

*america was built by explorers, and don't forget it*

Recently, I have become rather saddened by some of the developments that I have been reading about.

We Americans have built a long, proud history rich in adventurous pursuits of new frontiers. We have never been a country to sit pat on anything. We've always looked for new roads to travel...new worlds to explore...new frontiers to conquer. America has always lead the way down uncharted roads.

From our forefathers heading west to explore the virgin lands of our infant country, to today's high-tech scientists exploring new methods of overcoming disease, America has always had a built in resolve to meet every challenge with a spirit of determination not to give up until victory was ours.

When the world got tired of riding a horse, America invented the car. When the world wanted to fly like the birds, America invented the airplane. And when teenage girls wanted to talk, America invented the telephone.

Today we face a number of environmental concerns, and you can bet the farm that it will be America who will lead the way in finding the best solutions to these problems.

But I have become quite concerned about our space program. Has America's pioneering spirit of leading the world into new frontiers lost its edge? Are we becoming so smug in our world of creature comforts to be willing to take a back seat in the pursuit of new, uncharted worlds before us?

There are many people who would say that we need to leave space alone and concentrate our efforts on some of the more immediate problems facing us today. Although budget concerns certainly support this line of thought, I can't help but wonder if it wouldn't be a terrible mistake for us to forsake the one thing that has set our country apart from the others for all these years.

I remember when President Kennedy told us that we would have a man on the moon by the end of the decade. We were all quick to call it a crazy notion...and even quicker to say, "Let's do it!"

And by God, we did it!

During the insanity of the sixties, it was the space program that served as the one positive glue that kept us all together. We would all take time off from our riots, protests, demonstrations, LSD trips and love-ins long enough to watch another lift off at Cape Canaveral. Everything across America would come to a halt whenever the cameras focused in on our men in space.

From the Gimini flights, the walks in space, the Apolo flights, one small step for man, the giant leaps for mankind, the Rover dune buggies buzzing around a moon crater, Alan Sheppard's golf swing, the American flag standing tall and proud amidst a barren moon's playground, and of

course, those majestic splash downs in the blue Pacific. America's space program captured the imagination and the spirit of adventure in the hearts of everyone like no other exploration ever before.

Actually, we've gotten so good at it, that the reports of our space Shuttle flights have become token side notes on our evening news.

Certainly there are many problems in our daily lives that need our attention. Certainly our budgetary pie can only be cut into so many pieces. And yes, I too get irritated at watching millions of dollars being shot up in yet, another secret military satellite.

But we are America. It's always been our nature to explore. We have always improved our world by exploring the unknown worlds before us. So many of our creature comforts of today have evolved from yesterday's commitment to conquer space.

They say that space is our final frontier. It won't be easy... and it won't come cheap. But I can't help but think that it will be America who will find a way to conquer this last great frontier. I know we can do it. It's our nature to explore.

Just A Thought