Moon Memories

In the summer of 2019 the Oberlin Heritage Center invited individuals to share their memories of the moon landing, which occurred 50 years earlier. The following includes the invitation and the memories that were submitted giving OHC permission to share.

2019 is the 50th Anniversary of the moon landing! The Apollo 11 mission launched on July 16, 1969 and on July 20 the lunar module "Eagle" carrying Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin landed, leaving Michael Collins in orbit. Near 11:00 p.m. (Eastern Daylight Time), Armstrong touched foot on the surface of the moon.

Please share your memories of this event! You don't have to be from Oberlin to share - all are welcome. We know for some people this was a big event, and for others it was just another day. Everyone's story is important and we want to hear it!

Catharina Meints Caldwell
My husband, Jim Caldwell, and I were both playing a concert with the National Symphony at an outdoor pavilion in Columbia, Maryland. Van Cliburn was playing a concerto with us. He was famous for playing several encores, but the moon landing was scheduled for just after our concert would have finished. Cliburn always wore an American flag on his concert tux so Jim figured he'd be open to a patriotic suggestion. So being a fellow Texan, Jim went back at intermission to ask him to skip the encores on this special night. So Cliburn announced at the concert that we should all go home and watch this historic event (of course he made it sound like it was his idea). Several of us gathered at a friend's house nearby and sat around the TV. There was a long delay--maybe an hour? --so ironically, Van Cliburn could have played all the encores he wanted. But it was a truly memorable event.

Linda Schultz
I was a 20 year old college student back home (Superior, WI) for summer vacation. My entire family sat in the hot living room (including a brother home from Alaska) with our eyes peeled to the TV set. I was apprehensive - kept wondering if something would go wrong or even if an alien-type creature might just peek around a rock.

Richard Schmidt
We crowded together watching in awe of the televised Moon landing at a Vernal, Utah motel. We were on a Western Field Trip sponsored by the Cleveland Natural History Museum which included about ten teenage boys from the Cleveland area plus group leaders Bill Thomas, organizer of the field trip and East Cleveland science teacher; myself, a former twenty-nine year old East Cleveland science teacher, drivers Dave
Thomas and his naval friend Greg. The day was set aside from our busy field trip agenda so that we could witness this event. The inquisitive boys wondered if the Moon's surface would be firm to support the Lander, and why was the Moon's sky so black; also they had a multitude of other questions. Other parts of the Western Field Trip included Dinosaur National Park, Mt. Rushmore, Garden of the Gods, Homestake Gold Mine plus other parks, museums and fossil collecting sites. It was a trip well remembered by all.

Ellen Broadwell
I watched the moon landing at home with my family, who were very strong supporters of the space program from beginning to the end -- we knew history was being made. I remember that although the "Eagle had landed" in the afternoon, we had to wait a very long time to see Neil Armstrong walk on the moon. The next day I noted in my diary that I had an orthodontist appointment and that when I rode to the city on a public bus, everyone was talking about the moon landing.

Anonymous
In the summer of 1969, my wife and I volunteered on an American Friends Service Committee project in Detroit. This was a couple of years after the riots there, and our work involved assisting high school and college-aged people in building bridges between the white and African-American communities. (The white participants worked in the white communities; the African-American participants work in the African-American community.) We had the time to do this because it was between terms of my college teaching and we had no children. I don’t recall that we accomplished much, but we did learn a lot. We were living in a northern suburb in part of a house that was made available to the AFSC. There was a TV in the house, but it didn’t get the greatest reception. But we were able to view the moon landing. At the time I said that it reminded me of Captain Video, a middle-50’s TV program in which in one episode it showed Captain Video landing and walking on the moon. The fuzziness of the signal and the slow moving of the astronauts looked exactly the same as the old TV show.

Neal Dorenkott
Just Another Trip To Cedar Point? It was Sunday, July 20, 1969. Annually, our family would go to Cedar Point for the IBEW Local 38 Family Picnic. As a kid, the trip to Cedar Point was magical! I recall it started as a nice day but as often happens in that area of Lake Erie, rain clouds come and go! Since I was only a boy of seven years old at the time, the visions are not perfectly clear. In those days, as long as you were with a responsible elder kid, our parents allowed us to roam the park as a group; going from ride-to-ride. What I do remember is walking with the daughter of my dad's best friend, Donna. She was about five or six years older and as the rain was falling and as we were
walking, the park announcer proclaimed, "Apollo 11 has just landed on the moon!"
Applause followed the announcement. This, I distinctly remember! From my memory, I thought it was still daylight, so our day was not yet over (as far as Cedar Point rides!). As nighttime fell, we all headed for the cars to begin our ride home. There were no fireworks in those days; at least not on every weekend like these days. Our drive home was a longer ride in those days since the highway (I-90 / Rt. 2) was not yet completed. We listened to the radio driving home to hear any news on the landing progress. Little did we know, the astronauts did not just land and jump out of the lunar module. There was instruments and systems to check out, space suits to put on and check for operation, etc. Little did we know, the time factor was moved up and the astronauts made the first step within seven hours of landing. This falls into my timeline. So by the time we got to our West Park home, we turned the TV on and we started watching the most amazing accomplishment, to date, by mankind. "One small step for man; one giant step for mankind". I have no idea how late we stayed up but the parents put no limitations on us that night. From that point forward, I was hooked on everything "Space" or "Apollo". I joined some NASA book club and received pamphlets monthly on future space exploration. I built model rockets. I was now a huge fan of "Lost in Space" and "The Jetsons". Needless to say, the Apollo 11 landing on the moon changed my life and how I looked into the night sky! Today, I am still interested in eclipses, comets, meteors, etc. Hats off to those Apollo 11 astronauts! How many other Americans were changed on July 20, 1969!

**Julie Hill**
I was 11 years old. I remember seeing it on TV possibly at my grandmother’s because I was there a lot in summer. I knew it was a historical moment, and news coverage was way way different back then of course. I don’t have vivid memories, but I remember it. Also I knew that Neil Armstrong was from Ohio and that seemed significant to me.

**Mary Worthington**
I watched with my family at my maternal grandfather’s home. We ate dinner with him and my cousins every Sunday. I was seven years old, and specifically remember the small step speech by Neil Armstrong. I couldn’t believe someone was walking on the moon! Now I can’t believe that my Grandpa Shannon had 17 people to dinner every Sunday. His housekeeper, Mrs. MacFarlane, must have been a saint!

*Compiled July 2019. If you're interested in adding your memory, contact history@oberlinheritage.org.*

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