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TV > Inside China's Forbidden City



StarTwo

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40 years after setting foot on the moon, Dr Buzz Aldrin still keeps busy with space matters, including advocating space tourism. > 2-3

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Viewers can now catch a glimpse of the most hidden corners and discover the secrets of those who lived in the Forbidden City.

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FROM OUTER SPACE TO DEEP SEA: Apollo XI astronaut Dr Buzz Aldrin goes scuba-diving in his free time. – Pictures courtesy of Dr Buzz Aldrin

Getting tourists into space

By BEVERLEY HON

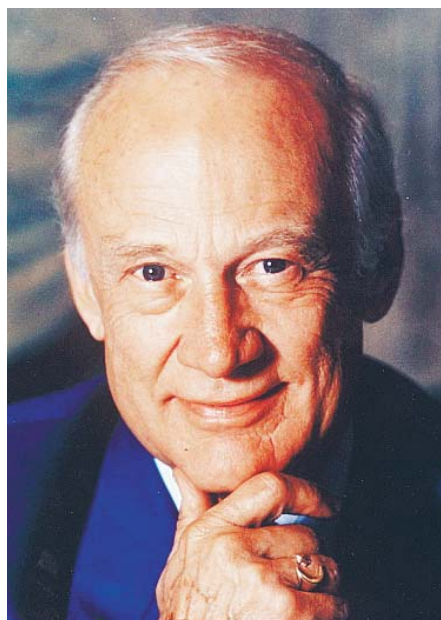
IT HAS been almost 40 years since Dr Buzz Aldrin first set foot on the moon in 1969 and the former astronaut has been anything but content to go into quiet retirement.

Designing rockets, deep-sea exploring, and speaking all over the world for privatising space are just some of the many things the 76-year-old has been up to. And of course, he's been actively advocating space tourism and sharing his vision for the future of space travel. You could even say that Aldrin is partially responsible for space tourism becoming a reality.

"I wouldn't want to take credit for being the first person to do that but I can certainly see where getting more and more people into being familiar with space by (getting them) doing the things that we too are," said Aldrin in a telephone interview from Los Angeles, California.

"There's a distinct tie-in between the two. It's not one or the other or parallel but two feet together and that's why I think that what you might call travel by private citizens or non-professionals is so important because they spread the word. And the more familiar people become with what space travel is about, then they're more likely to be supportive of space exploration activities," he explained.

So far, the paying tourists who have gone into space – millionaire Dennis Tito, South African Mark Shuttleworth, businessman Gregory Olsen and entrepreneur Anousheh Ansari – have reportedly paid US\$20mil (RM72mil) for



Dr Buzz Aldrin has been actively advocating space tourism and sharing his vision for the future of space travel.

the out-of-this-world experience. Just how affordable does Aldrin see space travel becoming?

"How far in the future do you want to go? There's only one supplier (at the moment) and that's the Russians, so there isn't much competition as much as far as taking non-professionals into space is concerned. It's whatever the market will bear," said Aldrin, who thinks that that may change.

"I'm not sure when there will be that

many competitors for orbital travel within 10 years. I think within two or three years, we'll have several opportunities for commercial people, private citizens, to be able to engage in sub-orbital flight – that's going up and down to some particular altitude but not attempting to cover any specific kind of distance over the earth," he added.

It is no secret that astronauts spend a considerable amount of time preparing for their space journeys. When asked how much time tourists need to prepare for their space sojourns to be prepared for the situations up there, Aldrin replied:

"I'm not an expert in that. I think the people who are preparing people are counting on maybe a week or two but once the people have been engaged or least contracted for a flight into space, they're continuing gradually to learn more and more about what the experience will be."

Aldrin feels "one week or so" should be appropriate for those going on a sub-orbital flight but for an orbital flight, it depends on the duration and what the duties may be.

According to Aldrin, for orbital travel, the Russians like to train people for six months and teach them Russian so that they become almost like crew members on board the Soyuz spacecraft and are active participants in the normal and the emergency procedures.

However, he thinks when passengers are eventually taken into space (where there are five to 10 people going into orbit as tourists), then they won't be doing crew duties and the training won't take as long

Over the moon about space

BUZZ Aldrin was born Edwin E. Aldrin Jr. in Montclair, New Jersey on Jan 20, 1930 to Marion Moon and aviation pioneer Edwin Eugene Aldrin.

He legally changed his name to Buzz Aldrin in the early 1980s – the name “Buzz” evolved from his sister Fay Ann’s mispronunciation of the word “brother”, which became “buzzer”.

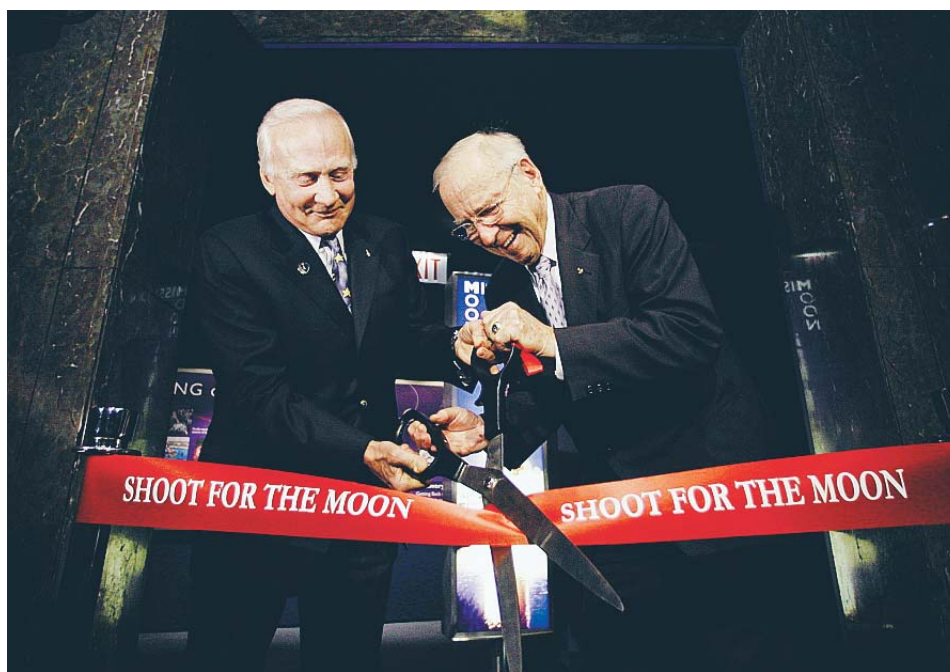
Aldrin studied at the US Military Academy at West Point, New York, and earned his bachelor’s degree with honours in 1951. After graduation, he entered the US Air Force and earned his wings in 1952. He served as a combat jet pilot during the Korean War and flew Sabre Jets in 66 combat missions.

He later earned a Doctorate in Astronautics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where his thesis was “Guidance for Manned Orbital Rendezvous”. The techniques he devised were used on all NASA missions, including the first space docking with the Russian cosmonauts.

In October 1963, Aldrin was selected by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) as one of the early astronauts. In November 1966, he established a new record for Extra-Vehicular Activity (EVA) in space on the *Gemini XII* orbital flight mission, which was his first space flight.

Aldrin recently celebrated the 40th anniversary of that flight and was reunited with astronaut Jim Lovell and their *Gemini XII* spacecraft at the dedication of a new exhibit on Nov 9 at Chicago’s Adler Planetarium. (Aldrin is in contact with many of the other astronauts, and touched base with them during periodic Apollo reunions.)

Aldrin has logged 4,500 hours of flying time; 290 were in space, including eight hours of EVA. As Backup Command Module Pilot for *Apollo VIII*, man’s first flight around the moon, Aldrin significantly improved operational techniques for astronomical navigation star display. Then, on July 20, 1969, Aldrin and Neil Armstrong made their historic *Apollo XI* moon walk, becoming the first two humans to set foot on another world in the first manned lunar landing.



Gemini XII astronauts Dr Buzz Aldrin (left) and Jim Lovell struggling with a gigantic pair of scissors at the dedication of a new exhibit on Nov 9 at Chicago’s Adler Planetarium.

The fully restored *Gemini XII* capsule from the 1966 mission is the centrepiece of the new, permanent exhibit. – APpic

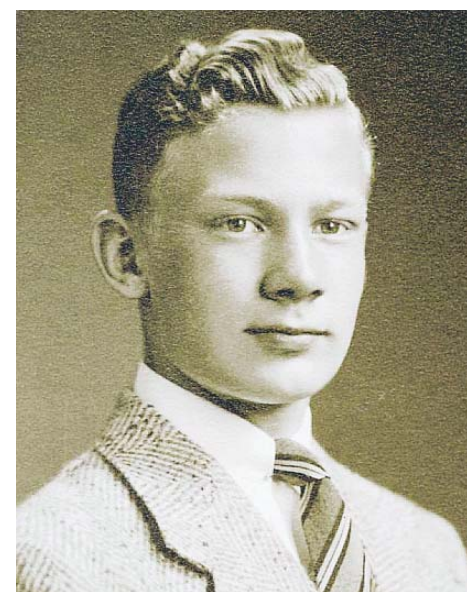
Despite the endeavour being witnessed by the largest worldwide television audience in history, conspiracy theories have emerged that the moon mission was faked and that it was all a hoax. How does Aldrin counter such accusations that keep popping up?

“Well, I don’t go out of my way to try and counter that because the people who are taking a position that we didn’t go to the moon are defying all reasonable evidence to the contrary and they are interested in getting maximum publicity for themselves,” said Aldrin. “I don’t see that I need to contribute to that because they’re not going

to change their minds certainly, publicly, whatever they feel privately.”

“I happen to be one of the fortunate few who came along with the right qualifications at the time when the nation was involved in sending people into space and that was very fortunate for the few of us who were selected and we’re very grateful for the opportunity.

“Obviously, we think that that’s something that is worthwhile to do for the exploration and the inspiration of future generations. I think also, at some point, humanity needs to be able to survive off the planet Earth and to



A teenage Buzz Aldrin

establish growing colonies elsewhere. I certainly think that at some point, in hundreds and hundreds of years, we should have the capability of communicating and perhaps transporting people to different star systems,” he added.

So does he miss going into space?

“In the pioneering days of space travel or space exploration or pioneering the use of space for humans, it was very brief exposures and very special positions and required considerable training. It’s not quite the sort of thing that people who are in their mid-70s entertain doing. Especially if those people in their 70s have been among the few, very fortunate people to be a part of developing capabilities in space, including reaching the moon, and even more fortunate, being among the few people to be able to land on the moon.”

– perhaps a month.

“That’s just a guess right now. I want to really point out how much more difficult it is from an energy standpoint in order to get into orbit than it is to go up and down in sub-orbital (flight)” he said. “I believe Singapore and Dubai are planning to have opportunities with space ports to take people on sub-orbital travel.”

Space tourism hasn’t been the only thing on Aldrin’s mind, though. He also supports America returning to the moon and feels colonisation of the moon will depend on “justifying the presence of the people there to do economically contributing activities.”

Economic returns

Aldrin feels if there are enough people who are willing to support staying in a habitat for some period of time, hotel operators should also consider a presence on the moon. He sees a remote chance of that happening, though, and certainly not within the next 30 years.

He believes that unless explorers can justify what they’re doing for the economical returns, they will just have to be content to hone their exploration skills on the moon until the time comes for them to utilise those skills to explore Mars.

He believes once robots can handle moon explorations and as long as there is a good transportation system between the earth and the moon, then “we can fix things that need to be fixed but most scientific and exploratory things can be done by robots.”

“If there are commercial activities like mining or producing solar panels for beaming solar energy back, then the economics need to justify the need for people to be there. I’m saying that because it’s just not that easy a location to set up life support systems,” he added.

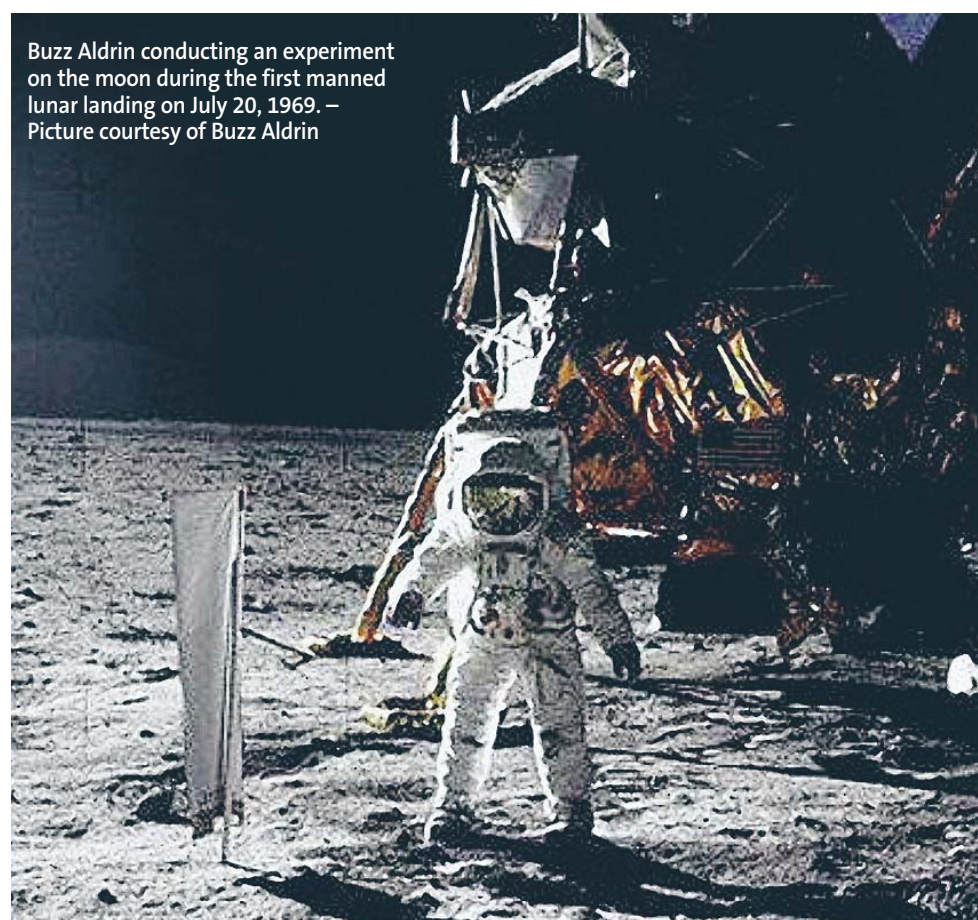
When told that colonisation of the moon

CNN Future Summit

BUZZ Aldrin and space tourist Anousheh Ansari will be panellists on *CNN Future Summit: World in Motion*, a unique televised discussion on the future of travel from Singapore which will air on CNN (Astro Channel 90) on Nov 23 at 6pm and 11pm, Malaysian time. CNN anchor and correspondent Richard Quest will be the host. Joining them on the show are Lino Guzzella, a professor of Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, who is an expert on fuel-efficient and environmentally friendly vehicles, and futurologist Ian Pearson. For more information about the programme and to participate in ongoing discussions about the subjects raised, visit the official website at <http://edition.cnn.com/CNNI/Programs/futuresummit>

and Mars will eventually happen in the future, Aldrin pointed out the need to deal with the foreseeable problems of, for example, deciding just how we’re going to go about exploring Mars.

“Are we going to do that one mission at time? It is very fundamental to whether we commit to permanence on Mars or whether we commit trip by trip and I don’t think that trip-by-trip is the way that we should go to Mars. I think we should commit from the beginning that we’re going to have a progressive build up and that takes a lot more national, economic and international co-operative commitment. I don’t think we’re quite ready for those



Buzz Aldrin conducting an experiment on the moon during the first manned lunar landing on July 20, 1969. – Picture courtesy of Buzz Aldrin

things yet,” he expounded.

At the moment, there are international laws that have been established by treaties. Aldrin reckons that those will probably have to be interpreted and fine-tuned as we begin to approach the potential ownership and utilisation of the surface for the moon for economic interest.

“I don’t think that’s really too clear now

exactly what the rights are. It’s pretty much been determined that nations cannot annex property on the moon but that doesn’t mean that individuals can’t make use of territory on the moon for commercial benefit. I’m not an expert in this area but to my understanding, that still needs a certain amount of interpretation internationally,” he commented.