

Part of the space economy that doesn't show up on the radar screen.

I want to tell you a space story that is personal and yet poignant to space activists of all ilks. It's part of my own space story, which relates to a part of the overall US space economy that tends to be overlooked.

I was born and grew up in England. I remember vividly the moment when the idea of traveling in space first captured my imagination, (it was actually the first episode of Fireball XL5) shortly after that John Glenn went into orbit. I remember asking my mum who the astronaut was and where did he live so I could write a letter to him asking about his trip. She told me he lived in a place called America. Now being seven years old at the time I'd obviously heard of the place but hadn't really paid it any thought. In those cold war days we obviously had many US TV shows in the UK about Cowboys and Indians and strange people called the Clampetts who lived in a place called Beverly Hills. I was intrigued. Where was America? I found a map and learned as much as I could by studying this far away place. It was the start of a lifelong relationship with what to me at the time seemed a magical place.

I learned much in my childhood about the US, how it had once been a collection of colonies founded by the English, how the colonies had separated from England in a war that started in 1776. How they had gone on to fight side by side with both of my grandfathers in a war that had only ended 10 years before I was born. How they now were sending people to the same place (more or less) as Steve Zodiac was visiting every week on my TV screen. How cool was that! Over the following few formative years of my childhood I soaked up everything I could find about not only the space program, but also about America itself. Even though I had never visited the place I fell in love with this wonderful country that apparently knew exactly where it was going, how it wanted to do it and that it had decided to send people to the moon.

My childhood naiveté did not pay much mind to all of the terrible happenings that were also occurring in the US during the sixties. I remember exactly what I was doing when JFK was assassinated and I gradually learned more about the civil rights marches, other assassinations of great people and how the US seemed to have great problems with its society. Nonetheless the over arching issue that was of the greatest interest to me was the space program. By the time I was 12 years old I could tell you the chemical formulae for the hypergolic fuels used in the LM and how they ignited spontaneously; what ISP was, (before the internet took over that acronym) the names of all of the astronauts and which missions they flew on etc etc. As a result I was so into everything American that my friends at school called me the Yank.

Fast forward 20 years and I finally moved to the US as a new immigrant. I'd sold my business in the UK a year prior to my move and so when I arrived here with my bride of less than two years who was now expecting our first child, I looked around to do what I do best, being an entrepreneur. It didn't take me long to start my first US business which involved something else near and dear to me which was the music business. I started my music distribution company from my basement in 1988. By 1995 I was generating combined revenues of over \$30m per year and had started some record labels and other spin off companies, one of which I still own in the book publishing business.

What I'm getting at here is that after arriving in the US I started companies that paid literally millions in taxes, employed thousands of people and generally contributed to the overall US economy. It would never have happened if I had not first been sparked by the kudos of the US Space Program. That first spark in my imagination caused by the flight of John Glenn helped to decide my future role in the United States economy even though my companies were initially nothing to do with space. How many other people are there who live in this country now, who contribute enormously to our economy and therefore our society who were also touched by that "Oh so bright torch" of the US leading humanity into the heavens?

Congress and any space program naysayers should put that in their pipes and smoke it.

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