



COMMENTARY AND OPINION ON HISTORY & POLITICS

Hugh's News

Let's go back to the moon

by Hugh Turley

President Obama's 2011 budget cancelled the NASA program Constellation, which would have returned men to the moon by 2020. Let's hope Congress disagrees.

The Apollo program was a tremendous success, with 24 astronauts traveling to the moon. Half of them descended to walk on the surface and drive a lunar vehicle. It was reported that the program, which ran from 1961 to 1975, employed 400,000 people directly and 1.6 million indirectly.

The new budget kills development of the Ares rocket, which was to have been the successor to the space shuttle for manned flight. NASA has already spent billions developing the rocket. The first launch of the Ares had been scheduled for 2015.

Some argue it would be easier to fake a moon trip and just have Steven Spielberg produce a video. After all, the sort of skeptics who claim that the earlier landings were Stanley Kubrick productions will never believe it if we ever go again. (Yes, there are those who don't believe man has walked on the moon, including a quarter of the British public surveyed last year – the 40th anniversary of the first lunar landing.)

As we reinvent the wheel, we should not forget the technology that got us to the moon 40 years



ago. The astronauts who first traveled there – and many of the engineers behind them – are now in their 80s and should be valuable resources on how it is done. Does anyone still remember how to use a slide rule? If someone would like to own a piece of history, I found the same model used on Apollo XI, signed by Buzz Aldrin, available online for \$550.

In 1968 Frank Borman, Jim Lovell, and Bill Anders were the first men to fly around the moon and see the first earthrise. That year, Lyndon Johnson was still president, the Green Bay Packers won the second Super Bowl, and the Beatles created Apple Records.

The following year Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin landed on

the surface of the moon. There were a total of six manned missions that landed on the moon! The final landing was in 1972. The Russians, with all their success, never achieved even a circumlunar manned flight.

Landing men on the moon and returning them safely to earth is even more remarkable, considering the limited technology available during the 1960s. Most Americans watched the first moon landing on black-and-white television sets with vacuum tubes and called each other using rotary dial telephones.

Today, stereo hi-fidelity record collections and motion pictures are contained in a palm-of-your-hand iPod. Digital cameras, laptop computers, and wireless phones are as common as the transistor radio was back then. Some 20th-century technologies have disappeared altogether, such as phonographs, tape players, typewriters, and adding machines.

Still, while some things change, other things remain the same. Haircuts are a good example. Barbers still cut hair the same way they did 50 years ago. Styles may have changed, but the tools of the trade haven't.

Moon travel, like barbering, apparently hasn't changed very much, either. The Apollo program has never been improved upon. It has stood the test of time and remains the best and only way to travel to the moon and back.

In the 21st century we may wonder: Why are we unable to do what our grandparents did in the 20th century?

