

Limelight America

by Michael Drew Shaw



Soon we will celebrate the 40th Anniversary of an event unlike any other in history. And there is a Toledo connection

Whether you lived on Stickney Avenue, Gracewood Road or in Point Place, the first lunar landing on July 20, 1969 remains singularly unforgettable. At 10:56 p.m. an Ohioian became the first human to set foot on another celestial body.

I watched Neil Armstrong step onto the moon's surface with my mother, Helen by my side. The only light in the room came from our TV. I still have the Polaroid picture I took of the screen.

I used to think it odd that I could picture myself *exactly where I was* over a period of hours following JFK's assassination, but many people have that same kind of recall. Some things are indelible.

The moon landing is different because it is an uplifting memory. It was truly global. It united mankind in a way unlikely to ever be equaled.

There were people just like me watching their televisions in Rome, London, Cairo, Karachi, Sydney, Honolulu and in the apartment above the National Bakery on Whitmore Street. No one was immune.

Eight years later I was working in Cleveland. The Press Club was at Euclid & 9th where I met Don Imus for the first time. He was in a foul mood and shattered a mirror behind the bar with a half-empty glass of bourbon. Another indelible memory.

Imus left so I stayed and by chance met another man who became my new inspiration. His name was James P. Storer, son of the founder of Storer Broadcasting, who built his first AM station in Toledo and named it WSPD.

For a radio guy like me, meeting James Storer was like a little leaguer meeting Rocky Colavito. The Storer name was legend. I was appalled to find that he was blind.

Months later at dinner one night at his favorite hotel in New York, The Drake, I asked him how he ended up running the Storer radio division while his brother Peter ran the TV side. There was a long pause. He lowered his head and looked over his *sunglasses* at me. Then we burst into laughter.

Jim Storer had a great sense of humor, and blind though he was, he could get around lower Manhattan far better than me.

Our conversation that night was about listening experiences and radio, the “theatre of the mind”. What resulted was a partnership called Project Eleven, with Mr. Storer the executive producer. *Our mission* was a musical dramatization and reenactment of the 5-day Apollo flight in 1969.

NASA gave us everything we needed. It took me two months just to condense the voice recordings using a razor blade and editing tape. John Petrone, who conducted for Sinatra and Dean Martin helped me compose the original score. Sammy Davis, Jr. let us borrow his drummer. What a trip!

In 1979, to mark the 10th Anniversary of the first moon landing, we released **The Flight of Apollo Eleven**. A copy was presented to the President. The vinyl record album found a permanent home at the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum. It had been a successful journey. A mission accomplished because we had been united in our purpose.

I was just one of the spokes in the wheel that spun around us all as we relived that magical moment in time. I took credit for the idea because it was mine. And I made sure everybody knew it had been born in Toledo, Ohio

Listen to **Limelight America** on Fox Sports Radio 1230 WCWA, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 5-6 pm and online at **www.limelightamerica.com**

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