

FORMER ASTRONAUTS ASK AMERICANS TO DREAM AGAIN

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Surrounded by the hardware that broke the grip of gravity, three astronauts talked Friday about what the nation has lost: its inspiration and fascination with science. "Space flight is such a neat thing," said Story Musgrave, who has been in space six times.

"Without dreams, we wither," said a fourth space buff, movie maker Ron Howard, who directed "Apollo 13."

They testified about "America's Vision for the Future of Space Exploration" at a congressional hearing held not in Congress, but in the Air and Space Museum. The spectacular setting became a noisy one when the doors opened to hordes of young springtime visitors.

It was good, however, for the photographs: **Buzz Aldrin**, the second man to set foot on the moon, seated in front of a lunar module like the one he piloted; Walter Cunningham, of the Apollo 7 crew, a few steps away from an Apollo command ship; Musgrave, who led the Hubble Telescope repair crew in 1993, seated just below a large model of the telescope suspended from the ceiling.

Howard, best known as Opie on the "Andy Griffith Show," and Richie Cunningham on "Happy Days," pronounced himself awed to be in such company.

"There's an old joke that goes: Hi, I'm from the government; I'm here to help you," is how he began his testimony. "Well, hi, I'm from Hollywood, and I'm here to tell you what to do."

Aldrin said his message is a call to action for Americans, especially young ones. "America must again dream," he said, "and have the faith to achieve the dream."

"Let me say, as I sit here before you today, having walked on the moon, that I am myself still awed by that miracle," **Aldrin** said. "That awe, in me and in each of us . . . must be the engine of future achievement, not a slow-dimming light from a time once bright."

After six flights - a record he shares with John Young - Musgrave has been told by NASA he won't go into space any more. So now he can say things he might not have otherwise.

"We should evaluate our priorities of how we manage our resources," he said. "I would like to see programs that do not devour our resources on space." To do science, "we don't have to fly humans, and we don't need to fly humans."

And Cunningham, who now is a Houston businessman, deplored the fact that "security and a risk-free existence have replaced opportunity and the chance of dangerous adventure" for Americans.

The three men who were to take the first Apollo flight died in a launch pad fire during a countdown rehearsal, and Cunningham was on the crew that took their place.

He lauded the risk takers. "It's the Christopher Columbuses and the Neil Armstrongs who move us forward, not the Ralph Naders," Cunningham said. "With a Ralph Nader at the head of a wagon train, we would never have made it across the plains and over the Rockies."

America, he said, has a crisis of will. "Today, we fail not because of our inability to do something; we fail because of our unwillingness to tackle it in the first place."

The best lines of the session came from Howard and Musgrave.

"I come from an industry that dreams for a living," said the movie maker.

"Space is my calling," Musgrave said. "It is what I am and what I do."