

Space

By Howie Flomberg

Today, March 3, 1847 Alexander Graham Bell was born. One might call Bell the “Father of Geek Dom.” As a self admitted geek I honor his memory

On Friday, May 5, 1961 Alan Shepard was blasted aboard a Mercury-Redstone 3 into a sub-orbital flight that lasted fifteen minutes and twenty-eight seconds. A fourteen-year-old boy sat riveted in his chair in JHS 50, NY. The entire mission was broadcast on the school intercom.

I was brought up on Tom Corbett, Space Cadet, Buck Rogers, Jules Verne and H.G. Wells. Space-men replaced cowboys and detectives in my young mind as the heroes that I wanted to follow. I sat glued to my television for every Mercury mission and every Gemini mission that I was able to. I cried over the deaths of the crew of Apollo 1. I was at work on February 1, 2003 when The Columbia was lost after a two-week mission.

I was in Southeast Asia when Apollo 11 landed successfully on the moon, on July 20, 1969. I was unable to watch the landing on Television. There was no TV reception where I was that day. I did get to see reruns, but it was not the same thing. While I never had the opportunity to get involved in the space program, I did become a computer technician and later a programmer and a systems analyst. Not quite space but high tech for its day.

What brought this on? I was looking at today’s topic: “Mischievous” and I honestly drew a blank. I experimented with homemade gunpowder and built near-lethal rockets with a couple of my equally foolish friends. Although the rocket was branded a “pipe bomb” by the police, we were nowhere near the “launch site” when the police arrived. As a young teenager, while playing with my chemistry set, I discovered the effects of throwing Iron Filings on the gas range – I used that to totally convince my grandfather that I was a “bum;” but I discussed that previously.

With the exception of trying to further age my grandfather I don’t think I was actually ever mischievous. I was, and still am, insanely curious. My guiding phrase is “what would happen if ...” my sense of humor runs to the seriously macabre. On day I was somewhere I really did not want to be. We had suffered a rather surprising shelling. Afterwards we were cleaning up the god-awful mess and someone yelled “Can I get a hand over here?” I reached over, grabbed a human hand and threw it at him. The total senselessness of the action hit us all and we were laughing till we cried. That definitely falls into the “You had to be there” category. As I said – while I’ve never been mischievous, my flat-out strange sense of humor frequently gets me in trouble.