

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Andrew E. Masich
President & CEO




“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 earth.” – President John F. Kennedy, May 25, 1961.

With that historic quote, the United States entered the Space Race in earnest. Eight years later, on July 20, 1969, President Kennedy’s vision became a reality when astronaut Neil Armstrong stepped off the Apollo Lunar Module and made “one giant leap for mankind” onto the moon’s surface. The moon landing, watched by millions of Americans on their living room television sets, remains

a defining and triumphant moment in our nation’s history.

Without question, President Kennedy’s vision established the tone and direction that led to the space program’s ultimate success. But as Americans (and especially Pittsburghers) know, it takes more than just vision for a dream to be realized. It takes hard work, ingenuity, and industry. It should come as no surprise that Pittsburgh companies and innovators played an important role in the Apollo 11 mission. NASA commissioned Pittsburgh-based North American Rockwell to build the Command Module *Columbia*, fitted out with Alcoa aluminum. ATI, MSA, and many others all rolled up their corporate sleeves and demonstrated Pittsburgh’s “We Can Do It!” attitude. And the famous video footage of Armstrong on the lunar surface? Brought to American television sets using special cameras created by Pittsburgh’s own Westinghouse Electric Company. For these reasons and more, it is fitting that the Smithsonian and the History Center recently announced plans to

partner and launch a stellar blockbuster of an exhibition. Next year, the ‘Smithsonian’s home in Pittsburgh’ will be the only venue east of the Mississippi to host *Destination Moon: The Apollo 11 Mission*.

The *Destination Moon* national tour will only visit four museums—all Smithsonian Affiliates—during the next two years while the National Air and Space Museum completes extensive renovations leading up to the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission in 2019. Along with dozens of artifacts from the Apollo mission, the exhibit’s centerpiece is the Command Module *Columbia*, the crew’s living quarters during the mission and the only part of the Apollo 11 spacecraft to return intact to Earth. *Columbia* is an iconic piece of American history that will attract hundreds of thousands of visitors to the History Center, from our region and beyond. So will Pittsburgh’s story of innovation and “can do” spirit. Let the countdown to liftoff commence ... until September 29, 2018. 

Andy Masich and Smithsonian Secretary David Skorton take a selfie in front of the Apollo 11 Command Module *Columbia*. It is the only portion of the historic spacecraft to complete the first mission to land a man on the moon and safely return to Earth.

