A Lunar Lie?

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When Apollo 11 landed on the moon, the entire world watched breathlessly as Neil Armstrong took his first steps on the lunar surface. Until recently, I thought the entire world believed that man landed on the moon. A friend of mine, however, told me that the lunar landing was a hoax—an enormous lie. My friend got his information from a television program, and now he and many others believe that man never made it to the moon. He said that during this program, conspiracy theorists presented evidence from NASA history, photographs, and film to back up their claims.

I was skeptical of this theory and wanted to know more. I began to surf the web to see if scientists could explain how the moon landing was a hoax. Nearly everyone from little children to our brightest scientists are interested in the vastness of space. While I was surfing for the answers to my questions, I came across some undeniably interesting websites that opened up a whole new world of space knowledge. After exploring the web sites, I realized that our scientists are interested in the vastness of space.

I was skeptical of this theory and wanted to know more. I began to surf the web to see if scientists could explain how the flag could wave in an airless environment, how astronauts could survive deep space radiation, and why NASA apparently doctored some lunar photos. To make a long story short, I found reasonable explanations for all of the conspiracy theory “evidence.” In fact, I am more convinced than ever that man has walked on the moon.

Space holds a fascination on both our popular culture and on the scientific world. Nearly everyone from little children to our brightest scientists are interested in the vastness of space. While I was surfing for the answers to my questions, I came across some undeniably interesting websites that open up a whole new world of space knowledge. A few others are interested in the vastness of space. While I was surfing for the answers to my questions, I came across some undeniably interesting websites that open up a whole new world of space knowledge. A few sites are interested in the vastness of space.

Web Sites

The website that supplied me with the information I needed to debunk the conspiracy theory is Bad Astronomy (www.badastronomy.com). The intent of this website is to eradicate misconceptions people have about space and general science. For example, Bad Astronomy debunks the common misconceptions that an egg can stand on its end during the Vernal Equinox and that water drains one direction in the northern hemisphere and the opposite direction in the southern hemisphere. A few sites are interested in the vastness of space.

When I began my quest to gather the true facts of the lunar landing, I went to SPA CE.com (www.space.com). Although this website gave me no answers for my friend’s argument, I spent a significant amount of time reading up on the latest stories related to space. For example, before the rest of the media picked up on this story, I learned that U.S. businessman, Dennis Tito, paid Russia U.S. $20 million for the chance to fly to the international space station. As a result, Tito was the first space tourist. (I wonder when I’ll be able to scrape up the $20 million to buy my own ticket into space.)

SPA CE.com is more than just a news site. At SPA CE.com, you can also learn about the latest research related to space. SPA CE.com also features several sections devoted to space and popular culture. For example, you can visit the Science Fiction page to read about how space is portrayed in movies and on television.

For the latest space news, check out Space Daily (www.spacedaily.com). Space Daily features a variety of “channels” devoted to specific areas of space information. For example, this website has channels devoted to information about Mars, space commerce, and space technology. One channel is dedicated to the possibility of space warfare. (Russia formed their Space Force units this month.) I left this website realizing that Star Wars may be a reality in the future.

All of the articles come from actual news agencies. Reading through the latest breaking news at this website helped me to understand that space is still a great new frontier into which we, as a society, are rapidly expanding.

When a person talks about space, naturally the National Aeronautic and Space Administration (NASA) is mentioned. NASA runs its own website at www.nasa.gov. Browsing through this website, you can read about current NASA projects and the past accomplishments and milestones NASA has reached. Along with information about NASA itself, this website is a great resource for learning about the wonders of space in general. If you are curious about black holes, space weather, the sun, or myriad other topics, you can satisfy much of your curiosity here.

Closely related to NASA’s website is the Kennedy Space Center website at www.ksc.nasa.gov. As you undoubtedly know, the Kennedy Space Center, located on Cape Canaveral in Florida, has been the launch pad for most U.S. space missions for the last 50 years. At the Kennedy website, you can view recent launches and learn more about ideas on the drawing board for future space travel.

If you want to tour the solar system from the safety and security of your own home, then see what National Geographic’s Virtual Solar System (www.goldenapples. com/solarsystem) has to offer. At Virtual Solar System, you can embark on a journey taking you from our sun past all of the planets into the far reaches of space beyond Pluto. As a result, Tito was the first space tourist. (I wonder when I’ll be able to scrape up the $20 million to buy my own ticket into space.)
Product Snapshots

With technology advancing all around us, new products hit the market every day. Product Snapshots gives you a first look at some of the new products on the market that we find interesting. Please note that these are first looks; we have not conducted exhaustive testing of the products.

WATTBUG

With California caught up in an energy crisis and much of the world poised to follow, the WattBug, designed by Inci Mutlo, is an engaging, little, firefly-like device designed to help you keep your electricity usage in check.

A WattBug, designed to sit on your counter or desktop, wirelessly connects to your fuse box and keeps track of the amperage of electricity you are using in your home. When you are on the wasteful side (using above 12 amperes), the WattBug will frown and growl; its tail will also turn an irritated red. When your household power usage is low, however, the tail turns a contented green, and a smile appears on its face.

If you want to conserve electricity, lower your electric bills, and are into cute pets that promote responsibility, then the WattBug is the gadget for you. For more information about the WattBug, visit www.sustainer.org/Viridian.

EXCALIBUR'S KING ARTHUR

If you want to learn how to play chess better or if you have mastered the game so completely that you can't find good competition anymore, check out the King Arthur electronic chess set from Excalibur Electronics.

If you want to improve your chess playing abilities, you can use the tutorial program to learn great opening moves and learn the solutions to checkmate problems. If you just cannot find competition equal to your abilities, the King Arthur electronic chess set enables you to raise the difficulty level until you meet your match.

One of the most interesting features of the King Arthur electronic chess set is the large LCD display. This display shows the entire chess board, along with the game play on the board. In fact, you could even play on the LCD display instead of using the game pieces.

The King Arthur chess set not only keeps track of your wins, draws, and losses, but it also keeps track of your progress using a point rating system. In addition, the King Arthur chess set enables you to watch as the 32 greatest games of all time unfold. You can even follow along with the annotation in your user's manual.

The King Arthur electronic chess set is available through retail channels for U.S. $79.95. For more information, visit Excalibur’s web site at www.excaliburelectronics.com.

GAME OF THE MONTH

In keeping with the space theme, Giants: Citizen Kabuto is this month’s game of the month. Giants: Citizen Kabuto draws you into the plot as you play one of three different alien species trying to subdue others on a distant planet. Giants: Citizen Kabuto leads you through plot after plot of science-fiction craziness.

Since the release of the initial first-person shooter games, many developers have tried to improve upon, and make a buck from, the success of this genre. Games such as Castle Wolfenstein and Doom gave gamers their first opportunities to experience level after level from their own perspective. Giants: Citizen Kabuto takes this genre a step further. Combining beautiful graphics, great pre-rendered movies, and a creative plot, Giants: Citizen Kabuto keeps you playing for hours.

In Giants: Citizen Kabuto, you get a chance to play as one of three different species, the Meccs, the Sea Reapers, or Kabuto. The Meccs are a bumbling group of vacationers who are stranded on an unfriendly planet after they had problems with their starship. The Sea Reapers, the indigenous species of the planet, are forced to live underwater after a science experiment gone awry takes over the land. Created by the Sea Reapers, Kabuto is the powerful monster who was designed to protect the Sea Reapers but instead turned on them and then drove them to live in the sea.

You begin the game as the Meccs. After the Meccs, you continue to play as the Sea Reapers and finally you’ll play Kabuto himself. For those of you worrying that you play the same game over and over again just with different characters, don’t worry. Each group has different objectives and visits different parts of the planet. Giants: Citizen Kabuto is an ongoing story of the different species not getting along with each other and with themselves.

Between each action scene, you experience a brief respite while you watch characters in the game in short, pre-rendered movies. These vignettes add insight into the broad story line as you play the game, and they cause the characters you play to come alive. The stories are both comical and engaging. For example, the Meccs, with their bumbling ways, get themselves involved in hilarious predicaments that add to the story and keep you smiling.

A wide assortment of resources—including weapons, skills, and other items—are available to each species through a group of indigenous creatures called Smarties. Although these items will help you accomplish each mission, these missions are still difficult and challenging.

Giants: Citizen Kabuto also offers a multiplayer option that can be played over Interplay’s Internet gaming network. In this format, players can choose to be any of the species as they try to take each other out.

Giants: Citizen Kabuto requires, as a minimum, a PII 350 with 64 MB of RAM, a 3-D accelerator video card, and about 900 MB of free hard-drive space. I would advise you to have at least a PIII 600, 128 MB of RAM, a 3-D accelerator card with 16 MB of on-board memory, and 1.3 GB of free hard-drive space so that you can more fully enjoy the high-quality graphics and movies.

We want to hear from you. You can send your reviews of new and interesting web sites, games, or products to editors@ncmag.com.