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ANTIQUÉ SPACE SHUTTLE BELONGS IN A MUSEUM – NOT IN SPACE

Can you imagine Lindbergh attempting to cross the Atlantic in the Wright Brothers airplane? In 1903, the Wright Brothers aircraft reached a top speed of 30 mph. Twenty-four years later, Lindbergh flew to Paris at 117 mph.

In 1927, passengers were being shuttled between cities in Boeing Model 80's and Ford Tri-motors. Can you imagine still flying between Dallas Love Field and Houston Hobby Airport in a Fokker Tri-Motor in 1951, when Douglas DC-6's had already been carrying passengers since 1946?

In 1951, twenty-four years after Lindbergh's transatlantic flight, the Douglas D-558-2 had reached a top speed of 1,240 mph, nearly 1,000 mph faster than the speed record attained by the Super Marine Napier in 1927.

In 1957, the Soviet Union started the "space race" with the launch of Sputnik I. Can you imagine the Russians still exploring space twenty-four years later in antique Sputniks, while America launched the first Space Shuttle?

Just as technology has advanced exponentially every twenty-four years over the last 102 years since the Wright Brothers managed to hit a top speed of 30 mph in the air, it stands to reason that sending humans into space using 1981 technology is just plain stupid.

Just think about computers and the almost unbelievable advances in that technology alone. Compare 1981 automobiles to 2005 cars. Compare just about anything high-tech between the 1981 version and the 2005 version.

It is my opinion that NASA and our Federal Government have been irresponsible at least from 1986 to date:

- (1) By 1981 and beyond, it had become evident that sending humans into space was largely unnecessary and exposed humans to unacceptable risks. Spending millions of dollars to carry Elementary School children's cages of rats with them, trip after trip, was certainly not advancing scientific knowledge, and furthermore cages of rats do not need human keepers in space. Congress and NASA failed to take appropriate action.

- (2) If it was determined that human space travel still made sense after 1981, then NASA should have been spending money to produce the next generation of vehicles rather than spending millions to “keep the old ship running”. Congress and NASA failed to take appropriate action.
- (3) Perhaps the 1986 Challenger Space Shuttle disaster wasn’t enough to scuttle the program, but it certainly should have been a warning. The 2003 Columbia disaster should have been the absolute nail in the coffin of a dangerous and obsolete technology. Congress and NASA failed to take appropriate action.

If the Space Shuttle Discovery crew makes it home safe and sound, then the “ship” should immediately be taken to the Smithsonian Institution and put on permanent display. Not one penny more of the tax payer’s money needs to be spent on trying to put “Humpty Dumpty together again”.

If the Space Shuttle Discovery crew does not make it home safe and sound, then, in my opinion, Congress and NASA will be to blame and the culprits should be held accountable.

Regardless, it was, and is, just plain stupid to have wasted untold millions of dollars senselessly endangering humans by continuing to patch these worn-out shuttles together with duct tape and bailing wire while our biosphere and the very life support systems of our species and all others on our planet are being systematically destroyed.

Our obligation at this point in human history should be to understand, preserve and protect Planet Earth and limit space exploration to unmanned vehicles studying our own biosphere in order to be able to better understand it, and heal the damage our species has already caused before it is too late.

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George H. Russell, an outspoken opponent of the death penalty, is a resident of Huntsville, Texas, known worldwide as "The City of Death."

He is founder of The Patriot Network, and author of its 35+ web sites located at www.patriotnetwork.org, as well as founder of The Universal Ethician Church, an interfaith ministry with a worldwide following via the church's 275+ web sites located at www.salvationnetwork.org.

Russell, 60, is an educational video producer, environmental activist, historic preservation specialist, photographer, art and antique collector, philanthropist, American patriot and ethician.

Additional biographical information may be found in *Who's Who in America*, through Internet searches, and in other publications. Images of Mr. Russell suitable for downloading for publication may be found at www.salvationnetwork.org.