

Welcome to TimesPeople Get Started  TimesPeople Lets You Share and Discover the Best of N' [Recommend](#)

HOME PAGE TODAY'S PAPER VIDEO MOST POPULAR TIMES TOPICS [Get Home Delivery](#) [Log In](#) [Register Now](#)

The New York Times

Opinion

Search All NYTimes.com

- WORLD U.S. N.Y. / REGION BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY SCIENCE HEALTH SPORTS OPINION ARTS STYLE TRAVEL JOBS REAL ESTATE AUTOS

EDITORIALS COLUMNISTS CONTRIBUTORS LETTERS THE PUBLIC EDITOR GLOBAL OPINION



The New York Times **Self-Service Advertising**

EDITORIAL

The Moon Landing

Published: July 17, 2009

Historians in the distant future are likely to classify humanity's first steps on a world beyond our own as one of the most memorable achievements of the 20th century.

Related

Times Topics: [Apollo Program](#)

America's race to the Moon began with the fear that the Soviets had already bested us in space. By the time Neil Armstrong set foot on the Sea of Tranquility — a broad desolate

lunar basin, on July 20, 1969 — the feat brought a surge of pride and optimism to a nation mired in Vietnam and torn by urban riots and assassinations at home.

Never again would the human space flight program stir such excitement or seem so central to the nation's endeavors. After a few more visits, the Apollo moon program shut down and the manned space program was relegated to shuttle flights in low Earth orbit.

Now the question frustrating space enthusiasts is how to rekindle the old days of glory. The answer is not readily apparent. At a confirmation hearing for President Obama's choices to lead the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Senator John Rockefeller IV described the agency as "a splendid story of the past" that has been adrift and lost its fascination for Americans. The nominees — Charles Bolden to be the NASA administrator and Lori Garver to be deputy — accepted the diagnosis but had trouble explaining how they would reinvigorate the agency beyond pushing harder on safety, research, aeronautics and communicating with the public.

In truth, it may not be possible to bring more drama to human space flight any time soon. Putting a base on the Moon by 2020, as is currently planned, feels like going back to the scene of the earlier triumph even if the stay this time would be longer. Second acts seldom captivate. And a wholly new conquest, say a landing on Mars, is decades away, if it ever proves feasible.

SIGN IN TO RECOMMEND

SIGN IN TO E-MAIL

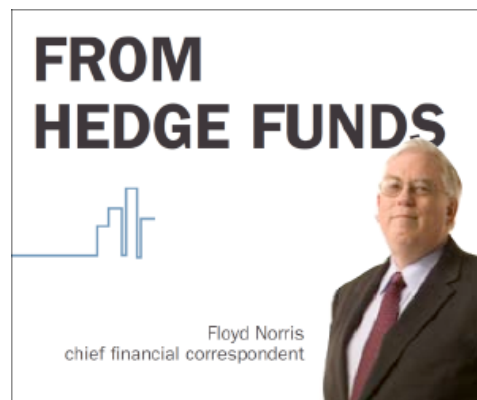
PRINT

SHARE

ARTICLE TOOLS SPONSORED BY



[More Articles in Opinion »](#)



FROM HEDGE FUNDS

Floyd Norris
chief financial correspondent

MOST POPULAR

E-MAILED BLOGGED SEARCHED

1. [The Puppy Diaries: Taking the Plunge With a New Dog](#)
2. [Home Burials Offer an Intimate Alternative](#)
3. [Driven to Distraction: U.S. Withheld Data on Risks of Distracted Driving](#)
4. [Thomas L. Friedman: Teacher, Can We Leave Now? No.](#)
5. [Frank Rich: They Got Some 'Splainin' to Do](#)
6. [Considering Longer Chemotherapy](#)
7. [The Storyteller Begat the Teacher Who Begat the Writer](#)
8. [Frank McCourt, Whose Irish Childhood Illuminated His Prose, Is Dead at 78](#)
9. [Sidebar: 9/11 Case Could Bring Broad Shift on Civil Suits](#)
10. [Barnes & Noble Plans an Extensive E-Bookstore](#)

[Go to Complete List »](#)

Wayne Hale, a NASA veteran, blames the old "Star Trek" television series, of which he was a fan, for setting expectations too high with visits to interesting planets and challenging interactions with alien species. That's more glamour and excitement than real space travel can provide - unless, as Mr. Hale observes, we learn to travel at "warp speed" as the Trekkers did.

A version of this article appeared in print on July 18, 2009, on page A20 of the New York edition.

Past Coverage

- OP-ED CONTRIBUTORS; Puzzles: Space Case (July 19, 2009)
- On Hand for Space History, as Superpowers Spar (July 14, 2009)
- ESSAY; 40 Years on, Reflections in a Sliver of the Moon (July 14, 2009)
- CHILDREN'S BOOKS; From Laika to the Lunar Module (July 12, 2009)

Related Searches

- Apollo Project
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration
- Space
- Editorials

- Get E-Mail Alerts
- Get E-Mail Alerts
- Get E-Mail Alerts
- Get E-Mail Alerts

INSIDE NYTIMES.COM

SPORTS »



Questions on Nascar's Drug Policy

BOOKS »



Financial Ruin and the Race to Contain It

OPINION »

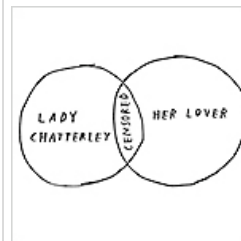
Should the Rich Pay for the Uninsured?
 A Room for Debate forum on why a surtax on the wealthy might be fair.

WORLD »



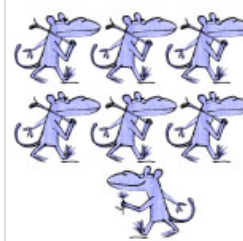
Cambodia Court Cases Mount Against Opposition

OPINION »



Op-Ed: The Day Obscenity Became Art

SCIENCE »



When 'What Animals Do' Doesn't Seem to Cut It

Sign in to Recommend
More Articles in Opinion »

SIGN IN TO E-MAIL

PRINT



40th anniversary of the lunar landing

Also on NYTimes.com
When texting is wrong
Fast food fascination

nytimes.com

ADVERTISEMENTS

