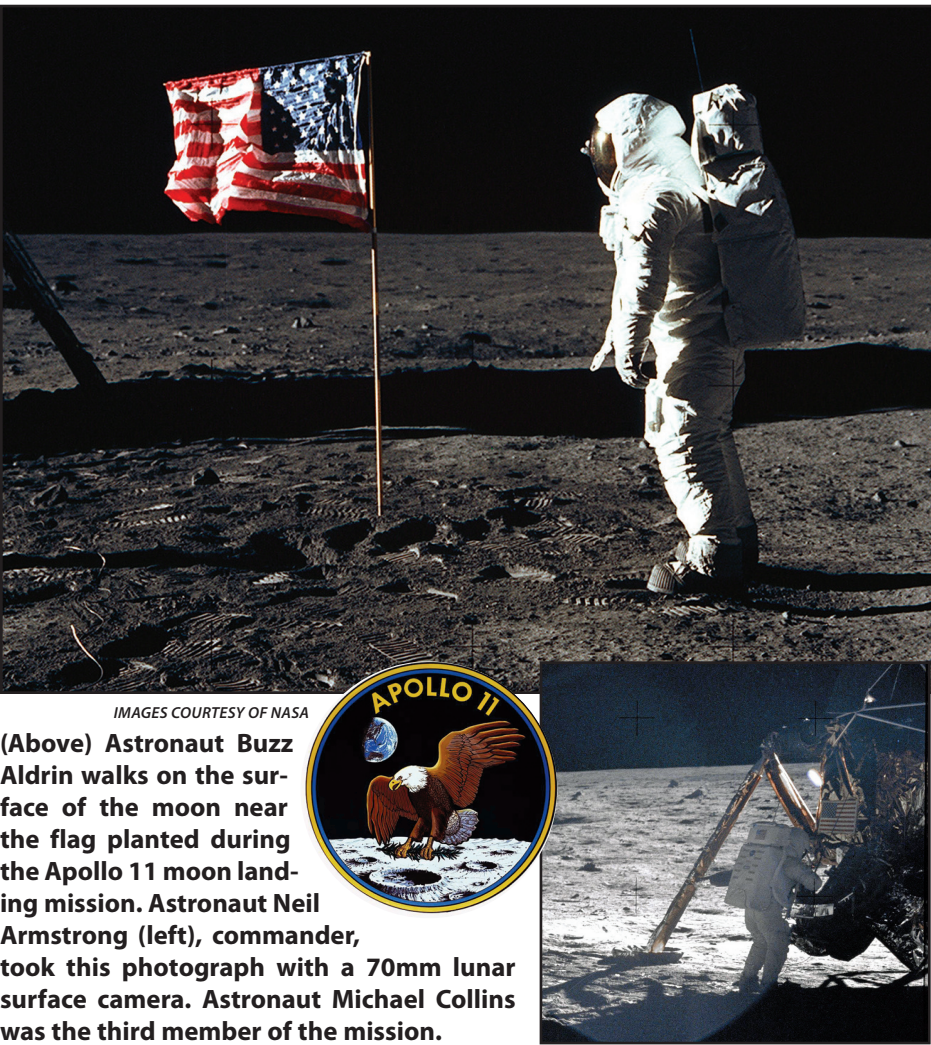




IMAGES COURTESY OF NASA
(Above) Astronaut Buzz Aldrin walks on the surface of the moon near the flag planted during the Apollo 11 moon landing mission. Astronaut Neil Armstrong (left), commander, took this photograph with a 70mm lunar surface camera. Astronaut Michael Collins was the third member of the mission.

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dedicate their lives to the goal of making the dream of walking on the moon a reality.

“The biggest benefit of Apollo was the inspiration it gave to a growing generation to get into science and aerospace,” said Buzz Aldrin, pilot of the lunar module on the Apollo 11 mission.

On July 20, Commander Neil Armstrong was the first human being to walk on the moon, followed by Aldrin. Command module pilot Michael Collins, the third member of the crew, flew the command module Columbia in lunar orbit while his crewmates made history on the moon’s surface.

Armstrong has become an iconic figure since that day. His observation, “That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind,” has come to represent the vision and desire of humanity to explore the solar system and develop a better understanding of the universe we inhabit.

Armstrong and Aldrin spent 21.5 hours on the lunar surface at a site they named Tranquility Base. They also laid a plaque on the lunar surface which read: “Here men from the planet Earth first set foot upon the Moon July 1969, A.D. We came in peace for all mankind.”

The plaque had signatures from the three-member Apollo 11 crew and that of U.S. President Richard Nixon.

During the time the astronauts were on the moon they spoke with Nixon, who later said the conversation was the most significant call ever made from the White House.

The steps taken by Armstrong and Aldrin were momentous and shared around the world.

Estimates put live viewership of the landing at 600 million worldwide, with 94 percent of televisions in America tuned into the event.

In 1999, historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. wrote, “In 500 years Pearl Harbor will be as remote as the War of the Roses, but the Apollo 11 moon landing may well be remembered as the most significant event of the 20th century. And that includes two world wars, the development of Einstein’s theory of relativity, quantum physics and nuclear weapons.”

The images of the astronauts planting the flag on the lunar surface have become iconic and continue to symbolize the spirit and determination of NASA and the American people, and, in a broader sense, the aspirations of many people on the planet.

The crew patch for the

Apollo 11 Mission was designed by astronauts. According to the NASA website, the inclusion of the elements of the patch were well considered and discussed in detail.

“We wanted to keep our three names off it because we wanted the design to be representative of everyone who had worked toward a lunar landing,” Collins said. “There were thousands who could take a proprietary interest in it, yet who would never see their names woven into the fabric of a patch. Further, we wanted the design to be symbolic rather than explicit.”

The Apollo Program involved an estimated 400,000 engineers, technicians and scientists, and cost \$24 billion. However, the resulting scientific knowledge was used to create many new and innovative products which include LED lights, scratch resistant lenses, heart monitors, solar panels, Hazmat suits and digital image analyzers, to name just a few.

Eventually, 12 individuals from the Apollo Program would land and walk on the lunar surface while conducting six crewed landings between 1969 and 1972.

The hundreds of millions that watched the initial moon landing and the extensive news coverage of the program united viewers across the globe in a way that has not been replicated to this day.

The backdrop on earth for the moon landing was tumultuous to say the least. The war in Vietnam was a subject of protest on college campuses across the country and the battle for civil rights were still major points of contention among the population. The short walk made by these space pioneers came during this period of division and dis-

trust, serving for a time as an endeavor that brought together not only Americans, but also the world.

The moon landing occurred at a time when there was a need for a reaffirmation of basic American values, and the literal otherworldly nature of the accomplishment filled that bill.

This public interest and support were not just a recognition of the amazing accomplishments of NASA, but also a reminder to Americans and the rest of the world what humanity ultimately stands for: teamwork, determination and the quest for knowledge.

The 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing has prompted a reexamination of the event itself and of its cultural and historic importance.

This week, celebrations at the Kennedy Space Center can be viewed live online. In addition, there is a wealth of archived materials available, as well as numerous television retrospectives that provide unprecedented access to the thousands of photographs taken by astronauts during their moon missions.

There is also an impressive collection of video footage now available that provides new and astounding details of the trip to the lunar surface and during space flights to and from the moon. Many of these new documents can be viewed through NASA, PBS and The History Channel.

Locally, the Siuslaw Public Library will be presenting a celebration of the Apollo 11 landing today at 1 p.m. Jeff Phillips from the Eugene Astronomical Society will lecture on the Apollo Program and provide unique insight, as his family was involved in the program.

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