

## *'A Second Kind of Frontier'*

The X Prize Triumph and the Future of Space Travel

**O**n October 4, 2004, the anniversary of the Sputnik launch, the \$10 million Ansari X Prize to encourage private spaceflight was won by a team that sent a manned rocket ship into space twice in five days. Before the end of the year, Congress passed the Commercial Space Launch Amendments Act, which aimed to protect what could be a fledgling space tourism industry. The sponsor of that legislation, Rep. Dana Rohrabacher of California, the Republican chairman of the space subcommittee, spoke on October 6, 2004, about the X Prize victory. His comments, taken from the Congressional Record, appear below.

Mr. Speaker, there are two kind of frontiers. There are physical frontiers:

uncharted land, unseen depths of oceans, unexplored space. And then there are frontiers of imagination: frontiers that require us to think a new way, to have a vision beyond what others see, to question assumptions about what is technologically possible.

Today, we honor Mojave Aerospace Ventures' SpaceShipOne, the winner of the X Prize, for traversing this *second* kind of frontier.

Suborbital space is not a new destination. Brian Binnie and Mike Melvill, the pilots of SpaceShipOne, did not fly higher, farther, or longer than the astronauts who came before them, yet Brian and Mike, together with SpaceShipOne designer Burt Rutan

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and sponsor Paul Allen, have nonetheless crossed a critical frontier. They have accepted and exceeded the X Prize Foundation's challenge, proving that commercial space transportation is viable and that space and its exploration and utilization will not be the sole arena of government, but is also open to the private sector and to private individuals and private companies.

The achievement of Mojave Aerospace will no doubt spur more entrepreneurial space ventures and inspire other dreamers to become doers.

Burt Rutan's design for SpaceShipOne has been said to echo that of the X-15, an experimental Cold War rocket plane like SpaceShipOne. It was launched in flight from a larger aircraft. It is not only Burt Rutan's elegant design, however, that reminds us of another time. The spirit of his team and the X Prize competition recalls the spirit of the early years of our nation's space race. It recalls the Charles Lindbergh transatlantic flight which was also the result of a prize that was offered for the ... first nonstop trip from New York to Paris.

It also reminds us of Chuck Yeager, and others like Chuck Yeager, who broke the records of the sound barrier and other records in flight. It reminds us of these other moments when these other barriers were broken and new opportunities were created in the accomplishment.

This spirit of exploration, this drive to push the limits of technology and

endurance, is a signature of the American experience; that human flight into space, we now can say, is no longer the arena only of government and only the purview of companies that are directly financed by government, but now is open to private individuals and private companies and private enterprise and individual enterprise.

The X Prize awakens us to this spirit with a new generation of explorers. It awakens the spirit in students who will study science and math and engineering, as well as those who have been inspired toward bold innovations in other fields...

Today, we honor the winners of the X Prize for their victory and for completing the first privately funded, human, suborbital space flight. We also commend the X Prize Foundation and the 25 other teams who vied for the prize. We look forward to watching commercial space transportation continue to develop, engaging new investors and engineers, scientists and pilots in the business of exploration.

This X Prize concept of offering a reward for an achievement, a technological achievement, is not a time that is past. What we have seen, through this accomplishment by Mojave Aerospace, is that this may be a vehicle to achieve new goals in space.... Hopefully, it will encourage further achievements that will help the United States and all of humankind set new records and push the frontiers.