

# moon landing still inspires

ARMSTRONG

Black boy in Chicago,  
Playing in the street,  
Not enough to wear,  
Not near enough to eat,  
But don't you know he saw it,  
On a July afternoon,  
Saw a man named Armstrong,  
Walk upon the Moon.

Young girl in Calcutta,  
Barely eight-years-old,  
Flies around the marketplace,  
Will see she don't get old,  
But don't you know she heard it,  
On a July afternoon,  
Heard a man named Armstrong,  
Walk upon the Moon.

River's getting dirty,  
Wind is getting bad,  
Warm haze is killing off,  
The only Earth we have,  
But the world all stopped to watch,  
On a July afternoon,  
Watched a man named Armstrong,  
Walk upon the Moon.

And I wonder if a long time ago,  
Somewhere in the Universe,  
They watched a Man named. . . Adam,  
Walk upon the Earth

-- John Stewart

Baby." For us, the world existed on both a sub-atomic level, and an inter-planetary one - and always had. I admit I view my generation from within my own generation, so my understanding could be askew. However, what cannot be countered is the perspective to us, as seen from within the experience.

I grew up in a world where I never gazed upon the Moon and wonderingly asked my Dad, "What's that?" or thought of the stars as mysteries. We had pictures. I grew up in a world which controlled the atom. I grew up in a world where people were repeatedly heard saying, "If they can put a man on the Moon, then they can . . ." If they can put a man on the Moon, then why can't they feed starving people? If they can put a man on the Moon, then why can't they cure us from disease? If they can put a man on the Moon, then why can't they solve any problem which might present itself? Certainly flying off to another planet is more difficult than growing some potatoes, or cleaning up a polluted lake.

I grew up in a world which taught us "possibilities." Even if it was unintentional, how could such a message not be translated to us each time our young, growing minds looked up and saw the pictures of humans traveling through space; walking on the Moon; flying faster than the speed of sound; creating energy from specks of matter; pictures of babies growing inside a womb; heart-transplants; test-tube baby's; jumbo-jets; solar-energy? All these things were presented before me as a child - wondrously achieved possibilities.

I believe my generation was taught from our very first moments on Earth that, "You can achieve anything. You can go anywhere; do anything; discover new problems, and develop solutions to them all." And we did. And we will.

"There are tears in all our eyes, no matter what country we're from."

I read the accompanying essay by William Safire over ten years ago, at a time when I did not know who he was, or for that matter really who I was. "Of Nixon, Kennedy, and Shooting The Moon" has had a profound impact on the way I view the world, and my life within its history.

I consider myself "A Moon Shot Baby" and by that I am referring to the manner in which my birth so closely coincided with the Moon Walk. I was born on June fifth, 1969 - "a month" before humans achieved interplanetary travel, and walked on the Moon. Having my birth so closely correlated to such a momentous event has prompted me to think about my life within a historical perspective. There is a real moment-in-time from which to measure my life, and my generation.

When I was growing-up our elementary school classrooms always had pictures on the walls of Moon. Either a picture of Earth as seen from the Moon, or of Neil Armstrong, or of the Eagle, or the Moon-buggy. It does not matter if I think I'm remembering second grade, third grade, or fourth grade, it was always the same. The pictures were there on the walls, in our schoolbooks, on television, in magazines. My classmates and I knew that, "Man had walked on the Moon," and that this was a very significant fact.

We did not know "Buck Rogers" as fiction. It had to be explained to us why Galileo got into trouble for speaking about Copernicus and the planets revolving around the Sun. Sure we heard the old nursery rhymes about the Moon being made of cheese, but we certainly could not understand such sayings anymore that "Rock A-Bye

For: John Kennedy, Jr.

At 4:18 p.m. EDT on July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong's voice crackled the news: "Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed." At 10:56 p.m. EDT, Armstrong became the first human to set foot on the moon. Whether seen through the eyes of an astronaut or those of a child, the unique power of that moment lingers today.

Reading William Safire's essay, has for ten years, lead me down a path of thinking about the world from a different perspective - especially history. Ted Kennedy made a drunken right turn instead of left and I ended up in prison.

Ted Kennedy committed a terrible act of indiscretion that night, and subsequently bungled the handling of the accounts thereafter in 1969. The consequences of events at Chappaquiddick prevented Ted Kennedy from being President. The re-election of Richard Nixon, and his eventual disgrace, lead to the demise of the Republican Party. That set-up a scenario where the Democratic party got Jimmy Carter, who showed himself to being a weak President, elected. This, in-tern, lead to a Republican revival, and the election of Ronald Reagan. It is because of Reagan's Right-wing political agenda of the mid-1980's that I am in prison today. ("Six degrees of Ten Kennedy.") Is it a bit of an exaggeration? Probably. Is it incorrect? No, not at all.

There is another accompanying essay to this composition. An essay by Ralph Petroff. This from a USA Today forum with a writing assignment. "What 20th Century invention or innovation do you consider to be most important to society, your industry or you personally?" [Faithful readers of "Fidjle" will be treated to additional samplings of essays in future issues. - Ed.]

There is a great deal of talk currently trying to "list" history. In ALBATROSS I wrote briefly about people who were influential over the past 100 years. What event will show itself to be the mile-stones of this century? I believe history will show the Moon Shot to being a unifying event for Human kind. Walking on the Moon will take historical precedence over the World Wars; the discovery of atomic theory, and controlling the atom; the invention of a myriad of electronic devises; before the inventions of the transistor, and the creation of computers. I agree with Walter Cronkite - history can only be viewed with perspective. I believe the Moon Shot will become a fulcrum in history, and show itself to being a stepping-stone towards human ingenuity, and advancement.

When Pathfinder and Sojourner landed on Mars I watched the news reports with awe, excitement, and wonder. I grew up playing with remote-controlled cars, yet this was not a toy. Premiering before the world was a little car riding around on the surface of Mars, taking pictures, bumping into things, thinking. It was MARS!! Really, truly, finally, "Man" on Mars! Sojourner left tire tracks in the dirt! This was not "Capricorn One", it was for real!

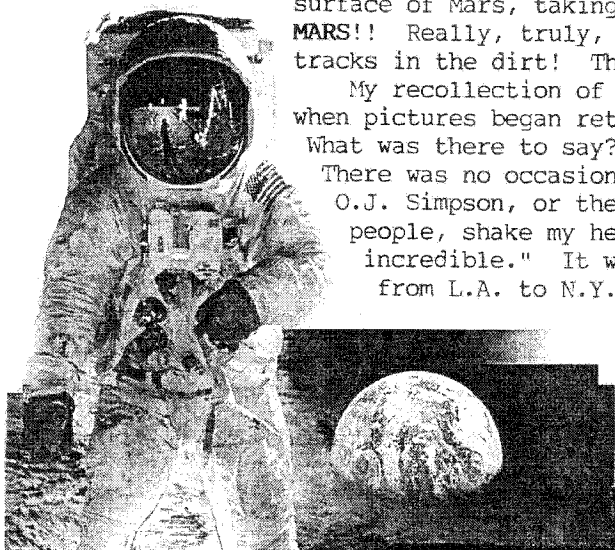
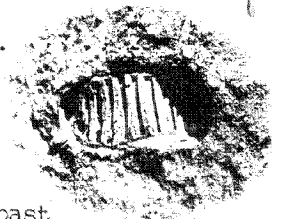
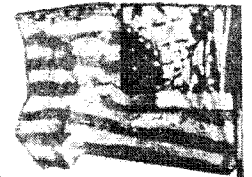
My recollection of that first week after the successful landing - and when pictures began returning - are that most people were speechless. What was there to say? We all seemed to feel the same unspoken awe.

There was no occasion to have an "opinion." Forget office-talk about O.J. Simpson, or the final episode of "Seinfeld." I would look at people, shake my head a little, and they would say, "Yeah. I know. It's incredible." It was, and it is. As incredible as tossing a basketball from L.A. to N.Y. and "swooshing" a hoop.

-- August 1998 / November 1999

"THAT'S ONE SMALL STEP FOR MAN,  
ONE GIANT LEAP FOR MANKIND."

30 years later



A MAN TOOK A WALK AND MADE THE  
WORLD'S HEART SKIP A BEAT.