



In the longer term, the private sector might pick up the slack and provide the much needed low-cost space access. This is Burt Rutan's Spaceship One, his entry into commercial spaceflight . He demonstrated his capabilities recently by winning the X-Prize.

It's apparent that Burt Rutan had the vision; his pilots had the courage. His vehicle was pretty basic, at best, but you can't knock success.

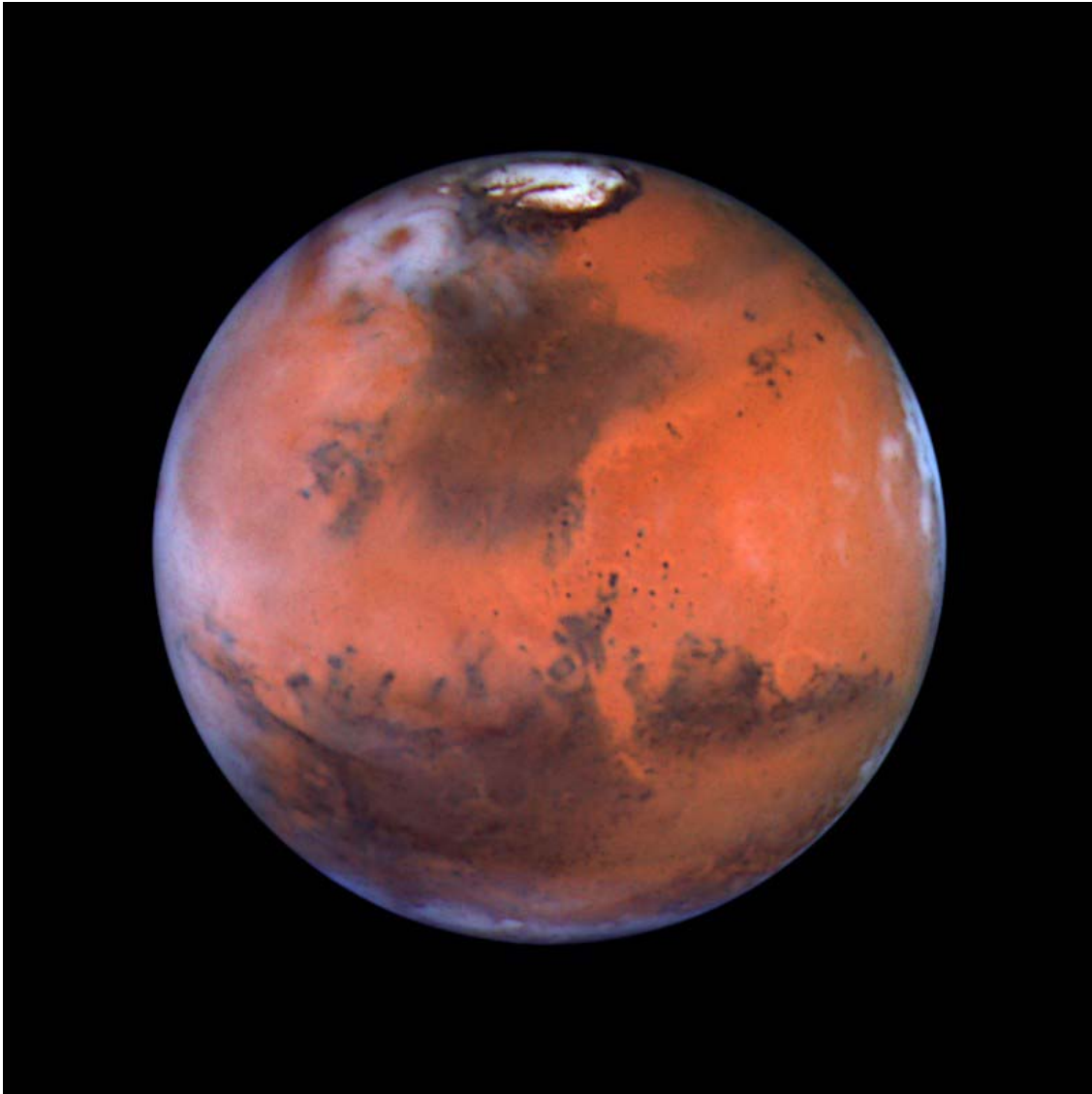
No doubt Burt runs a lean operation, which is in stark contrast to the massive, complex, often lethargic and error-prone bureaucracy formed by the Administration, Congress, NASA, other government agencies, and contractors. There's a saying about bureaucracy, "Not one of us, is as dumb as all of us."

What's needed is something between Burt Rutan and runaway bureaucracy. Clearly, commercialization can stimulate the space industry just like it did for the aircraft industry.



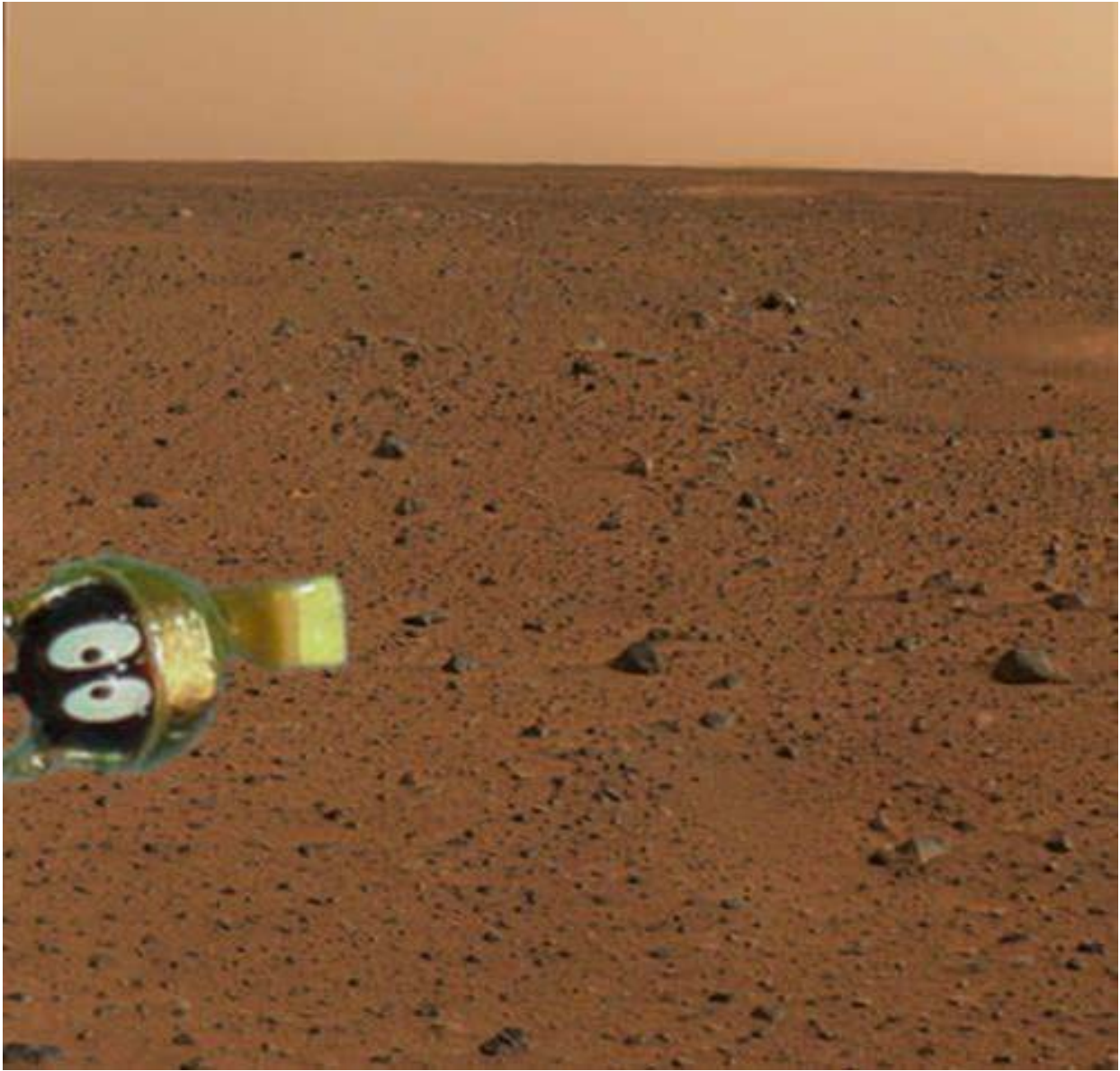
Next, we see a return to the moon, not only for further exploration, but also to better prepare us for our next step.

If I know Jack Schmitt, the geologist who got into the program with me, he was trying to find a way to bring back this rock sample.



Finally, using our experience from the Space Station and the moon, and maybe using them as actual stepping stones — it's on to Mars. When we do land there, it's importance may go well beyond exploration. Mars was once a much hotter and wetter place. It had a dense atmosphere and rivers flowed. So why's it so barren now? Once we understand the answer to that question, we'll also know more about the future of our own planet.

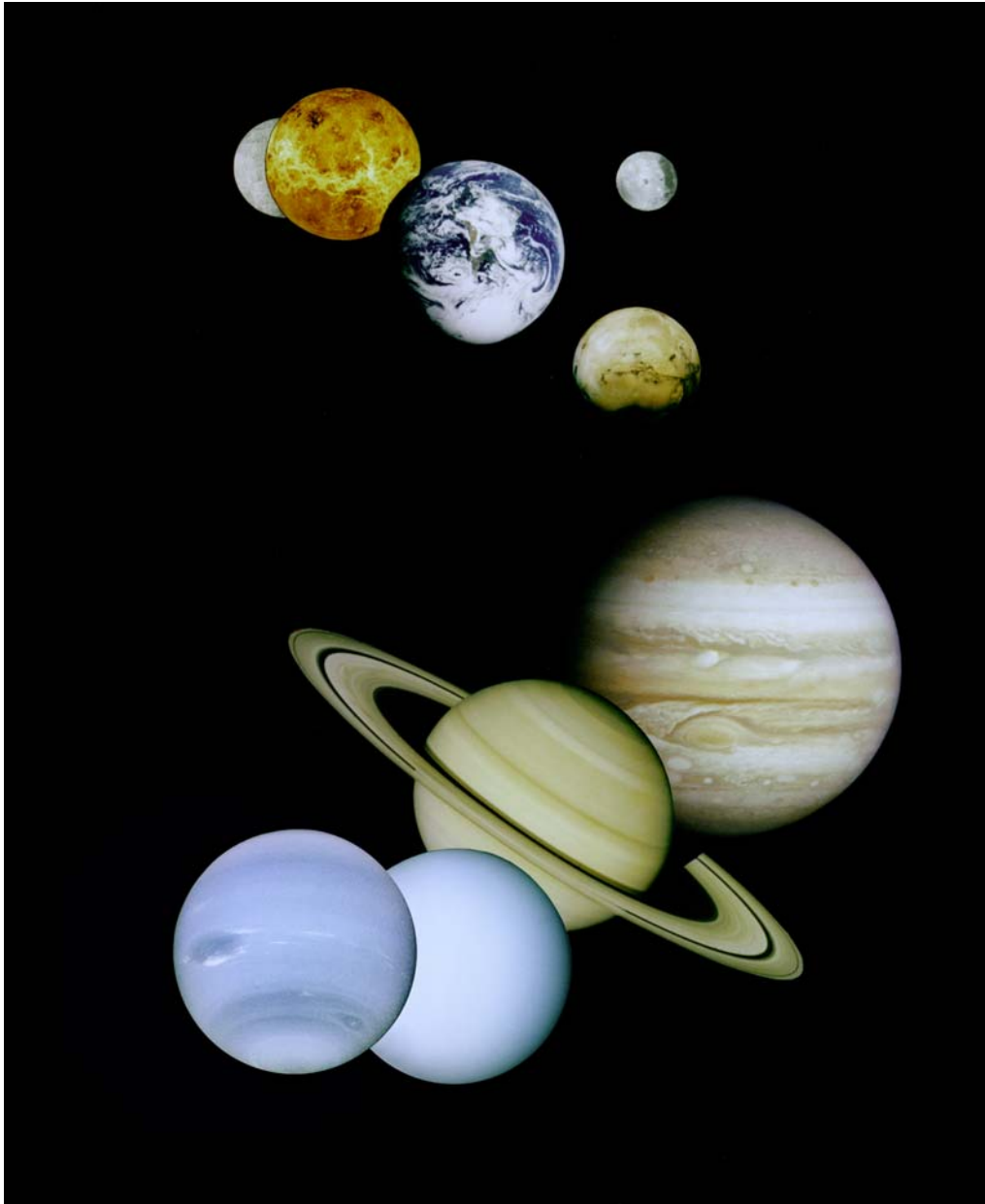
From recent pictures of the Martian surface, we've found evidence of water and are more excited than ever, that someday, we might just find some small evidence of life . . .



Eventually, settlers will move in behind explorers, just here like on earth, bringing along only the barest of essentials . . .



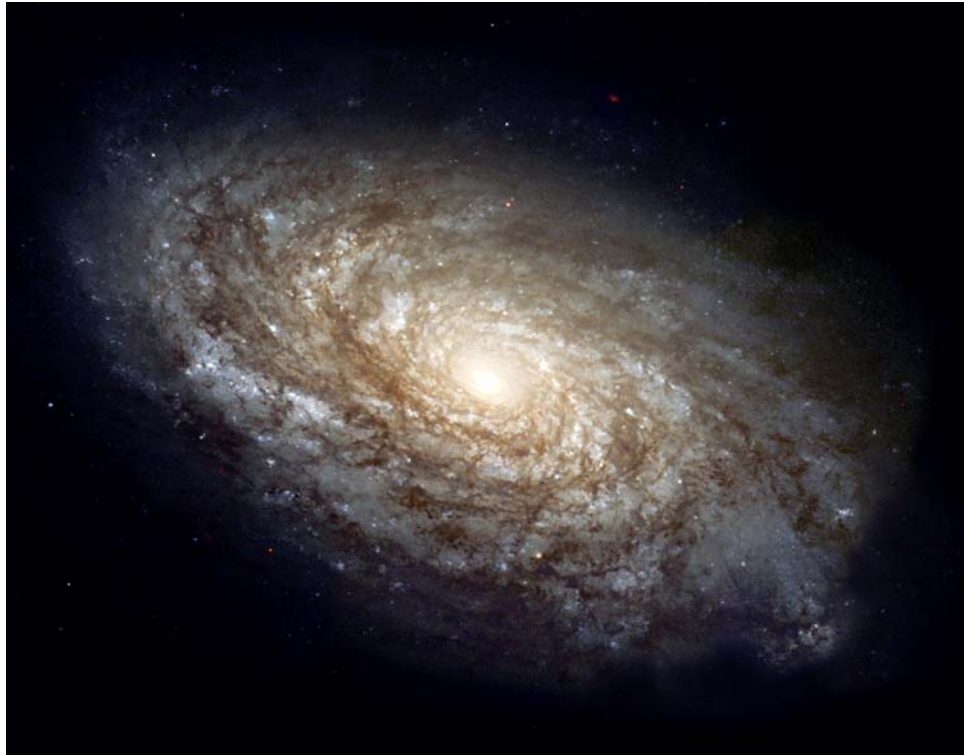
And beyond that, beyond our solar system? It's interesting to speculate.



Along with new telescope systems on Earth and the Hubble Space Telescope in Earth orbit, one of the best locations we could imagine for astronomy is on the far side of the Moon where we are free from Earth's radiations. Instruments at one or more of these locations could be capable of directly seeing planets around other stars. And if we do see one . . .



. . . a blue planet, one with an oxygen atmosphere, the pull would be irresistible. We'd have a crash program for near-light-speed flight, then a mission that'd fire our imagination far more than any fantasy from Star Trek.



But we all understand that the distances are immense. On our Skylab flight, we traveled 35 million miles, the distance that light goes in just three minutes. Yet it takes light four years to reach our nearest star. Clearly, when it comes to space travel, we've just barely put our toe out the front door.

But it's also clear that we're on the front end of something much larger than any of us can imagine, travels and adventures far greater than anything we can now picture.

And it's also clear that we'll never stop exploring, never stop reaching outward — it's hard-wired into our psyche. I believe that if you scratch deep enough into the tough hide of even the most cynical, hard-boiled, space engineer, lurking inside you'll find a treckie; someone who realizes that space probes and all their data are interesting, often exciting, but ultimately, it's we who have to go there, in person, to see and feel new turf up close before it truly becomes a real part of our own world.

I also believe, that one day in the long-term, driven by the human spirit and future great leaders, we will travel to the rest of our solar system and, eventually, beyond.



Who still wants to fly?