

SECTION

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The Buzz Surrounding Aldrin

■ **Profile:** Ex-astronaut and O.C. resident is busier than ever as moon landing's 25th anniversary nears.

By CHRIS WOODYARD
TIMES STAFF WRITER

LAGUNA BEACH—The televised image of Buzz Aldrin planting and saluting the U.S. flag on the moon 25 years ago is one of the most familiar of the Space Age.

Today the former astronaut, the second man to walk on the lunar surface, is still a familiar face on TV, only now he's in sales.

Among Aldrin's latest commercial ventures is being a pitchman for Snapple soft drinks.

"We chose Buzz because he is one of the first men on the moon and one of the most recognized astronauts in history," said a spokeswoman for the New York

ad agency that created the Snapple spot. (In the commercial, a man who writes to Snapple praising its products tours a space memorabilia exhibit with Aldrin, who then escorts the customer to a kiddie ride that looks like a spaceship.)

The former test pilot and Korean War veteran, who lives in the exclusive Emerald Bay community north of Laguna Beach, also promotes porcelain astronaut figurines, neckties with designs copied from photos of moon rocks and a variety of "Buzz Aldrin licensed products" that range from watches to commemorative coins.

Aldrin's stepdaughter, Los Angeles lawyer Lisa Cannon, said the

ex-astronaut is much in demand on the speaking circuit, where he commands \$20,000 and up for each engagement, though he often speaks for free at charity functions.

As the July 20 silver anniversary of the first moon landing approaches, Aldrin "is probably busier than he has ever been," said Matt Bialer, the former astronaut's booking agent at William Morris Agency in New York.

He is being interviewed later this month on CNN's "Larry King Live" talk show and was recently the voice of a TV cartoon character in an episode of "The Simpsons."

He also has his name on a computer game, "Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space," which Omni Magazine recently

Please see MOON, D4



Associated Press

Astronaut Buzz Aldrin on the moon.

Orange County Business



From left, Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins and Aldrin were the Apollo 11 crew that achieved the first lunar landing on July 20, 1969.

MOON: Aldrin Busier as Anniversary Nears

Continued from D1

described as "an engrossing experience for anyone who has sat glued to the TV watching rockets lift off from Kennedy Space Center."

Still, Aldrin can make time to discuss his favorite subject. During a brief phone interview Friday—with three other phones ringing in the background—the former astronaut, who had just returned from Europe and was waiting for a limousine to whisk him off to an evening appointment—wanted to talk rocket science.

On his mind were adding a second-stage booster to the space shuttle, developing a new rocket that could facilitate going to the

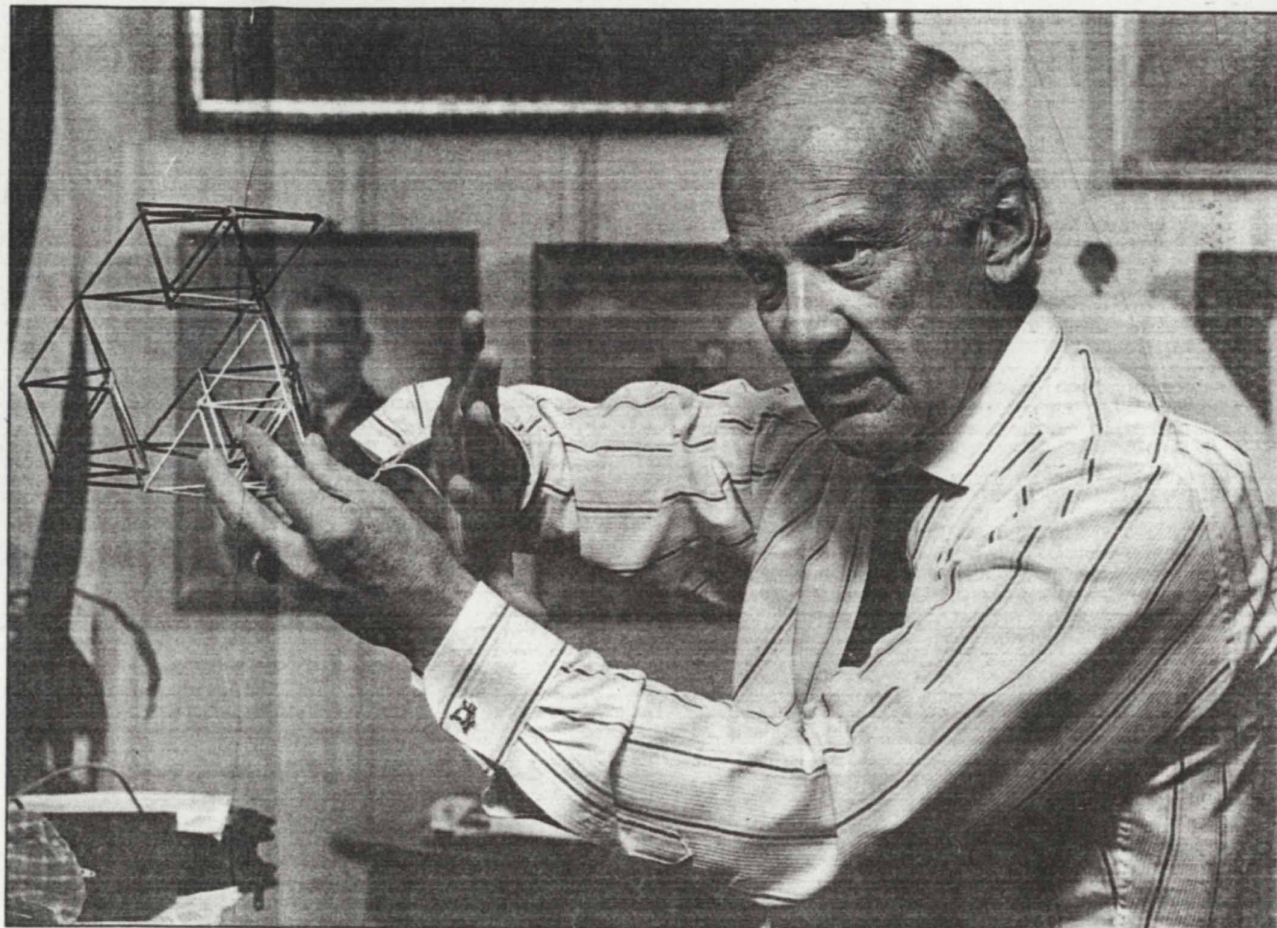
moon and establishing a permanent shuttle between Earth and Mars.

He speaks with passion about those subjects at an age, 64, when many of his contemporaries are contemplating retirement. Aldrin, however, has no intention of slowing down.

"I don't want to live in the past," he said. "I want to live as a contributing person."

His many commercial ventures, he said, are a way of paying the bills so he can focus on his true mission: spreading the gospel of space travel.

"My name becomes associated with credible products, and in varying degrees they help my livelihood," he said. "The work



Los Angeles Times

Aldrin holds a model of a space station in his Laguna Beach home in a 1989 photo taken shortly before the 20th anniversary of his moon walk.

that I do on the space program is uncompensated directly."

He acknowledges that when he speaks in public, most audiences would rather hear about his moon-walking experience than about strap-on reusable rockets. "There aren't that many people really interested in this detailed stuff," he said.

Aldrin, who has a Ph.D. in orbital

mechanics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is finding an outlet for some of his scientific ideas by co-authoring a science fiction novel.

"He's not by nature a writer," said Pittsburgh novelist John Barnes, the collaborator. "Between being a natural athlete and the busiest person I've ever seen in my

life, he had no time to sit in a chair."

The book is based in part on Aldrin theories that a spaceship could travel a permanent route between Earth and Mars powered by the whipsawing gravitational pull of both planets. The spacecraft, which would be like a link in a cosmic bicycle chain, would be intercepted by shuttles from both

Earth and Mars.

But all of that aside, Aldrin remains a moon man at heart.

"It's regrettable that Apollo went to the moon and then stopped," he said. "It gives us a lesson that says we should think twice before starting something that will only have a temporary lifetime."