



Photos by Kathy Baker

Former Apollo astronaut Buzz Aldrin spoke in Alameda Oct. 19

Aldrin: Our future may be on Mars

By Peter Hegarty
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For former astronaut Buzz Aldrin, the past provides a launching pad into the future.

Visiting Alameda to rally support behind preserving the decommissioned USS Hornet as a museum, Aldrin said that by becoming an educational facility, the mothballed aircraft carrier could be a catalyst for a manned mission to Mars and the colonization of space.

"Not just to go once or twice," said the 66-year-old Aldrin, "but to go and establish permanence for the world someplace else."

An Apollo 11 crewmember and the second man to walk on the moon, Aldrin told a crowd gathered inside the Officers' Club at Naval Air Station Alameda on Oct. 19 that a mission to Mars would unite people across national boundaries and inspire future generations, comparing it to building a cathedral in the past.

"This world and this nation needs something out there," Aldrin said, "something in the fu-

ture. We need something to draw us into the next century ... And I can't think of a better way to do that than on the surface of Mars."

Institutions like museums and universities create the knowledge necessary to undertake the exploration of space, he said.

Aldrin followed Neil Armstrong onto the surface of the moon in July 1969.

After their historic voyage, the two men, along with Michael Collins, were picked up in the Pacific Ocean by the USS Hornet, which also saw fierce action during World War II.

It now sits mothballed alongside Pier 3 at the base, where supporters hope to turn it into a floating museum.

Flanked by a flag reading, "Don't Give Up The Ship," Aldrin told the \$50-a-plate fundraiser for the preservation campaign that it was only after being picked up by the carrier that he learned the full impact the moon mission had on people throughout the world.

"I had the impulse to say to

Neil, 'Look up, we missed the whole thing,'" Aldrin joked, before adding, "We were out of town."

The Apollo missions united people through a common experience, Aldrin explained, which far outstripped the importance of what the voyages achieved scientifically.

A trip to Mars would have a similar effect, he said, inspiring mankind "to accomplish noble things."

His call for more manned missions in space was echoed by some of the nearly 300 people attending the luncheon, which also featured a talk by Dr. Paul MacCready, a pioneer in both human- and solar-powered flight.

"It's not just the mission," said John Spanjersberg of San Leandro, as he waited in line to receive Aldrin's autograph. "It would unite the country and give it purpose."

Former Naval Reservist Leah Sisk agreed. "It would be worthwhile," she said about a manned trip to Mars. "But I think it would take a thousand years to

do it."

The moderator of the event, Mayor Ralph Appezato, said further space exploration could provide breakthroughs in science.

"The benefits from such a giant leap forward into the future to our quality of life cannot be measured," Appezato said. "You cannot be complacent. We must take the risk to step into the 21st and 22nd centuries."

During the fund-raising event, participants could tour the Alameda Naval Air Museum and the Western Aerospace Museum at Oakland Airport, as well as the decommissioned USS Hornet itself.

Before meeting audience members and signing copies of his book, "Encounter with Tiber," Aldrin told the crowd that he and his fellow astronauts had made up a sign reading "Hornet+3," after they had been picked up by the carrier following their lunar voyage.

"Because it had three more on it when it came back in," he said. "And we were proud to be those three."