

The Columbus 500 Space Sail Cup:

SAILS OF EXPLORATION

Voyagers to the Past - Voyagers from the Future

Wither the Space Program

by Klaus P. Heiss

This is a brief account of the origins of the Columbus 500 Space Sail Cup, the potential vistas opened by this novel technologies, the battles of Space policy and Space exploration, "good guys and bad guys" and why a breakthrough in Space transportation technology is needed to liberate mankind's Space activities from the clutches of Space bureaucracy.

1. Power Lunch: the Summer of 1987.

Somewhere in the summer of 1987 I got a call from a good old friend of mine, Joe Blatchford: did I have any ideas on how his lawfirm could be of help to Martin Marietta, one of teh foremost US aerospace firms. The law firm had done outstanding work for other aerospace companies, indeed dating way back to the 60ies and seventies. With fondness I remember fishing trips starting out in some God foresaken fishing village in Washington State at 4:00 AM, certainly not awake, already filled up with beer, and then setting out with an armada of other

small boats - another version of D day and Pearl Harbor all combined into one - judgeing from the noise, the size of the flotilla, the determination of the crew and the passangers, ready to "kill". That any salmon are left in the North West is one of the marvels of the productivity of the oceans. And right there on these boats was the future of the US Space program - then and there - and of Space Transportation: the Boiengs, leading the way, the North American Rockwells, later just Rockwell, the Thiokols, the United Technologies, the Martin Mariettas, the Aerojets, Pratt Wittneys: we had met here in the summer of 1979 to discuss the single most urgent, obvious problem at hand: the Carter Administration - in its urge to destroy the Space Shuttle - but incapable - or niggardly - of telling the American people of what it had done, coutched that decision in the policy of but four Orbiters and possibly only one launch site: with one bureaucratic swoop the core of the US Space transportation program had been mortally wounded. The aerospace industry "knew" teh fatality of that decision - but who in the public, who in Congress, in particular, who in the media would lend any credence to the cries of "wolf": it would all be in vain.

It was at that juncture - in the Spring of 1978 - that I first suggested to the Office of Management and Budget, than to the investment community and finally to the

aerospace community that a consortium be formed to see to the private financing of additional orbiter(s): first the Fifth Orbiter, then others. It was then, in the Summer of 1979, that a Pat O'Connor participated with me in the first meetings out in Seattle of aerospace companies to explore precisely such a consortium. It was here that I met Pat, and with Pat the core of US space Transportation companies.

These dreams, these battles would all come to naught, culminating in the predicted explosion and catastrophic loss of Challenger in January of 1986. The events leading to that "Defining Moment" need to be explored elsewhere. But this is what led to this call on one of the hot summer days in 1987. I readily agreed to meet with Joe Blatchford. At the last moment, he had to cancel out, but his associate, James Symington, formerly chairman of the subcommittee on Space in the US Congress would meet with me. It was at that lunch that the Columbus 500 Space Sail idea moved from conjecture to reality: while exploring a wide range of Spacepolicy issues, and how these might affect Martin Marietta, James Symington mentioned in passing that he also was a member of the President's Columbus 500 Quincentenary Jubilee Commission. Was there anything one could suggest to them - and Martin Marietta - involving Space and exploration.

Right then and there I said: "Of course, a Space Sail Cup race to Mars". Thus was borne the Columbus 500 Space Sail Cup idea and competition.

We both obviously were stimulated by the great wine and cuisine in a restaurant right across from Jim's law offices on Pennsylvania Avenue and 19th Street. Jim knew me from testimony given before his committee in the 1970s on Space Transportation, remote sensing, other Space applications and aerospace issues in general. But for a moment there Jim doubted my sanity or seriousness or sobriety, more likely all three of these. So I explained. And went back in the history of Space exploration and concepts - that unending quest for ideas, frontiers, concepts and conflicts, without which life and history would be but a bore.

2. Voyagers from the Future - Voyagers to the Past.

What else makes one's heart heavy with anticipation and one's soul sing remembrances past and future but a sail unfolding over the waves of an endless sea: where the firm feel of the land and places so well known are left behind, setting out on a trip where nothing but the unknown, the uncertain, indeed risk to life and wellbeing awaits one over the infinity horizon of the endless sea. Yet, this is precisely what men set out to do, again and again over many a generation, from time immemorial, as if such voyages were

part of the genetic "imprint", indeed the very essence of life, the very reason of mankind's existence: I explore, therefore I am. I risk, therefore I am alive. I leave family, friends, wife and children behind, for unknown shores, to maybe return one day with untold fortunes, but more likely never to come back.

Just as over many a generation, hordes and tribes set out following the setting sun to "the end" - from East to West, or to the rising Sun, to the East, until "land's end", so the horizons of the sea have been an unending temptation and challenge to all mankind and all ages: the first voyages of Gilgamesh in Sumerian times, the navigational feats under Necho II of Egypt, circumnavigating Africa, the voyages of Ulysses, the flight of Carthaginian ships across the "columns of Hercules" the moving account in Dante in the thirteenth century of Ulysses's last voyage across those very same straights, the setting out by the Vikings across Europe and beyond over many a century, and one of the most audacious and untold stories of navigation and exploration: the people of Polynesia exploring and sailing the infinite vastness of the Pacific Ocean, with nothing but the stars, the winds and migratory birds to guide them over thousands of miles.

And yes, Columbus: with all the knowledge then existant about the Earth, its likely circumference, the approximate 40,000km: after being turned down by the academies of sciences both in Portugal and in Spain - each for the very valid reason that Columbus could never, ever reach India via a Wstern route, since the voyage was much to distant to eve be completed (how true !!), nevertheless set out and - rightly - became the single man to most contribute to the myth and the feats of exploration: a whole new continent, a whole new world, to change forever the destinies of Europe and mankind.

This is not a treatise on sails and sailing, nor of exploration. But when wind fills the sails of boats to set out to that distant horizon, it is these memories of accomplishments past - and of accomplishments yet to come - that fill our minds and our souls. They are part of our "memory". They are part of our "genetic code". To be that deeply ingrained, so deeply rooted, "sails" have to have a history much older, much deeper, much more infinite. Indeed they do. The record is here for all to see.

"SUN gods", Sails, the "skyfigures" of the Incas, the voyages of the Polynesians, the travails of Ulysses, Gylgamesh and his boat voyage.