

**Epilogue:**  
**Address Given at a Tricentennial Celebration,**  
**4 July 2076, by Leonard Vincennes,**  
**Official Historian of Luna City**

*Ladies, Gentlemen, and Robots:*

**I**t is a great honor to be asked to give Luna City's official Tricentennial Address, celebrating the three hundredth anniversary of the independence of the nation of my forefathers, the United States of America, Earth.

*It is also a weighty responsibility, for this date marks not only the three hundredth year of American independence, but also the seventy-fifth year since the permanent settlement of our own great nation of Luna by pioneers from the United States.*

*I am extremely gratified, therefore, to see such a large and enthusiastic turnout for this anniversary dinner. Not only have we filled the Assembly Hall tonight, but this speech is being beamed to every nation on Earth. Believe me, the warmth of your applause and support is just about all that's holding me up right now. Even in one-sixth g, my knees are knocking here behind the podium.*

*As a historian, I have always been fascinated by the words of Astronaut Sheila Davidson on that historic occasion, seventy-five years ago, when she became the first American to set foot on the Moon in twenty-nine years: "We're back, and this time we're going to stay!" I hasten to assure you, I'm not going to stay up here at the podium for very long!*

*The reason for my fascination, as a historian, with Davidson's words is that they bring into clear focus the parallels between the first landings and eventual settlement on the Moon and the earlier European discovery and eventual settlement of the New World of the Americas.*

**T**he Vikings, the Polynesians, perhaps even the Carthaginians, all "discovered" America centuries before Columbus. And, of course, every human being who had ever looked into the night sky had "discovered" the Moon. However, it was Columbus' landings in America that actually awakened the Europeans to the fact that a whole new world existed on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. More importantly, Columbus' pioneering voyages proved that the Atlantic could be crossed, and that the ocean was not a barrier but a

highway—a highway that could lead to riches beyond Europe's wildest imagination. It took nearly a century, however, for the Europeans to realize this. At first they were disappointed that Columbus had not reached Asia. At one point, Columbus was returned forcibly to Spain, under arrest, in chains, humiliated and disgraced.

Eventually, Europe realized that this New World had fantastic new wealth to offer. They plundered it for gold and silver at first, the kind of hard metallic wealth that they could easily understand. Later, when they had established permanent colonies in the Americas, new kinds of wealth crossed the Atlantic to enrich Europe: tobacco, maize (Indian corn), and the lowly potato made more fortunes for more people than the gold of the Incas or the silver of the Aztecs.

Later still, a treasure of infinitely greater worth was discovered in North America. We celebrate that treasure tonight: the development of large-scale democracy, the realization that government should be based not on the whims of kings, but on the will of the people. This great leap forward in individual human freedom culminated in the Declaration of Independence, which established the United States of America as a separate and free nation.

Note the parallels with the history of our own nation of Luna.

The first men to land on the Moon had no idea of what they had accomplished. They had come, basically, for the adventure of it, for the thrill of setting foot where no human being had stepped before, for the honor, in the words of a popular dramatic entertainment of that era, of "boldly going where no man had gone before."

Those brave astronauts had been sent to the Moon mainly as a result of the competition between the two great superpowers of the mid 20th Century: the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The two nations were engaged in a "space race" at the time. Once the United States reached the Moon, the race was declared finished, and no one set foot on the Moon again for nearly three decades.

Although the Moon receded from the attention of the politicians and the general public, that handful of Apollo astronauts had accomplished something far more important than most people realized. They had proved, much like Columbus nearly five centuries earlier, that space is not a barrier. It is a highway, a road to riches.

The three decades between Neil Armstrong and Sheila Davidson saw the development of a powerful space technology that began to transform the Earth. Not only did Earth-orbiting satellites take on global tasks such as communications, weather observation, and resource monitoring; but planetary probes began the investigation of the other worlds of our solar system; orbiting telescopes searched the distant stars; and the first tentative experiments in space manufacturing were begun. All the industrialized nations of the Earth began to work in space, and soon enough the less-developed nations began to see space technology as a means to enrich their own economies.

*Then, seventy-five years ago, astronauts returned to the Moon. The permanent habitation of this world began.*

*Like the Conquistadores of old, the first wave of settlers came to the Moon in search of mineral wealth. Not gold or silver, of course. They sought aluminum and silicon, oxygen and titanium for the factories in orbit near the Earth, and water. In those pioneering days, water was far more precious than gold in space, and also more expensive.*

*Soon they found other forms of wealth, which today are the basis of Luna's economy. We export energy to Earth, and our mining expeditions to the asteroids have been so successful that last year they supplied more than fifty percent of the raw materials used by factories on Earth itself. The energy and natural resources we supply to Earth have raised the standard of living across the planet, and have helped in no small way to usher in the era of peace and international cooperation that has marked the twenty-first century and made it so different from the twentieth.*

*Most important, however, have been the social, moral, scientific, and spiritual riches that we have gained since permanently settling the Moon.*

*As I look out on this distinguished audience, I see men and women from every part of Earth. I see people who were born here, whose children have migrated even farther from their ancestral home and now live in the great habitation complexes that ply the trade routes out to the asteroid belt. I see robots, whose intelligence is different from that of human but no less valued and no less revered. Without your untiring contributions, the human habitation of the Moon could never have been accomplished.*

*We, here on the Moon, have achieved a new level of society, integrating men and women of all races, all religions, and all political backgrounds into a harmonious, productive, prosperous community. We serve as an example to the nations and peoples of Earth, many of whom are still striving to reach the equality and freedom that we take for granted as citizens of the nation of Luna.*

*And, as you all know, it was our own Farside Observatory that first picked up the faint microwave signals from the region of the Veil Nebula, in the constellation Cygnus. While as yet the astronomers have not been able to determine exactly which star these signals originate from, they have conclusively demonstrated that the signals are purposeful, that intelligent life does exist elsewhere in our galaxy.*

*The parallels with the American experience are manifest, and just as America reached out beyond the limits of planet Earth to establish this human settlement here and help it grow into an independent community, we of Luna have already started to send our children deeper into the wilderness of space. Someday we may send them beyond the reaches of our solar system altogether.*

*Where will those children of ours be a quarter century from now, on the first centennial of Luna's original settlement? They will go as far as our own vision and faith*

**860 / Epilogue**

*allow them to go. And they will send back to us new wealths of knowledge, new vistas of hope, new visions of the universe.*

*Thank you.*

*This speech was "ghost written," somewhat in advance of the date on which it is to be delivered, by Ben Bova, president of the National Space Institute and author.*