devised a way to quite realistically mimic the physical attributes of a Black Hole experience. (details to follow) It seems likely that when passing through a black hole we will

undoubtedly travel back in time. I'd like you to know that in high school I did pretty well in history and am confident I can quickly adapt to any prior historical period.

Additionally, I've begun studying home electronics and feel confident that by the time we launch I should be able to build a radio device from the most crude components of wood, stone, coconuts, etc. If in fact we do pass through a black hole, I will be fully prepared to then build a homing beacon that should lead the rescue party precisely to our current position. Please note: If we happen to arrive back in the time of dinosaurs, then please bring heavy explosives.

Issue #3: Alien encounters. On a personal note, I'd like to think I have some idea of how drastically unique an alien might be. You would have to meet my ex-brother-in-law Frankie to fully appreciate that assumption. (introduction to follow) But by way of formal alien preparation, I've begun re-watching all of the original *Star Wars* movies and can assure you that if I need to take the ship into hyperspace or battle a Darth Vader-type individual, then again, and not to be redundant, I will be fully prepared.

Also, in light of the fact that space travel can be both highly stressful and yet strangely boring, I'm willing to provide musical entertainment via a rather unique range of

instrumentation: I can play the theme song from *Top Gun* on a handmade Tennessee ukulele. Additionally, I can play the chorus from Celine Dion's *Titanic* hit song on an 'older' Baroque harpsichord. And lastly, I play a lovely rendition of Ozzie Osbourne's, *Crazy Train*, on an authentic set of South American pygmy windpipes.

In closing, there is no foreseeable space event that I will be unprepared for. Additionally, I bring any number of 'space intangibles' and fully expect to thrive in an anti-gravity atmosphere.

Sincerely,

Mac Jones

PART 1 – Earth

Why Monkeys Prefer Classical Music

The television studio camera zooms into the enthusiastic face of America's #1 morning show anchorman, John Reynolds. He glances at the monitor, turns back to the camera with a smile and says, "And now a story that is truly captivating America. Most of you know about NASA's *Working Man in Space Program* and are aware that a plumber from Missouri was selected as the lucky man to travel aboard the space shuttle's next mission. *Well, just who is this*

man? To better answer that question, we're live this morning in his hometown of Fiddlesburg, Missouri. The soon-to-be astronaut's name is Mr. Mac Jones, and we thought we might just drop in and say hello. Local affiliate reporter, Trisha Gates, is live in Fiddlesburg with Astronaut Jones... *Good morning Trisha.*"

"*Good morning, John.* I'm standing outside the garage of Astronaut Mac Jones. As you can see there's quite a crowd gathered here offering their support and encouragement."

"Trisha?" John asks, pleasantly amused, "Are those cheerleaders in the background?"

The camera turns away from Trisha and zooms in on the somewhat disheveled, cigarette smoking, mostly middle-aged and older cheerleaders, complete with pom-poms and t-shirts that read: *Gooooooo MAC!*

"That's right, John, some locals gals - of all ages really. A very festive scene this morning," she says in a way that suggests she too is caught up in the Mac Jones craze as the cheerleaders cheer:

"Man in the Garage – We love you!"

Man in the Garage – Going to the moon!

Gooooooo MAC"

"Trisha, I think it's safe to say that Astronaut Jones is America's first plumber turned astronaut who has his own cheerleaders!?"

"I'm sure that's true, John. Oh, wait, the garage door is opening. It looks like Astronaut Jones is coming out now..."

The small crowd lets out a roar of approval as Mac Jones steps out of his garage pushing his lawn mower. Appearing confident but somewhat startled by it all, he is casually dressed wearing jeans and boots and a mostly pressed button-down. Of average height and build, he otherwise appears a modestly handsome guy with a genuine smile and friendly attitude. Someone from the camera crew hands Mac a set of headphones which he slips on as he raises a wave of his hand into the air and says, “Thank you. *Hi everybody.*”

“Here comes Mac! – *We Love You!*”

Here comes Mac! – *Come home soon!*

Gooooooo MAC!”

“Astronaut Jones,” asks Trisha with a beaming smile, “This must be very exciting for you!?”

“Oh, sure... it’s a dream come true for a guy like me.”

“Did you always want to be an astronaut?”

“Well, like most kids, I thought about synchronized swimming or maybe professional basket weaving but yeah, ultimately—I think I was probably always meant to be an astronaut.”

“Space is a long way away... *are you scared?*”

“Trisha, I’ve had the privilege of removing some twenty-year-old toilets in my day—I think I can handle space flight.”

“Astronaut Jones?” asks John via Mac’s headphones, “It’s John Reynolds in New York.”

“Hi, John.”

“Mac, we’re sure looking forward to your visiting the studio here in New York. And just glancing outside my window, it looks like you have some serious New York fans who look forward to meeting you also. I’m seeing several *New York Loves Mac* signs.”

“Thanks, John, looking forward to visiting the Big Apple.”

“And Trisha?” John says, “Be sure and keep us updated here in New York regarding our favorite astronaut.”

“We’ll do, John. This is Trisha Gates with Astronaut Mac Jones and now back to our New York studio...”

Mac’s notes from the Garage: (pre-space)

Are apples bigger in New York? If so, why?

Suggest a maximum age limit for the cheerleading squad.

Also, eat more apples.

“So... I guess this all looks a little strange to you?”

Some clown walks out of his garage and is surrounded by adoring fans and cheerleaders with national TV coverage. Let me just offer here that I like clowns as much as the next guy and I mean nothing derogatory or disrespectful about clowns or the clown industry. In fact, if it were up to me, and eventually it may be... I would have a clown on every corner doing the various things that all good-hearted and safety-conscious clowns do, etc. In fact, if I were running for political office I might very well offer as my 'emotionally charged' platform declaration: *Vote for Mac! And a clown on every corner!*

Okay... may have slipped off track there with the whole 'clown thing,' but fair warning, I do tend to slip 'off track.' In fact, the good folks over at the *NASA Psychiatric Review Board* have even suggested that I've been 'off-track' for so long that I may not know what 'on-track' looks like. For the record, I find that evaluation and conclusion a little overstated and I look forward to alleviating any outstanding concerns they may have in our ongoing 'discussions.'

Anyway, hard to imagine that only a year ago I was just another plumber having recently been hired for an entry-level Executive Management position with an up-and-coming Toilet Partition Installing company. But I guess it's true what they say... dreams do come true.

But where to start? Perhaps a little more about me? You'll want to know this partly because it will change your life, but also because if the good people over at the *NASA Psychiatric Review Board* ever ask you any weird questions you'll know how to answer them. The fact is, I'm your basic sort of 'Average Joe.'

To be clear, my name is not Joe and I don't actually know who Joe is or more to the point why Joe was deemed and awarded the 'most average' sort of guy, etc. As for my career in plumbing, well, I didn't choose plumbing, nobody chooses plumbing... it just sort of happens.

You quite literally wake up one day and realize that you are a plumber. Naturally, the mind reels. But in time one begins to appreciate the finer aspects of water management, etc.

I'm a Midwestern guy, born and raised in Fiddlesburg, Missouri. My neighborhood is full of houses. And most of these houses have yards (with grass) that people mow. Mowing the lawn is a big deal where I live - it's a very big deal. People seem to feel a kind of passion about lawns and lawnmowers. I used to be like that... until I became an astronaut.

As an aside, I'd like to voice my concerns regarding this rather alarming trend towards self-propelled lawnmowers. And if I need to follow up with some of my newfound congressional friends to emphasize this position then so be it, but let me say this—people should *push* their lawnmowers. I dare say a man or woman running for political office, here or anywhere, would win by a landslide were they to adopt this simple platform: *For a better America - Push your lawnmower!*

As you can imagine, I'm asked countless questions regarding NASA's *Working Man in Space Program*. One of the most common questions is whether the stresses I faced in the field of plumbing and Toilet Partition Installing were in any way comparable to being an astronaut and the stresses of space flight. Well... yes and no. I'll save the details for later, but needless to say a plumbing professional rarely finds himself face-to-face with galactic aliens (galactic aliens... *redundant?*) nor is it often required that a plumber save the world, etc. Otherwise, I found plumbing and space travel to be surprisingly compatible. I'm guessing you think I'm either joking or in some way lacking mental clarity... more on that later.

Anyway, my biographer (yes, I have a biographer) keeps badgering me about the details, in short: How did a plumber save the world from possible Alien invasion? You'll notice at

various times I will capitalize the word Alien. Why? Two reasons. Hypothetically, if America were to invade an Alien planet, I would appreciate it if they (the Aliens) properly capitalized America. Also, if in fact Aliens possess the technology to disintegrate the planet Earth, I think we have nothing to lose by showing our respect in any way we can. This of course raises another point, that being: Are we insulting them (the Aliens) by referring to them as Aliens? No, if we were to refer to them as dumb foreigners, I think that might be cause for concern. But I think most would agree that the word Alien suggests at minimum a unified and advanced culture that incidentally may have the capability to use massive ray guns and effectively eliminate the planet Earth, etc.

Surprisingly, it's not easy having a biographer. I mean she's a really nice gal but she's not the *world-saving hero type* and therefore imagines I can just sit down and tell her the whole story... but it just doesn't work like that. I told her that we would have to go through this whole thing sort of frame by frame. That's movie lingo for those of you who aren't prepared to meet with Mr. Spielberg anytime soon, i.e. – of *Jaws* fame.

Have I mentioned the deal NASA made with the networks? Well, much to my surprise, the networks are broadcasting my Astronaut experience and there's even talk of a movie deal and some sort of documentary regarding my life and times. So, what's been on my mind lately is how I would shoot the opening scene. I should offer here that I'm somewhat of a movie buff and have subsequently been trying to outline an *Amazing! Incredible! You Wouldn't Believe It!* introduction to the story of my life.

And I don't want to overstate this, but for a plumber my cinematic instincts are exceptional. I think I've roughly worked out how the film might open, but these are only my

preliminary thoughts and I will finalize all of this with Mr. Spielberg at a later date. (It may be worth mentioning that I've never met, and likely will never meet Mr. Spielberg, so that 'meeting' is extremely pending and, in all likelihood, destined to politely conclude with *No thank you* or *Not Interested* or more likely, and for reasons of efficiency, just *No*.)