

Community Comment – Jon Sapper – 9/3/2012

“One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind”. One of the most important quotes in history delivered by one of the most courageous individuals who ever lived. Yes, he blew that famous quote by leaving out the word “a”. He was going to say One small step for “a” man, but come on, would you remember what to say if you just landed on the moon? Neil Armstrong died this past week at the age of 82. For those who witnessed this historic feat in 1969, they can tell you where they were and what they were doing when they heard the words from Apollo 11.... “The Eagle has landed”. It still brings chills reflecting on that achievement. And for all the conspiracy theorists, Neil Armstrong did not broadcast his message from the Arizona desert. There was not one saguaro cactus.

Mr. Armstrong shied away from the limelight in the years following Apollo 11. He rarely spoke publicly. But, in 2010 he testified before Congress criticizing President Obama for cancelling the Space Constellation Program. Armstrong said, quote, “Taking this new direction will cost the United States its leadership position in space exploration. America is respected for the contribution it has made in learning to sail on this new ocean. If the leadership we have acquired through our investment is simply allowed to fade away, other nations will surely step in where we have faltered. I do not believe that is in our best interests.” End quote.

Some criticize our investment in space technology. During the early years, space program microprocessors were called novelties and toys. However, that investment has returned a billion fold. Smoke detectors, water filters, portable x-ray machines, pacemakers, the artificial heart,

convection ovens, home insulation, wireless communication, kidney dialysis, Doppler radar and thousands of other products were developed that had their beginning in space technology innovation.

Scientific growth means economic growth. Science education leads to innovation while improving our standard of living. Science education is alive on the North Coast and engages children in the wonders of scientific inquiry.

Let's embrace our next generation of scientific pioneers. I believe they will find the cure to cancer, they will find ways to feed a hungry world, and I believe they will find a way to develop cost-effective energy to move us away from dependence on other countries.

Neil Armstrong's legacy is now left to history. But when you look up on a clear night and see a full moon, think of Neil Armstrong and say "Thank you", a true American hero. He will forever be remembered as a landmark in human history.

This has been Jon Sapper for Community Comment.