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Media Advisory: UNH Space Scientists Recall the Thrill of the 1969 Moon Landing

By *Carmelle Druchniak*
UNH News Bureau

In light of this year's 30th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing, several University of New Hampshire space science researchers recall where they were in '69.

For these faculty members with the university's Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans and Space, the July 20 moon landing is especially memorable. Now working in space science and related fields, they remember their thoughts when humans first set foot on the lunar surface. An historic moment for the world, for these people, it was an emotional experience as well.

Feel free to contact any or all of the following faculty members for additional comment. Or call Carmelle Druchniak, UNH News Bureau, 603-862-1462.

Mark McConnell - Research Associate Professor of Physics - tel. 603-862-2047

In July of 1969, I was a 10-year-old with a very keen interest in the space program. I had been following the space program very closely during the Apollo missions (which had started the previous fall with Apollo 7). I remember vividly that sunny Sunday afternoon when Apollo 11 landed on the moon.... Today, I now appreciate more fully the technological accomplishment than I did back then (just think of the advances in computer technology alone!). Those were certainly exciting times for the American space program. Today, as the space program literally fights for its survival, it would be great if we could somehow rekindle that enthusiasm.

Today, McConnell is among the UNH scientists who collect and analyze data beamed from space by the Compton Imaging Telescope, or COMPTEL.

Joseph Hollweg - Professor of Physics -- tel. 603-862-3869

I was living in Germany at the time, just beginning my second post-doctoral year at the Max Planck Institut fur extraterrestrische Physik near Munich.

I had spent that weekend hiking near the Italian border. At the time of the lunar landing, I was driving home, and following the events on the car radio. When I was

on a winding road above Innsbruck, the view was spectacular, and I simply parked alongside the road and listened. It was hard to believe that we actually pulled it off.

Hollweg is director of the university's Solar Terrestrial Theory Group, internationally recognized for its contributions to the understanding of cosmic rays, the sun's atmosphere and solar flares.

James Ryan - Professor of Physics -- tel.603-862-3510

During the summer of 1969, I was between my fourth and fifth years of college in California. I was majoring in both physics and math, which took five years in those days. My interest in astronomy was strong then, but I had made no personal commitment to be an astrophysicist.

The war was going on and it seemed to be at its worst point. That was a pretty big deal for me, being prime draft age. My girlfriend was traveling around Europe while I lived at home with my parents, slaved at my summer job and worried about the draft. I was working that summer as a mechanic and was following the Apollo mission closely at the time. There was much discussion in the media about the value of traveling to the moon, its cost relative to the war on poverty, etc. An interesting technical item was the possibility that the astronauts could bring home with them an alien virus that had been lying dormant on the lunar surface for billions of years.

Few people realized that the mission was first and foremost a technological statement to the Soviets. My recollection is that if the public did know that fact, it was forgotten. That sort of investment in science will never be made again.

Ryan currently supervises the university's Compton Telescope, or COMPTEL project.

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