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# Memories of moon landing still burn bright in community

By Sara Samora | The Herald-Zeitung Jul 20, 2019

Fifty years ago Gerald Koch was working as a bartender in Austin, where a projector was setup for everyone there to view the moon landing. "It was quite a thing," Koch said. "America was standing tall that day."

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Today is the 50th Anniversary of Apollo 11 and man's first step on the moon, an event that left a longstanding impression on New Braunfelsers who witnessed it.

At the Comal County Senior Center, members recalled where they were when astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin made history.

Juanita Wells was working part-time as a waitress at restaurant in Minneapolis at the time. She said she, her coworkers and their customers watched the event on the television, cheering.

"It was awesome," Wells said, smiling.

Gerald Koch was also working part-time, but as a bartender in Austin, where a projector was set up for everyone there to watch together.

“It was quite a thing,” Koch said. “America was standing tall that day.”

Koch said he was in the Air Force then, and his father-in-law was one of the Chrysler engineers on the Saturn V rocket in Louisiana, so he knew a little bit about it.

“The tremendous advancement, the technology and the science the United States made behind getting the people to the moon is fantastic,” Koch said. “It shows what a great country we can be.”

Jerry Finke was serving in the Navy and stationed in Guam at the time, so he and the people on the small island did not get to witness the moon landing live.

“We heard it on the news but we didn’t tune in to the coverage until several days later when they flew the tape up there,” Finke said.

Although satellite television did not exist at the time, there was a tracking station in Guam, allowing Finke and others on the island to hear the details.

The Vietnam War was still going on at the time, and Finke was focused on his duties. Still, Finke thought the moon landing — and that the U.S. did something like that — was great.

“It’s been 50 years and we had a good start, but why in the hell did we stop?” Finke said. “That’s my biggest thing. We should’ve been back here three or four times and doing stuff and beyond that.”

New Braunfels transplant Josef Wyrwal was 18 and living in Germany when Apollo 11 happened. It was lunchtime, and a big grocery store had placed five or seven TVs on the outside windows, all in anticipation for the moon landing. A crowd gathered.

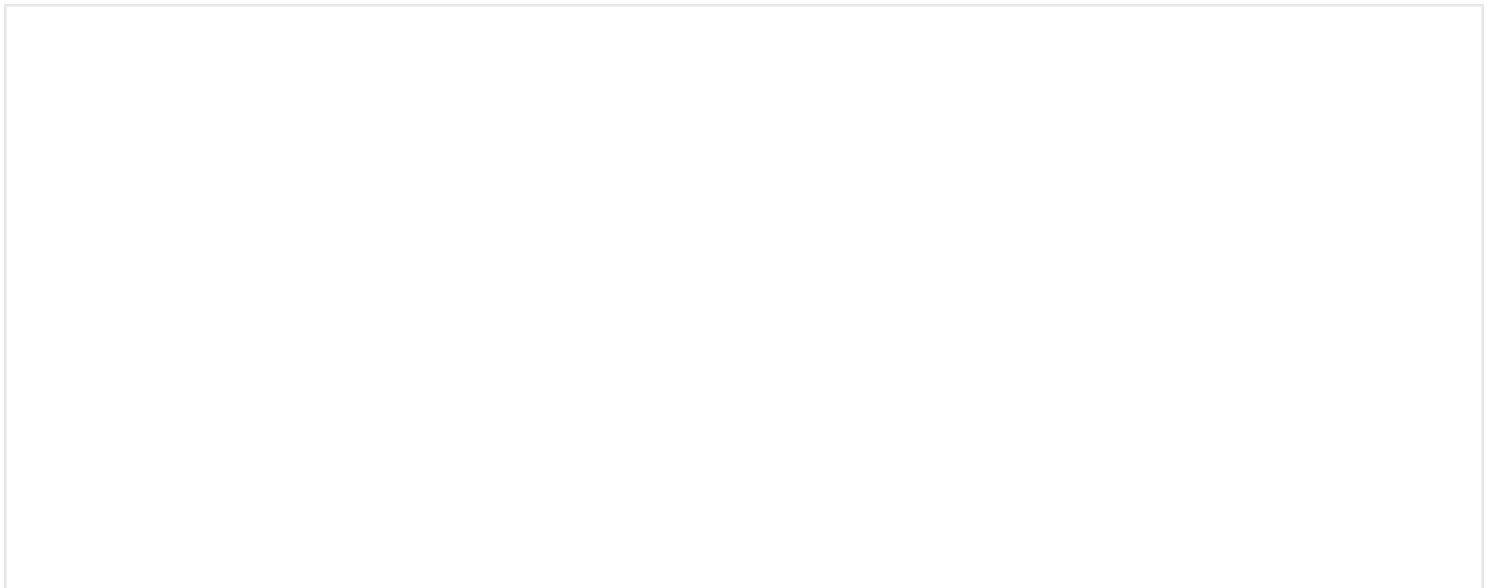
“Like a football stadium, first row was the best,” Wyrwal said, laughing.

The historic event caused him and his coworkers to run late for work. While their manager wasn’t mean about their tardiness, he told them they could not be late.

“And then my colleague said, ‘Yeah, but it’s not every day somebody runs to the moon,’” Wyrwal said “So it was a good excuse for us.”

He said people will never forget the names, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin.

“It was amazing and you think, ‘God, that’s real?’ And it was real.”





NB man one of the few on deck as Apollo 11 returned home