

**BUZZ
ALDRIN
SPACES OUT**

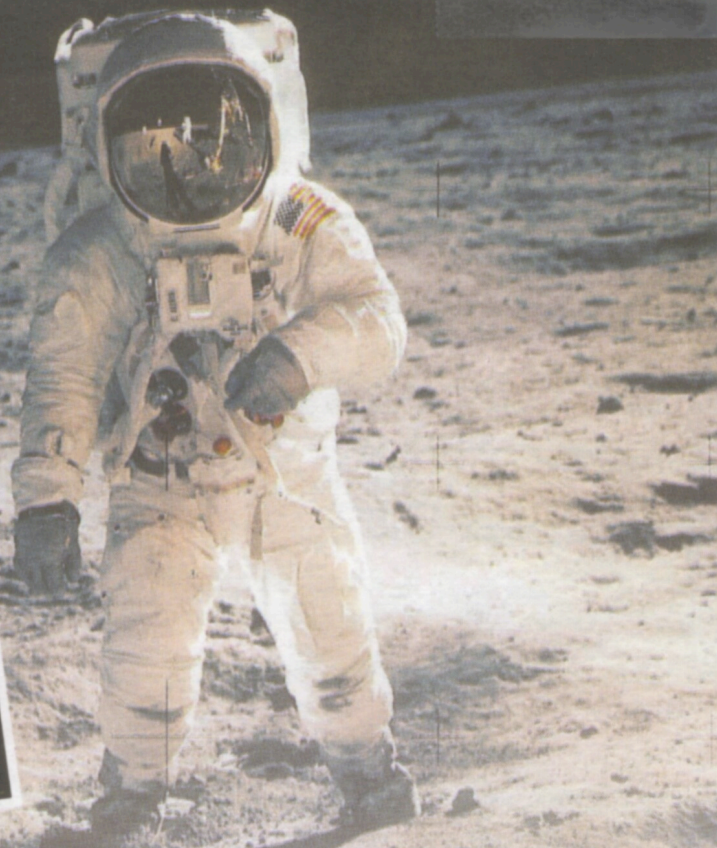
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Buzz Aldrin on the surface of the moon and out of his uniform (inset).



LOST IN SPACE

Buzz Aldrin laments lack of U.S. exploration

By **ADAM BUCKMAN**

IT TOOK ONLY eight years for the U.S. to land men on the moon after the goal was first stated in a speech by President Kennedy in 1961.

Now, nearly 40 years later, progress in the exploration of space has slowed.

The situation is frustrating to one NASA booster, Buzz Aldrin, 78, a member of the three-man crew of Apollo 11 and the second man to walk on the moon.

Aldrin is one of the "stars" of this week's installments of the Discovery Channel miniseries "When We Left Earth: The NASA Missions," a comprehensive space program story by the men of NASA Mission Control and the astronauts themselves.

The story of Apollo 11, including Neil Armstrong's famed first steps onto the moon, takes center stage in the first of two episodes Sunday night, titled "Landing the Eagle."

The rest of the Apollo missions, including the one that

almost ended in disaster, Apollo 13, are the subject of the second installment, "The Explorers."

"The surface of the moon itself was a very fine talcum powder-like surface," Aldrin explained.

"In the first quarter-inch, half-inch, it was very loose" he said. "Beyond that, it was quite compacted because there were no air molecules between the dust molecules that extended down to 10 or 15 feet. So walking on the surface was very easy because of the slow-motion effect produced by the combination of decreased gravity and the restrictions of the [spacesuit]."

Aldrin says he "hates" to see the U.S. lose the leadership position in space exploration especially since he can remember a time, the 1960s mainly, when the space program was just about the most popular program the government ever devised.

"Those of us in the space program do realize what we're capable of doing," he said. "And hate to see that, because of the stretched out [amount of time] big projects take and with the expectancy of the general public,

there's an impatience to move to something else just when U.S. leadership is being contested by many other nations today. It may be difficult for us to regain that leadership if we let it slip away because of inattention and [inadequate] allocation of resources."

Aldrin spends much of his time "campaigning" for progress in space exploration.

He remembers when NASA planners felt a manned mission to Mars was a real possibility.

"When we came back from the moon," he recalls, "we found there was a space task group doing a study of our future, in November of '69, and [the study] had three levels of intensity and even the more relaxed and slower paced future that was envisioned then had us reaching Mars in the 1990s.

"So we certainly haven't lived up to those expectations."

**WHEN WE LEFT EARTH:
THE NASA MISSIONS**

Sunday, 9 and 10 p.m.,
Discovery Channel