



Aliens On Earth.com

Resources for those who are stranded here



Our Bookstore is **OPEN**

Over 5000 new & used titles, competitively priced!

Topics: [UFOs](#) - [Paranormal](#) - [Area 51](#) - [Ghosts](#) - [Fortean](#) - [Conspiracy](#) - [History](#) - [Biography](#) - [Psychology](#) - [Religion](#) - [Crime](#) - [Health](#) - [Geography](#) - [Maps](#) - [Science](#) - [Money](#) - [Language](#) - [Recreation](#) - [Technology](#) - [Fiction](#) - [Other](#) - [New](#)

Search... for keyword(s)

in Page Titles

[Mothership](#) -> [Ufomind Mailing List](#) -> [1999](#) -> [Sep](#) -> Here

NOTICE: The page below has been permanently FROZEN as of January 2000. Due to resource limitations, this section of our website is no longer maintained, so some links may not work and some information may be out of date. We have retained this page for archive reference only, and we cannot vouch for its accuracy. Broken links will not be repaired, and minor errors will not be corrected. You are responsible for independently verifying any information you may find here. [More Info](#)

Bigelow Article in Washington Post

From: Millennium <mtwain@ihug.co.nz>
Date: Wed, 29 Sep 1999 17:26:08 -0700

Space Tourism's Boosters Start Countdown
Joel Glenn Brenner, Special to The Washington Post; 07-25-1999

Like many who witnessed the glory and spectacle of the Cold War space race, Robert Bigelow grew up devouring sci-fi novels, sketching rockets in his schoolbooks and wondering when it would be his turn to fly to the moon. Now, at 55, the Las Vegas multimillionaire still has dreams of blasting into orbit--only he's going to do it in style.

The owner of the Budget Suites of America hotel chain is investing as much as \$500 million of his real estate fortune to design and build a 100-passenger luxury cruise ship that will permanently orbit the moon, giving vacationers a week-long excursion they'll never forget. For Americans waxing nostalgic about Apollo on the 30th anniversary of the first moon landing, Bigelow may be the best chance, however remote, of seeing lunar dreams fulfilled.

"It's up to private enterprise to get the general public into space in our lifetimes," Bigelow said in a weighty tone, as though he alone were carrying this burden. "It is imperative that we create user-friendly, market-driven projects like this one or it will never happen."

The Las Vegas native, who made his fortune developing apartment complexes and mid-priced hotels throughout the Southwest, said he realizes his vision is "highly experimental." But he also firmly believes that he can succeed where NASA and other aerospace companies have failed. "I know a lot more about aerospace than NASA knows about business," he said, his voice brimming with confidence. "The government's launch costs are outrageous; I can do it for one-twentieth of what they're spending."

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's shuttle program costs about \$10,000 per pound and private launch companies spend about \$8,000 per pound to get their payloads into orbit, experts said. At that price, Bigelow's \$500 million is mere pocket change. But if launch companies are able to develop less-expensive means of orbital transportation, that per-pound cost could drop dramatically--something Bigelow is counting on.

More than a dozen private firms are currently trying to develop reusable rockets that could potentially cut the payload cost to \$1,000

per pound, maybe less. But so far, none of these rockets exists.

"We're getting close, but we're still not there," said Thomas Rogers, chief scientist for the Space Transportation Association. "If the commercialization of space is ever going to take off, we're going to have to overcome this barrier."

Bigelow hopes the lure of his "cruise ship" idea will provide a crucial incentive to reusable-rocket makers, which have been struggling because of lack of capital. "I expect to provide [these companies] with a market for their product," Bigelow said. "That, in turn, should help them raise money to finish their plans."

GARY C. HUDSON, president of Rotary Rocket Co., which is developing a reusable single-stage rocket that is undergoing tests in the Mojave Desert, called Bigelow "an angel" and likened him to the royalty of the 1700s who privately sponsored seafaring voyages to the Far East and the New World. "This is just the kind of boost we've been waiting for," said Hudson, who plans to have his vehicle in commercial service next year.

Bigelow shrugs off such accolades. The extremely private real estate mogul has always been interested in outer space and the paranormal. He donated millions of dollars to the University of Nevada at Las Vegas to fund a "consciousness studies" program and he bankrolls the nonprofit National Institute for Discovery Science, which researches such out-of-the-box concepts as creating interstellar "wormholes" using nuclear explosions.

But his new project, privately funded Bigelow Aerospace Co., is about more than cosmic curiosity: It's about being at the vanguard of the "dawning age of space tourism," as he puts it. It also reflects these flush economic times. Vacationers are already paying tens of thousands of dollars to climb Mount Everest or explore the Antarctic, Bigelow points out.

A journey into space would represent the ultimate tourist destination, easily worth a few hundred thousand dollars per ticket. Recent surveys on behalf of adventure travel companies have shown as many as 10,000 people say they are willing to spend \$1 million or more for an experience in space.

"This is the beginning of the future," he said matter-of-factly. "It's people like me that are going to get the public into space -- not NASA, not some internationally sponsored space station."

This assessment was echoed last week at a symposium in Houston where more than 100 scientists, researchers and engineers--and even a few former Apollo astronauts--met to discuss the future of the moon. Virtually everyone at the conference agreed with Bigelow, saying it is time to take the moon out of the government's hands and place it squarely with the private sector. The idea of a lunar cruise ship was met not with snickers but with a hearty "it's about time" sense of relief.

"This is not a pie-in-the-sky fantasy," insisted rocket scientist Greg Bennett, who presented Bigelow's plans. "The technology is there; the know-how is there. It's always been a matter of money and now Bigelow is closing that gap."

To be sure, Bigelow's \$500 million investment will cover just a fraction of the project's ultimate cost, even if launch costs drop dramatically. But it is a serious enough commitment to make people stand up and take notice, and Bigelow himself speaks as if money is his last concern.

"I'm not in this for the profit," he said. "I don't expect to see any return for at least 15 years--if ever. This is all a big experiment."

But it's one the Las Vegas native is taking very much to heart. "I'll put in more than [\$500 million] if that's what it takes," he said. "My only hope is that this company can be a catalyst for change, that we can alter the way people view space and make everyone realize that it's up to the private sector to make things happen."

Just how much capital Bigelow can afford to invest is unclear. The developer owns all of his companies outright--including the Budget Suites hotel chain, which analysts estimate is worth about \$600 million, and a number of large apartment complexes and other real estate assets around Las Vegas worth about \$400 million, according to

other Las Vegas developers.

Further obscuring the picture, Bigelow has generally kept himself out of the public spotlight; he has never been profiled by the media or granted a face-to-face interview, and he declined to be photographed for this story. He said he is only talking about his aerospace plans because "there is a general need to educate the public," not because he's seeking personal glory.

But these are reasons, too, that he believes he'll be successful. "The only shareholder I have to answer to is Mrs. Bigelow," he said, only half joking. "There isn't a public company in America that could take the risks I'm taking--I have no investors breathing down my neck, no need for short-term profits," he continued. "And if I say I'm going to do something, I do it."

Evidence of "Mr. B's" commitment is everywhere, said Bennett, a 30-year aerospace veteran who left his job at Houston's Johnson Space Center in April to become Bigelow's vice president of spacecraft development. The company is already running full-page advertisements in Space News and other publications to hire the researchers, industrial engineers, architects and scientists who will try to turn Bigelow's vision into reality.

The company plans to break ground next year on its new Las Vegas headquarters--a rocket-shaped building surrounded by a moat, "to give it the impression of being on a launch pad," said Bennett. With 60,000 square feet set aside for building models and developing the space ship, the production facility will rival those of aerospace giants such as Lockheed Martin Corp. and Boeing Co.

The cruise ship itself will be just as impressive. Though there are no artist renderings yet, Bennett said he is designing a craft equipped with artificial gravity and appointed with all the amenities of an opulent ocean liner, complete with private bathrooms, bedrooms and individual portal windows for viewing the earth, moon and planets. Like a scene straight out of "The Jetsons," the cruise ship will also contain an observation deck and gymnasium, a dining room with "real" food and possibly even a means of allowing passengers to take a brief walk in the cosmos.

It all sounds a bit wacky, Bigelow admits. But Apollo astronaut Buzz Aldrin, an ardent supporter of Bigelow's idea, gushes: "This is completely within the realm of possibility. For 30 years we've been waiting for a chance to go back to the moon. But it's never been a matter of technology, only desire."

"We need more Bob Bigelows," seconded Alan Binder, chief scientist for NASA's Lunar Prospector mission, which last year discovered evidence of water frozen in the moon's polar craters. "His project alone could jump-start an entire lunar industry."

A lunar orbiting cruise ship would undoubtedly be a ferociously hungry beast, requiring thousands of rocket launches annually just to keep it supplied with food, crew members and passengers--not to mention clean linens and toilet paper. A commercial lunar base could provide supplies such as fuel and water, said Binder. And while there are bound to be many skeptics, Bennett, who has only been on the job for two months, said he has absolutely no doubt that Bigelow's dreams will come to fruition.

Asked how he can be so certain, he smiled wryly and said, "This isn't NASA," referring to the agency's endless bureaucracy. "We've got the know-how, and he's got the money. It's a beautiful combination."

Besides, Bennett quipped, "Robert Bigelow is the only man in the world with his own pet rocket scientist."

+-----+
 UFOMIND MAILING LIST
Supporting the World's Largest Paranormal Website
www.ufomind.com Moderator: Glenn Campbell

Archived at: <http://www.ufomind.com/misc/>
Submissions to: ufomind@lists.best.com
"unsubscribe" (in body) to: ufomind-request@lists.best.com

+-----+

RELEVANCE OF THIS MESSAGE: UFO personalities

Index: [Robert Bigelow](#) (#24)

[Mothership](#) -> [Ufomind Mailing List](#) -> [1999](#) -> [Sep](#) -> [Here](#)

[Our Design and Original Text Copyrighted](#) © 1994-99 [Area 51 Research Center](#)

PO Box 30303, Las Vegas, NV 89173 Glenn Campbell, Webmaster & Moderator

This site is supported by the [Ufomind Bookstore](#)
Please visit our business if you appreciate our free web services. [New Items](#)

Send corrections to webmaster@ufomind.com

This page: <http://www.aliensonearth.com/misc/1999/sep/d30-001.shtml> (9/30/00 8:53)

We encourage you to link to this page from your own. No permission required.

Created: Sep 30, 1999