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Limitless Space Institute

NUOVA VENEZIA, European Lunar Colonies, April 2, 2060 – It has been forty years since the first major commercial launches, and oh what a glorious time it has been. Like their parents and grandparents before them with the Space Shuttle and the Apollo Program, the young people of the world watched astronauts return to space on the wings of corporate falcons, and they were inspired to take the next great leap.

Enrollment in college-level STEM programs ballooned worldwide as young people yearned for the education needed to make these new dreams a reality. Soon, almost every country had more young scientists, engineers and mathematicians than they knew what to do with... or they would have if national governments had not accelerated their own human spaceflight and exploration programs in response to both continued corporate launches and the wave of pro-human space exploration sentiment among the general population. NASA, ESA, JAXA and more expanded their mission profiles to once more include human exploration of LEO and beyond – and added staff to match this renewed mission.

Meanwhile, the civilian job market was flooded with engineers and scientists who – despite not making the cut for the space agencies – were well trained and highly skilled. Thanks to both this new generation of inventors, and the numerous spin-offs created in the continued pursuit of protecting humans in outer space, several technological advancements and innovations were introduced that raised global standards of living dramatically. Improved ventilator technology developed for the ESA's Luna Program helped improve the recovery rate from the pandemic that was affecting the world at the time – and a vaccine developed thanks to micro-gravity research on the old ISS helped stamp it out a few years later.

Working on a hunch based on a 1990s NASA proposal, the United States was able to set up a solar panel factory and solar farm on the lunar surface by 2035, and the energy that the farm beamed back to the planet was key in ending decades of environmental damage and U.S. foreign energy dependence. Other similar solar factories followed and soon the moon was full of clean energy generating facilities and the various crews needed to run them. In order to avoid clashes on the moon – or upset the tenuous earthbound ecological renewal that these facilities had helped create – the Treaty of Armstrong was signed in 2040 after a meeting of the world’s leaders at America’s Port Armstrong facility near the Sea of Tranquility. While the treaty has not led to full political integration – it has helped create a climate of peace on the planet as all its signatories focus their efforts on exploring the great unknown of space.

Human space exploration has changed the world for the better over the past forty years. Aside from the STEM renaissance and the ever-increasing supply of new spin-offs, the world’s focus on going where few humans have gone before has provided other benefits. Overpopulation is soon to be a thing of the past thanks to the lunar colonies – which are slowly being expanded beyond simple factory support staff – and the new Red Planet Initiative colonies that are being jointly established by several space exploration corporations and various national space agencies. Starvation will soon be a distant memory if Chinese claims about their new microgravity farming domes are to be believed. Our civilizations stand on the precipice of a new age of exploration, prosperity and unity... and to think it all started with a rocket and the dream it inspired in the minds of those who watched it fly.