

Historical Reflection on What Has Made The Planetary Society Significant

WE ARE HERE TO CELEBRATE AND REFLECT ON HISTORY. AND I AM CALLED UPON TO DO AN HISTORICAL REFLECTION – HISTORICAL NOT HYSTERICAL; OTHERS CAN BE HYSTERICAL. REFLECTING ON HISTORY IS ACTUALLY COUNTER TO WHY I STEPPED DOWN AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR; MY PURPOSE IN DOING SO WAS TO COMMIT THE SOCIETY TO CREATING A FUTURE – AND I AM PLEASED TO SAY I THINK I DID THAT.

NONETHELESS -- LET ME GIVE YOU SOME HISTORY: WHEN WE STARTED THE

**SOCIETY WE DID NOT HAVE A
COMPUTER – WE HAD TYPEWRITERS
AND THE FIRST FEW MAILINGS WERE
TYPED. WE DID NOT HAVE E-MAIL, WE
WENT TO THE POST OFFICE SEVERAL
TIMES PER DAY – BUT EVEN COUNTING
TRAVEL TIME WE SPENT LESS TIME ON
THAT THAN WE NOW DO ON E-MAIL. WE
DID NOT HAVE THE INTERNET, WE USED
TELEPHONES. WE DID NOT HAVE
CROWDFUNDING, WE HAD DIRECT MAIL.**

**WE ALSO HAD CARL SAGAN AND BRUCE
MURRAY – TWO REMARKABLE
INDIVIDUALS WHOSE SUM WAS EVEN
GREATER THAN THEIR PARTS. I
STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT EITHER OF
THEM ALONE MIGHT NOT HAVE STARTED**

THE SOCIETY – AS REMARKABLE AND FANTASTIC THEY WERE AS INDIVIDUALS. BUT THEIR SYNERGY WAS EVEN MORE REMARKABLE. IN PART BECAUSE OTHERS PERCEIVED THEM AS RIVALS. THEY WERE, BUT NOT IN THE PETTY WAY WE SOMETIMES THINK OF RIVALS, BUT IN THE COMPETITION OF IDEAS – WHICH THEY BOTH STRONGLY BELIEVED IN AND BELIEVED IN THE DELIBERATIVE PROCESS BY WHICH THEY ARE ADVANCED. A TIP OF OUR GLASSES TO BOTH.

THEY DOMINATED, BUT THEY WERE NOT ALONE. WE ALSO WERE STARTED BY PEOPLE WHOSE PRIMARY INTEREST WAS FAR FROM SPACE, PLANETS OR

EVEN SO MUCH IN SCIENCE. THESE WERE PEOPLE WHO THOUGHT WE WERE DOING SOMETHING IMPORTANT AND VALUABLE FOR SOCIETY AND WANTED TO HELP US BUILD A CONSITUTENCY. THEY I INCUDED A PULITZER PRIZE WINNING JOURNALIST ACTIVE IN CIVIL RIGHTS, POLITICAL REFORMERS, ENVIRONOMENTAL ACTIVISTS, AND PEOPLE BROADLY CONNECTED IN ALL PARTS OF SOCIETY. THEY SAW PLANETARY EXPLORATION AS MORE THAN JUST ANOTHER AREA OF SCIENCE, BUT AS A REPRESENTATION OF HUMAN ACCOMPLISHMENT AND HIGH ACHIEVEMENT THAT DISTINGUISHES OUR SPECIES AND AS AN ENTERPRISE

WITH ENORMOUS LEVERAGE TO BRING OUT THE BEST IN US.

THE BEST IN EXPLORING NEW WORLDS AND BY THE UNDERSTANDING AND PROTECTING OUR OWN WORLD. THERE WERE SOME WHO THOUGHT THAT BY FOCUSING ON OTHER WORLDS WE WOULD SOMEHOW DIMINISH THE VIEW OF EARTH. BUT OF COURSE JUST THE OPPOSITE HAPPENED – WE BECAME PART OF A GLOBAL FORCE FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND FOR AWARENESS ABOUT TRULY EXISTENTIAL THREATS TO OUR PLANET AND TO HUMANKIND – ASTEROID IMPACT IS ONE, GLOBAL CLIMATE

CHANGE IS ANOTHER. WE ALSO I THINK CONTRIBUTED IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, AND CREATING TECHNOLOGY FOR PEACEFUL AND SOCIAL GROWTH. THIS IS IMPORTANT – BECAUSE EVERY POLL, EVERY POLICY STUDY, AND EVERY POLITICAL ACTION RUNS INTO THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION THAT SPACE EXPLORTION IS VERY GOOD, BUT NOT VERY IMPORTANT. PUBIC OPINION IS BROADLY SUPPORTIVE, BUT SHALLOW. IT IS OUR JOB TO BRING FORTH THE SIGNFICANCE AND IMPORTANCE.

WE HAD SOME TRULY REMARKABLE AND WONDERFUL ADVENTURES IN OUR HISTORY: TO THE FOUR CORNERS AND

AROUND THE GLOBE (I WISH CHARLENE WAS HERE TO CRITICIZE MY MIXED METAPHORS). IT IS GREAT FUN AND RICHLY ENJOYABLE FOR ME TO REMINISCE ABOUT THEM – AND I DO.

BUT IT IS TOO EASY TO REMINISCE; I GET TO DO THAT IN TOO MANY CONVERSATIONS ALREADY – AS I CONTINUE TO BUMP INTO AND SEE OLD FRIENDS, COLLEAGUES FROM “BACK IN THE DAY.” MORE IMPORTANTLY, IT WAS THE PLANETARY SOCIETY RAISON D’ETRE (ANOTHER TIP TO CHARLENE AS I BUTCHER ANOTHER LANGUAGE) TO APPEAL BEYOND THE COGNESENTI – TO THE PUBLIC AND TO PUBLIC (NOT SPECIAL) INTEREST. WE WISHED TO

**SERVE THE PUBLIC, NOT THE NARROW
SCIENCE AND AEROSPACE
COMMUNITIES EMPLOYED IN THE
BUSINESS.**

**TO SPEAK TO THIS I AM GOING TO
SELECT THREE ENTERPRISES FROM OUR
HISTORY THAT I LABEL OUR MOST
SIGNIFICANT. OTHERS MIGHT CHOOSE
DIFFERENTLY – MAYBE I WILL CHOOSE
DIFFERENTLY IN 15 YEARS AT OUR 50TH
ANNIVERSARY.**

- 1. ADVOCACY**
- 2. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**
- 3. MARS ROVER TESTING**

**EACH OF THESE TOOK PLACE IN A
COMPLEX AND BUSY ENVIRONMENT OF
OTHER ACTIVITIES WHICH I CAN ONLY
BRIEFLY MENTION IF AT ALL. BUT EACH
LED TO DISTINGUISHING HALLMARK OF
THE SOCIETY THAT DOMINATES WHAT
WE ARE TODAY.**

1.....

2.....

3.....

**THERE ARE OTHER THINGS OF COURSE.
SOME WILL BE SURPRISED AT ME NOT
MENTIONING SETI – OUR FIRST AND
LONGEST RUNNING PROJECT; THE MARS
BALLOON, PERHAPS OUR MOST
INNOVATIVE; THE GREAT STUDENT**

PROJECTS LIKE THE DUDLEY WRIGHT INTERNATIONAL ESSAY COMPETITION AND RED ROVER RED ROVER, OUR PRESENCE AT THE HALLEY COMET ENCOUNTER WORLDWIDE, AND OF COURSE THE SOLAR SAIL PROJECTS. THEY TOO WERE IMPORTANT BUT I CHOOSE TO RANK THEM AS "MERELY" GREAT IN THEIR OWN WAYS WHILE PICKING ON THE ADVOCACY, THE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION EFFORT AND MARS ROVER TESTING AS THE BIG 3 OF SIGNIFICANCE.

THE LEGACY OF THESE LIVE ON – IN OUR ADVOCACY, IN OUR FOCUS ON MARS: ROBOTIC AND HUMAN; AND NOW IN CONDUCTING OUR OWN MISSION,

LIGHTSAIL, ILLUMINATING AN IDEA THAT MIGHT TAKE US FROM MARS TO THE STARS (CAN I PLUG MY BOOK HERE?).

I WANT TO CLOSE WITH AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO MANY MANY PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN WITH THE . SOCIETY OVER THE YEARS – BRINGING MANY DIFFERENT PERSPECIVES AND IDEAS WHICH HAVE MADE US A WHOLE. MEMBERS, VOLUNTEERS, COLLEAGUES, FRIENDS, SCIENTISTS, ENGINEERS, HUANISTS, AND JUST PLAIN INTERESTED FOLK. MANY OF YOU ARE HERE, SOME SADLY NOT. I PARCIULARLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE TERRIFIC GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO

GUIDED ME – BOARDS OF DIRECTORS AND ADVISORS; PEOPLE PUT TOGETHER BY CARL AND BRUCE WHO RECOGNIZED THE BREADTH OF OUR UNDERTAKING. WE'VE HAD SOME REMARKABLE PEOPLE – DIRECTORS LIKE TOM PAINE, KATHY SULLIVAN, JOHN BRYSON, MICHAEL COLLINS, STEVEN SPIELBERG, NORM AUGUSTINE, ACADEMIIAN ROALD SAGDEEV, GENERAL DON KUTYNA, ELON MUSK, LAREL WILKENING, LARIE LESHIN, AND ADVISORS LIKE THE HON. SHIRLEY HUFSTEDLER, LEWIS THOMAS, PAUL NEWMAN, SALLY RIDE, HARRISON SCHMITT, JOHNNY CARSON, RAY BRADBURY, ARTHUR CLARKE, FATHER TED HESBURG, STORY MUSGRAVE,

**JACQUES BLAMONT, SERGEI KAPITSA,
YASUNORI MATOGAWEA, ...**

**THIS OF COURSE IS NOT A COMPLETE
LIST – IN FACT TO BE HONEST IT’S JUST
NAME-DROPPING: NAMES I AM VERY
PROUD OF. NAMES THAT HELPED US
REACH NEW WORLDS.**

**AND I’D BE REMISS IF I DIDN’T
MENTION OUR PAST PRESIDENTS: IN
ADDITION TO CARL AND BRUCE, WESLEY
T. HUNTRESS, JR. AND NEIL DEGRASSE
TYSON. IT IS HAS BEEN NOT JUST A
PRIVLEDGE BUT A FANTASTIC
EXPERIENCE KNOWING AND WORKING
WITH THESE AND MANY MANY OTHERS**

**TO CREATE AND DEVELOP THE
PLANETARY SOCIETY.**