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6584 words

**Florida's Space Coast:**

**Where Captain Kirk Meets John Glenn and Dreams Meet Possibilities**

I dwell in Possibility--  
A fairer House than Prose--  
More numerous of Windows--  
Superior--for Doors--

Of Chambers as the Cedars--  
Impregnable of Eye--  
And for an Everlasting Roof  
The Gambrels of the Sky--

Of Visitors--the fairest--  
For Occupation--This--  
The spreading wide my narrow Hands  
To gather Paradise--

- Emily Dickinson

American poet Emily Dickinson describes the vision of possibilities which originally helped found the United States, a nation built by dreamers. Everyday realities like gas prices and political issues may attempt to ground us in the here and now, but they do not keep us from envisioning a future of possibilities as we look up into the night's sky, beyond this world. Some of these dreams seem merely to be fantasies fueled by talented science fiction story tellers like Gene Roddenberry, famous for his creation of *Star Trek*, now a popular science fiction franchise, and Philip K. Dick, whose stories became embedded in blockbuster American movies such as the now classic *Blade Runner*

and later produced movies *Screamers*, *Total Recall*, and *Minority Report* ("Films"). However, science fiction has become reality to many Florida residents in a state some still consider a paradise, and those who live and work on the Space Coast of Florida, the home of Kennedy Space Center (KSC), have first-hand knowledge of this. The rest of the nation, though not physically located as closely, has also shared this experience, especially when it comes to the relationship of pop culture and space exploration. Hollywood, California - not Hollywood, Florida - has been responsible for shaping much of what we think about when it comes to exploring the heavens, and now the two are fused, as science fiction often crosses over into scientific facts.

One of the most significant scientific resources today in Florida is KSC, home to the National Aeronautical and Space Administration (NASA) and numerous aerospace contractors. Unequivocally, KSC has been responsible for some of the nation's most astounding scientific accomplishments while its development also resulted in creating Florida's historically recognized Space Coast, once a vast area of undeveloped swamp land that now coexists with rocket boosters, launch pads, and aeronautical engineers. Florida's cultural identity is tied to the Space Center, and in this chapter I examine the notion that Florida's Kennedy Space Center has been responsible for more than just great scientific discoveries. It has helped build a nation of dreamers.

I frame this essay in history, purposefully selecting major historical milestones rather than attempting to include the entire history of KSC, a topic already covered very well and in some detail by many other authors. Historic events related to KSC are naturally responsible for shaping much of the nation's related popular culture as well as

space culture; however, I also thread my analysis with eye-witness narratives from local citizens in addition to more famous participants who have lived these dreams and, in some cases, nightmares which have encompassed the Space Center. Without their stories, the text simply becomes a group of facts with no discernable connection to the dreams and possibilities that I believe have helped to develop an iconic relationship that most of us recognized, whether or not we are Florida natives, when we think of Florida's Kennedy Space Center. As I become an explorer of space in an around the Space Coast, I focus on the following questions: How did KSC initially develop from a possibility into a reality and affect the cultural environment of local residents? What was the vision of the original newly transplanted Space Center residents? How did KSC impact the national consciousness and become integrated into our nation's psyche as well as affect our popular culture? Does this iconic relationship and connection to popular culture still continue in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and if so, how does it inform the nation's dreams of future possibilities?

### **The Right Stuff at Cape Canaveral**

The Space Coast of Florida refers to Brevard County, one of the largest counties in Florida. Like much of the state, the original inhabitants included Native Americans and later Spanish explorers. Its large coastal area and access to rivers such as the Indian River and Banana River provided plenty of natural resources for living off the land, and even today, a surprising amount of wildlife still manages to negotiate between housing subdivisions and golf courses. By the mid-1800s, pioneers prompted by land grants started to settle in the area as well, especially "following the Civil War, when defeated

Southern soldiers and northern veterans as well moved their families to the unoccupied frontier to seek new lives and opportunity” (“Brevard County History”).

Originally part of an even larger area, by 1905 Brevard broke off and established its current boundaries located now between Indian River County to the South and Volusia County to the North. The famous Flagler railroad continued to supply more residents to the area who made their living off of citrus farming, commercial fishing, and tourism until World War II. Currently, Brevard has a population of over 500,000 with 16 cities and towns, and includes a huge stretch (72-miles) of Atlantic Ocean beach access (“Brevard County History”).

Like much of present-day Florida, Brevard County is still a tourist destination. Within close driving distance to Disney World, Epcot, and other theme park attractions, it is also home to one of the most famous beaches in the country, Cocoa Beach; however, its economic and cultural foundation changed considerably after World War II when the United States Government took proactive measures to become a leader in what was then considered true rocket science. In an unprecedented and controversial step, the government established the Army Ballistic Missile Agency in Huntsville, Alabama using a team of German scientists, “men who a year before had been using their genius to try to stop the Allied efforts for victory in Europe” (Faherty 4). Headed by Dr. Wernher von Braun, the group was assembled in order to start developing, building, and testing missiles for the United States Army. Eventually, this team moved to what was originally a testing ground called Cape Canaveral, a more remote area of Brevard surrounded by water and ideal for running and monitoring missile testing. By the 1950s, both the US

Army and Air Force were conducting numerous tests at Cape Canaveral. These initial steps into a scientific space frontier were the beginnings of what evolved into a national aerospace industry that would plant much of its resources in Cape Canaveral, and thus the county was aptly nicknamed the Space Coast of Florida. This time marked the early stages of a monumental manned space program, some of which was later romanticized in Tom Wolfe's *The Right Stuff*. First published in 1979, the book's popularity with the public who was hungry for heroes propelled it to the big screen in 1983. It may have been about thirty years after the fact, but eventually, Hollywood did catch up and realize this true story was worth telling. In an un-Hollywood-like approach, the tale is told with surprising accuracy beginning with the test pilots who were attempting to break the sound barrier, then the selection of the first pilots to be trained as astronauts, followed by the Communists' slap in the face with the launch of Sputnik, and finally the success of three space missions manned by Alan Shepard (played by Scott Glenn), Gus Grissom (Fred Ward), and John Glenn (Ed Harris). Cape Canaveral plays a significant part in this narrative account as the story wraps up with astronaut Gordo Cooper (played by Dennis Quaid) flying Mercury-Atlas 9 from Cape Canaveral's Launch Complex 14 (*The Internet Movie Database*).

### **KSC Emerges from the Muck**

Before anything else – before man walked on the moon and before the Shuttle flew teams of astronauts into space – the Space Center complex had to be imagined and built. Of course, “built” may not be the correct word to use considering the initial development of the center where those involved “made do” with what they had available

at the time. Maybe "assembled" might be more appropriate considering the then-titled Cape Canaveral Missile Test Annex included a slab of cement (which was poured directly over sand), plywood scaffoldings, and trailers. This was the site of the first successful launch from the Cape in July of 1950 called Bumper 8, a two-stage missile, and this was where many other launches soon followed (Faherty 7- 8).

One of the witnesses to Bumper 8 was Elizabeth Bain, who was responsible for monitoring radar equipment during testing and has the distinction of being the first female to work on a launch pad. In September 2000, Bain and other retired KSC workers participated in an on-going oral history project. She was interviewed about her experiences working at the Cape and moving to Cocoa Beach, which at the time had little in the way of housing or other amenities. A single mother of two, she was offered a position as a chief clerk and moved from New Jersey to Florida. She eventually gravitated to working for the Air Force because of the lack of male personnel available due to the Korean War. In her interview, she explains how she came to work at the Cape:

Well, they were so short of men to take care of radars and things, that they asked me if I knew anything about radar because I had worked, you know, with people that had been into this thing, I was exposed to what they were talking about and knew what a radar set was and everything. So they said, "Ok, you're going to go to the Cape." There were two other ladies that went up with me, but they were able to work in an air conditioned van that was not on the pad. Where with me, I worked with Dick Jones' group, and it was in a rinky dinky little truck type thing, that had all the equipment

and things in it printed interference control. So, the GIs that were there, about five or six, kind of felt sorry for me, so they said instead of you sitting in this truck why don't you let us work it out so that you can sit outside the truck and do the radar out there. That was the way we ended up (11).

All of these people working together, Elizabeth Bain, the GIs, and other members of the small team who began at the beginning - imagining, making do, working around whatever obstacles presented themselves - had some understanding of the significance of the work they were doing. However, as Bain explains, their picture of the future was not completely clear: "Although we were aware that they would take certain steps to go further and further we had no idea what it would eventually come to. All of us were very proud of the fact that we were actually able to do something" (19).

KSC, at this point, was still evolving and remained an unclear vision in the minds of those closely involved in the process, and this process went into overdrive soon after the Russians launched Sputnik and the space race began. It took the president of the United States, John F. Kennedy, to focus the lens and clearly outline what was expected of the nation's space industry:

I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to the Earth. No single space project in this period will be more impressive to mankind, or more important for the long-range exploration of space; and none will be so difficult or expensive to accomplish ... (qtd. in Pyle 13).

This challenge literally launched the Mercury, Gemini, and finally Apollo program; we did make it to the moon. President Kennedy, however, would not live to see this happen many years later with the landing of Apollo 11 on July 20, 1969 (Pyle 43), and after the president was assassinated, his name was used to unite the Cape Canaveral Testing Annex and the Launch Operation's Center (operated by NASA) to officially create the John F. Kennedy Space Center (Day), today most often referred to simply by the acronym KSC.

### **From Tropicana OJ to We Have Lift-Off**

From 1950 to 1969, a considerable alteration occurred for Brevard County affecting both residents and the surrounding environment. The launch pad where Elizabeth Bain worked was not the only spot back then that lacked an infrastructure. When she naively agreed to temporarily live in the house owned by the man who interviewed her, Bain had no way of knowing what a tremendous favor he was doing for her and her children because at the time there was no rental property available. If not for his house (which he was not living in himself since he was traveling), they would have had no place else to stay on Cocoa Beach. The condos, surf shops, and mini-marts that now crowd the island were nonexistent; the little "row houses" were the only available form of housing, and most of it was occupied by native residents (Bain 10). Norris Grey, who participated in the September 2000 oral history project as well, was a serviceman stationed to work on the base at the time. He lived out on the launch area, literally sleeping on the pad and eating C-rations for two weeks as he and other servicemen prepared for the Bumper launches. Without enough barracks for the men to sleep in, they



setup World War II mosquito bars right on top of the launch pad, and that's where many of the security and infantry men slept (Gray 16).

William Barnaby Faherty discusses the changes that occurred in the area in his book *Florida's Space Coast: The Impact of NASA on the Sunshine State*:

During the years 1950 to 1960, when the Cape changed from an area of citrus groves, sand bars, and swamps to a major launch site, Brevard became the fastest growing county in the country ... Brevard [saw a population] increase of 371 percent [, and] the median income had risen to \$6,123, the highest in the state (15).

Not all of this income came from residents employed directly by the Air Force or NASA; independent contractors became very much involved in the transition from citrus farming to space exploration as they took on countless support roles needed at the time. Today, many of these contractors, such as Lockheed, Grumman, Boeing, and Harris, play an even bigger role in the operation of the Cape, especially the Shuttle, the area's most recent manned space vehicle project. Not all contractors provided technically related services either. With such a large facility to operate, other services at some point were also needed such as food vendors, security, and transportation. All of these smaller industries spun off the initial aerospace industry and infused the area with jobs, which in turn, enticed more people to move to the Space Coast.

One area of the Space Coast that realized enormous change was Port Canaveral. At one time, it was a small port used mainly by shrimp boats and later by Tropicana to

ship orange juice up north. Today it has some of the largest cruise ships in the world docking and loading up with tourists who will be traveling on ships owned by Disney, Carnival, and Royal Caribbean. Minnie Mouse, appropriately sporting a sailor suit dress and heels, greets travelers as they arrive and climb aboard. The access to rivers like the Mississippi made the small port another perfect match for the needs of the space program which would use it to transport large pieces of equipment. Years of dredging helped expand the port's access to larger ships, opening it up to more opportunities and eventually converting it "into one of the busiest cruise and commercial ports in the Western Hemisphere" (Faherty 161-2).

The general population was, for the most part, open to these changes, understandably interested in earning wages that far exceed those of citrus pickers and packers. But, like many rural areas, there were some community members who were reluctant to welcome the "missile people" with open arms (Faherty 15). Not everyone may have been happy to see these changes happen, but there was really no way to stop it as Cape Canaveral, Cocoa Beach, and the surrounding areas exploded with growth.

### **Locals Get Lost in Space**

The dream to live and work in Florida became true for those who took a chance on a new life and moved to the area. This unique cultural environment attracted northern transplants to the Sunshine State who were lured by the promise of well-paying jobs and a semi-tropical way of life: "men of science and industry, academics and engineers, politicians and dreamers, in short, people from all walks of life, united in an unlikely alliance to reach to the Moon. It was a time like no other" (Pyle 13).

Even with the catastrophic Apollo 1 accident that killed astronauts Gus Grissom, Ed White, and Roger Chaffee during a simple space craft check out in 1967 (Pyle 18), the influx of new-comers continued to flood into the area. Most were there because of the Apollo program; these included engineers like Charles Lynch, who had spent time stationed at Eglin Air Force Base in 1955, and after finishing his enlistment went on to earn his engineering degree from Northrop Aeronautical Institute in California with the intention of becoming part of the space program. A few years working for various aerospace contractors, first in Texas and then in Alabama, taught him the value of a government position that might pay a little less but provide more security for his family. He managed to land a coveted position as a NASA engineer, and in August 1967 moved from Huntsville, Alabama to the bedroom community of Rockledge, Florida, along with his wife and three young daughters, ages 4 months, 4 years, and 8 years old. Looking back now, even though he had lived in Florida before, he admits they “didn’t know what to expect” and discovered “Huntsville was already civilized [compared to the] poor housing in the area. A few people were still living in campers and trailers .... The Humphrey Bridge was still made of wood ... It was the end of old Florida.”

The Lynch family was typical of the countless numbers who came due to the Apollo missions, which had become the primary focus of KSC and NASA, starting with Apollo 7, which launched October of 1968 (Pyle 18). The race to the moon had officially started, and more Apollo missions would follow as these once-new residents transformed into Space Coast locals. Each launch brought with it a kind of energy that spread throughout the community. I was one of those locals, and though very young, I still remember the huge numbers of citizens who lined up from across the pad and along the

waterway to watch each launch. We'd load up in VW vans and pick-up trucks ready for a day of festivities, bringing picnic lunches and lawn chairs as we prepared to wait it out. It was a massive party complete with moms who would bring cakes decorated like missiles, offering free slices to anyone who happened by. Once we witnessed the launch, we all fell silent and thoughtful, proud and amazed at what we had shared, and we still thought of this moment days later after the lawn chairs were put away and our sunburns had subsided. Lynch described it as "a strange feeling" similar to a carnival atmosphere: "You had all this excitement, and then everyone would be quiet, for two or three weeks, before it all started over again [for the next launch]."

This Moon craze was not just a hot topic in Brevard County or the State of Florida. The early to late sixties was packed full of movies that related to space adventure. The Moon, especially, was the focus of numerous B-rated movies: *Moon Pilot* (1962); *First Men on the Moon* (1964); *Hercules Against the Moon Men* (1964); and *Rocket to the Moon* (1967) ("Movie Listings by Genre"). All of these had some sort of scenario placing men on the moon, much like the real-life goal of NASA. On the smaller screen, space travel was given a more domestic flair with the television show, *Lost in Space*, where a family of astronauts is thrown off course and continues to travel to alien worlds as they try to find their way home. This show ran from 1965 to 1968 and was basically the equivalent of *The Brady Bunch* in space (Phillips). All of this media attention continued to idealize the notion of man in outer space.

Of course, with every boom there comes a bust, and while Apollo 11 brought us to the Moon, the brass ring of the carnival ride that everyone was after, what followed

was an unexpected change in the political atmosphere and ultimately the last mission to the moon with Apollo 17 in December of 1972. Plans had already been in the works for Apollo 18, 19, and 20, and all the launch hardware was in place to follow through with these missions, but the U.S. Congress of the early 70s did not have the vision of its predecessors (Guillemette). The race by this time had long been over and the political climate no longer looked favorably on space exploration, so the Apollo program ended, and “Brevardians moved from space to earth, namely to keep their jobs as layoffs soared toward the ten thousand mark” (Faherty 112). Though Faherty goes on to point out that the layoffs did little to affect the growing population of Brevard County, this is primarily because of a change in demographics more so than the fact that most workers found local jobs after losing their positions at the Cape.

In 1972, I was nine years old and many of my friends' parents had lost their jobs. I may not have had a full understanding of the crisis going on, but as I road my bike around my neighborhood, the row upon row of “for sale” signs was unnerving. One friend of mine confided in me that they may have to move back to New York because her dad's company was going back there. To keep his family in Florida, he sacrificed his career as an aerospace technician to become the manager of a local drug store, a far cry from the launch pad but enough of a living to allow him to still support his family. But many families were not that lucky, and little by little, KSC employees moved away and were replaced by retirees. Charles Lynch explains how this happened:

Many houses were empty. People just walked away from their homes.

That's when the retirees came down here. It was like grocery shopping.

They could pick almost any house they wanted and just take over the payments. We really didn't have that many retirees around here until then.

Of course cyclical, the bust eventually turned around, though the glory days of the early Apollo years would never be matched. Apollo was not the end of KSC or NASA or the Space Coast. Skylab followed and "became the bridge to sustaining manned space flight while the nation opened up new avenues to Space exploration" (Faherty 118). One of these avenues eventually led to the Space Shuttle Program that, like Apollo, had its share of successes and disasters. The Space Coast population now consisted of more than just "missile people," and the nation continued to look at this area of Florida to inspire.

### **Genies and Guinea Pigs**

Cocoa Beach, in particular, found favor with a national audience. For local residents, if someone asked you where you were from and you mentioned any city on the Space Coast other than Cocoa Beach, most "Yankees" would not comprehend. Even if you didn't live in Cocoa Beach, it became easier to say so just to give your correspondent at least a vague understanding of your location. To most non-natives, Cocoa Beach *was* the Space Coast because, more than any other area in Brevard County, it saw a concentrated dose of development during the early Apollo days. This included hotels, office buildings, nightclubs, and restaurants, and the "nation came to identify the space program with Cocoa Beach rather than with other communities in the vicinity" (Faherty 16). This fascination with Cocoa Beach, NASA, and Florida's part in space exploration spilled over into pop culture with the television show, *I Dream of Jeannie*, the creation of Sidney Sheldon. Airing for the first time in 1964 and running for five consecutive

seasons, its main characters include a 2,000 year old genie and an astronaut (Lundquist). Both share the roles of protagonist and antagonist, creating comedic scenarios that intertwine slap stick with space missions. U.S. audiences now had a little of the Space Coast in their living rooms, via a television show, once a week. This show still airs through reruns and DVD collections. The city even renamed a street after the show: "My Dream of Jeannie Lane" (Duggins x). Much like the Space Center, the television show has become its own icon of the era.

Space was becoming a romanticized frontier both in real life as well as the fantasy world created by Hollywood. Following *I Dream of Jeannie* and *Star Trek* on the small screen, came space adventures for the big screen with such motion picture epics as *2001: Space Odyssey* (1968) directed and co-authored by Stanley Kubrick; the *Star Wars* series (which began in 1977) from writer and director George Lucas; and of course, *Star Trek* also crossed over to the cinema in 1979 with its first of a series of movies starting with *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (The Internet Movie Database). Movies about cowboys and cops were being replaced by stories that took place in other worlds, in a future that movie-goers could only imagine. Astronauts were the new Lone Rangers who could virtually take audiences on new adventures to new worlds.

Major Nelson and Captain Kirk were fictional characters, but the real astronauts, like Alan Shepard and John Glenn, were just as popular, becoming celebrities of the Space Center, and their presence at Cape Canaveral during the 60s "electrified the place ... transform[ing] lazy little Cocoa Beach into a high-tech boom town and a rocking, rollicking hot spot. The young engineers and their families built homes, schools,

churches” (Thompson 204). The Space Coast was no longer a sleepy county of citrus farmers and fishermen and had evolved into a national leader in technology, a home to heroic astronauts as well as unimaginable scientific discoveries. In his biography of Alan Shepard, *Light This Candle: The Life and Times of Alan Shepard America's First Spaceman*, Neal Thompson talks about the instant status of hero the original 110 test pilots received just for being nominated by NASA as well as Shepard's thoughts on the strict selection process that followed:

The selection Committee was looking for men “who were not only in top physical condition but had demonstrated that they had the capability to stay alive under tough and dangerous assignments.” Skeptics ... would snicker that what NASA really wanted were guinea pigs. But Shepard didn't see it that way. He saw aviation at “a crossroads, and space was the new turning point...something new and important.” (161)

Each Apollo launch brought Americans together emotionally and spiritually as they listened on radios or watched their televisions to hear if the astronauts were successful, and if not, as in the Apollo 13 mission, would they make it safely home to Earth. This powerful real-life story was moving enough to again prompt the creation of the movie version in 1995: *Apollo 13*, directed by Ron Howard and starring Tom Hanks, Kevin Bacon, and Bill Paxton. Characters in the movie illustrated a fictionalized version of the story that was in many ways accurate, particularly when it came to showing how the entire country was watching and waiting together for the safe return of their heroes, in reality astronauts Jim Lovell, Jack Swigert, and Fred Haise. These were nationally shared



experiences, not just the property of locals or NASA employees, and even for those critics of the space program, one issue that most Americans can agree on is that America had surpassed the Soviets in the space race. We had won.

The Space Shuttle program was another big connection to mainstream America for many reasons. It no longer limited astronauts to male pilots from one of the branches of the U.S. armed services. Dr. Sally Ride was the first woman in space as part of the 1983 *Columbia* mission. Astronauts from other countries, such as Holland, West Germany, and Canada, also participated, as well as the ill-fated school teacher and civilian Christa McAuliffe who died during that *Challenger* accident in 1986. Another reason the shuttle had caught the attention of average Americans was because of the large number of flights and the airplane-like structure of the spacecraft which “added a new thrill” to this program (Faherty 132 - 134). Even the program's first spacecraft was named after a fictional space ship everyone knew very well: *Enterprise* from the popular syndicated television show *Star Trek*. In the beginning, it seemed possible that space flight would one day become just as common as flying in an airplane.

The horrible accidents of *Challenger* and later of *Columbia* in 2003 were sobering reminders for the nation that space flight was anything but common, at least not yet, and that space exploration was still dangerous. In 1986, it seemed unbelievable that the first accident even happened, surrealistic. Much like the Kennedy assassination, most of us who were old enough to remember the incident also remember where we were and what we were doing when it happened. It's a day we will never forget. My own experience was particularly eerie. I was listening to the radio, wearing my circa 1980s walkman, while

conducting research at the University of Central Florida's library when I heard a brief news flash from the radio station. I stopped with a stack of books held in my arms and looked around at all the other students and staff who were quietly going about their business, obviously unaware of what just happened. I realized no one in there could tell me if what I had just heard was correct (as this was well before Internet access in school libraries existed), so I rushed outside and looked up into the sky. The tail smoke was normally visible even as far as Orlando, but that day I couldn't find it. I saw a friend of mine walking by the library entrance and immediately told him what I had heard. Of course, he told me I had to be wrong. That just wasn't possible. The events in each of our stories may differ, but the experience was still the same: shock, disbelief, and grief. Unlike the rest of us, McAuliffe, the first lay-person to attempt space travel seemed to realize the risk she was taking, and as her famous quote indicates, she also was aware of the importance of this attempt: "I touch the future. I teach" (iCelebZ.com).

### **Looking in the Rearview Mirror**

With so many other issues crowding America's psyche in the early twenty-first century, it may seem difficult to believe there is still room for us to dream about space. Confessions of Space Shuttle astronauts such as Mike Mullane, who talks in his autobiography about his experience in 1987 of being one of the 29 men and 6 women to be selected for the program, may even seem naive today: "I dreamed of feeling the crush of a rocket's G-forces on my body and of seeing the great globe of Earth behind my ship. I dreamed of the day I would fly a rocket as part of the 'Conquest of Space'" (22). This kind of overwhelming excitement speaks back to the years of the Shuttle program, which

may not have been as electrifying as Apollo, but is still not currently matched today. It is uncertain whether or not the U.S. will find a successful program that will bring back the glory days of space exploration and thus generate the same kind of excitement, especially in the public.

Politically, the atmosphere is still not as encouraging as that of the Kennedy era, and with a real war going on, though removed from our soil, it is hard for the ordinary citizen to focus on the possibilities of space compared to the Apollo and Space Shuttle years. The majority of space missions now are unmanned robots or satellite launches. In fact, the Space Shuttle will be in moth balls soon, and dreamers like Mike Mullane are most often seen via autobiographies resting on quiet library shelves rather than in the spotlight during a launch. So what is next for KSC and NASA? How can they continue to inform the nation's dreams of future possibilities, and is popular culture even paying attention any more?

Apollo fever is certainly only a memory now, but according to Pat Duggins, a longtime journalist for Public Radio whose voice is associated instantly with the topic of space exploration, the narrative is not necessarily over with the retirement of the Shuttle: "It's a story of lost dreams, facing change, and new dreams to come" (xi). These new dreams he talks about are, in fact, grounded in the old technology that made Apollo so successful. Theorist Marshall McLuhan's notion of the past affecting the future describes the philosophy that NASA seems to have adopted with some of the programs it has planned for the future: "We look at the present through a rear-view mirror. We march backwards into the future" (75). In many ways, NASA and the team at KSC are looking

into their rearview mirrors and modeling aspects of the Apollo program that seemed to work so well back then.

The Moon is back in view for the Space Coast, and Mars has been added as well. Both are planned destinations for the latest space program called Constellation, which will use KSC to maintain ground operations including launch, recovery, and landing. The Ares and Orion spacecrafts will be launched from well-known Launch Pad 39-B, previously used for both Apollo and the Space Shuttle. Their missions also sound very familiar: “Ares I is an in-line, two-stage rocket that will transport the Orion crew exploration vehicle to low Earth orbit. Orion, which will eventually carry humans back to the lunar surface, will accommodate as many as six astronauts” (*Kennedy Space Center*). Another similarity is the physical design of Orion, which looks very much like the old Apollo rockets. The cone shape is restored, replacing the airplane-like design used during the Shuttle years. NASA, at least, is trying to build momentum again by using its website at [www.nasa.gov](http://www.nasa.gov) as it presents a modern marketing concept through content and videos aimed at contemporary web-savvy audiences with the mantra, “At NASA, exploration powers inspiration, innovation, and discovery.” Considering the fact that the International Space Station has had a human presence since 2000 and the Constellation program has goals which mirror those much like Apollo – traveling to the space station in 2014; returning to the moon by 2020; and building an outpost on the moon – this seems encouraging for the United States to be inspired again by the “Conquest of Space” (Mullane 22).

It has taken over 35 years for another Moon mission, and according to Rod Pyle, those who worked closely within the original Apollo program believe that they all “had a dream that the powers in Washington and the nation at large may no longer share” (180). However, Pyle makes a good argument as to why the nation should continue to dream about space exploration and act on that dream: we had a successful Moon program before, so we should continue; it will push and expand our technological capabilities; Mars is the next closest planet which “feeds the human soul,” and finally, if the U.S does not continue, we will lose our competitive edge to another country or countries who continue progressing their space technology (180). So, basically, if we stand still and do not attempt to move forward, even if it is just a few steps, it is the same as taking many steps backwards.

As a product of the Space Coast's rocket fever, growing up in Brevard County and later working at KSC writing operation and maintenance manuals as my first “real job” out of college, I choose to be optimistic. The general public may currently be unconcerned about the future of space exploration; however, future space programs look promising. As Constellation has the opportunity to prove itself and make groundbreaking history like its model, Apollo, the gaze may one day return to KSC and to the people on the Space Coast who continue to support the space program. Even so, there will always be dreamers like Alan Shepard, Elizabeth Bain, Christa McAuliffe, Mike Mullane, and Charles Lynch who are able to “dwell in Possibility” (Dickinson).

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**Suggested Index Words:**

Alan Shepard  
Apollo  
Brevard  
Bumper 8  
Cape Canaveral  
Challenger  
Christa McAuliffe  
Cocoa Beach  
Columbia  
Emily Dickinson  
Enterprise  
I Dream of Jeannie  
John Glenn  
KSC  
Lost in Space  
Mike Mullane  
NASA  
Philip K. Dick  
Right Stuff  
Skylab  
Space Coast  
Space Shuttle  
Sputnik  
Star Trek