

One Giant Leap

By Laura Martin

You're sitting on your favorite plaid couch surrounded by your siblings and your parents; a bowl of forgotten popcorn rests between you and your dad. Your mom flips on the TV and for a second all you can hear is static but you don't care, you are too focused on the screen, waiting for the reporter to switch to live footage. What you- and the whole country- has been on the edge of their seats to witness is a piece of history and a step toward America's future- the Moon landing.

The idea of choosing just one moment in history is a nearly impossible task. Our country and our world has experienced and learned billions of lessons- good and bad and each would be unforgettable to experience. Every person would have his or her own opinion on the events they find most interesting, and I am no exception. I thought for a while about different eras that were meaningful and interesting to me personally and though it was my own decision, I still looked at how the events had changed history for others and for the world that we all live in. More recent parts of history have always been interesting to me because I like the idea that history is made every day and not just hundreds of years ago. All of these factors added up to a few possibilities that I would love to witness and then came the hard decision on which was my top choice. From my options, I chose the moon landing not only because it has always been an interesting topic to me, but also due to the history that led up to the event and the effect it had on strengthening relationships between American citizens.

July 20, 1969 was a truly monumental day in the minds of American citizens and promised an event they would remember forever. Hundreds of scientists and workers acted together to send men to the moon, and only the force of their minds working together could have pulled off such a feat. When the news was announced to the public that an American was to set foot on the moon it raised the spirits of people and gave them a renewed sense of pride and love for their country. At the time, tensions were high because of the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union. The idea of the moon landing helped bring a more relaxing atmosphere to the country and take some anxiety away which was turned into anticipation. The United States making this huge announcement changed the lives of American citizens and the history of mankind as a whole.

Even today, the moon landing is talked about in books, schools, TV and all other kinds of media, spreading its influence and promoting reaching for seemingly impossible goals. When a moment of that magnitude is a shared experience of a nation, it ensures that its greatness will be passed down for all of history. Every citizen in today's world has been taught about man's first steps on the moon and even though it was Neil Armstrong who physically took those steps, the whole United States of America took those steps with him. The part that makes this moment so important is, though, when Neil Armstrong stopped his steps, the country kept walking on the path. The Moon landing was the beginning of a journey that still continues today. While it may seem like the goal was just space travel, and that is a large part of what this event inspired, I believe it was more. When little kids look into books and see someone walking on the moon, it shows them to reach for the stars, as well, and reminds them that others have also wished for things that seem hard to reach or accomplish but nevertheless, they

persisted and rose to the challenge. When citizens see each other struggling, they embody the same kind of bond that is present when we have a common goal and reach through whatever struggle to help their neighbor, just like the sense of family that grew from the excitement of people working together to send a man to space. So, as an event, the United States Moon landing was an amazing step in space exploration, but it was also so much more than that. It was a sense of pride for a country, a sense of brother and sisterhood between a nation, and a sense of the American Dream in reaching for the stars to become anything you desire.

Finally, the static sound quiets and you are faced with a pixelated screen, then, a gray surface—the Moon. As you watch, the lander slowly slides into the frame and then it takes even longer for the camera to focus in on the side of it. Not a person in the full room breathes and you are on the edge of your seat, almost sliding off the cushions. An excited breath escapes you as the seal around the hatch seems to release with the slightest bit of movement. A head peeks out, then a body follows. He looks like a man in a strange suit, but you know that he is a real-life superhero. A blinding smile is followed by an achingly slow trek down the slight steps of the craft. Then, the moment you have all been waiting for, he hops off the ledge and lands with soft feet onto the foreign surface. A smile breaks across your face and someone cheers. It seems unreal that this could happen, there is a man on the moon hundreds of thousands of miles away. You almost miss one of the most famous quotes in history as your dad twirls your mom around the room, “That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind”.