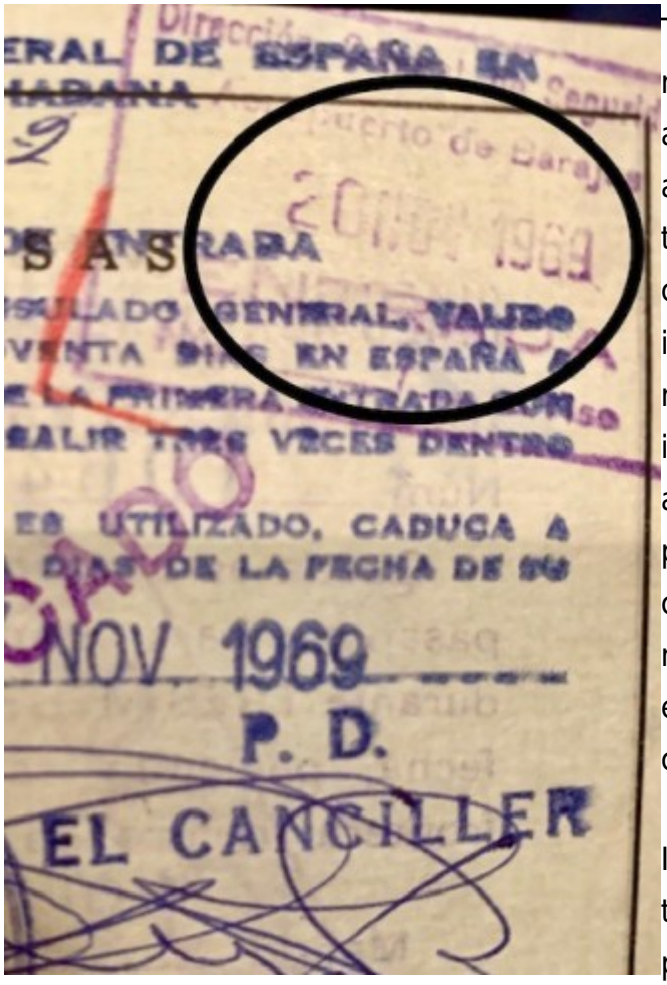
For life-changing flights.

This week marks the 50th anniversary of Apollo 11's mission and Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin taking humanity's first steps on the moon. Those astronauts…man, talk about courage. The entire Apollo program, forever remarkable.

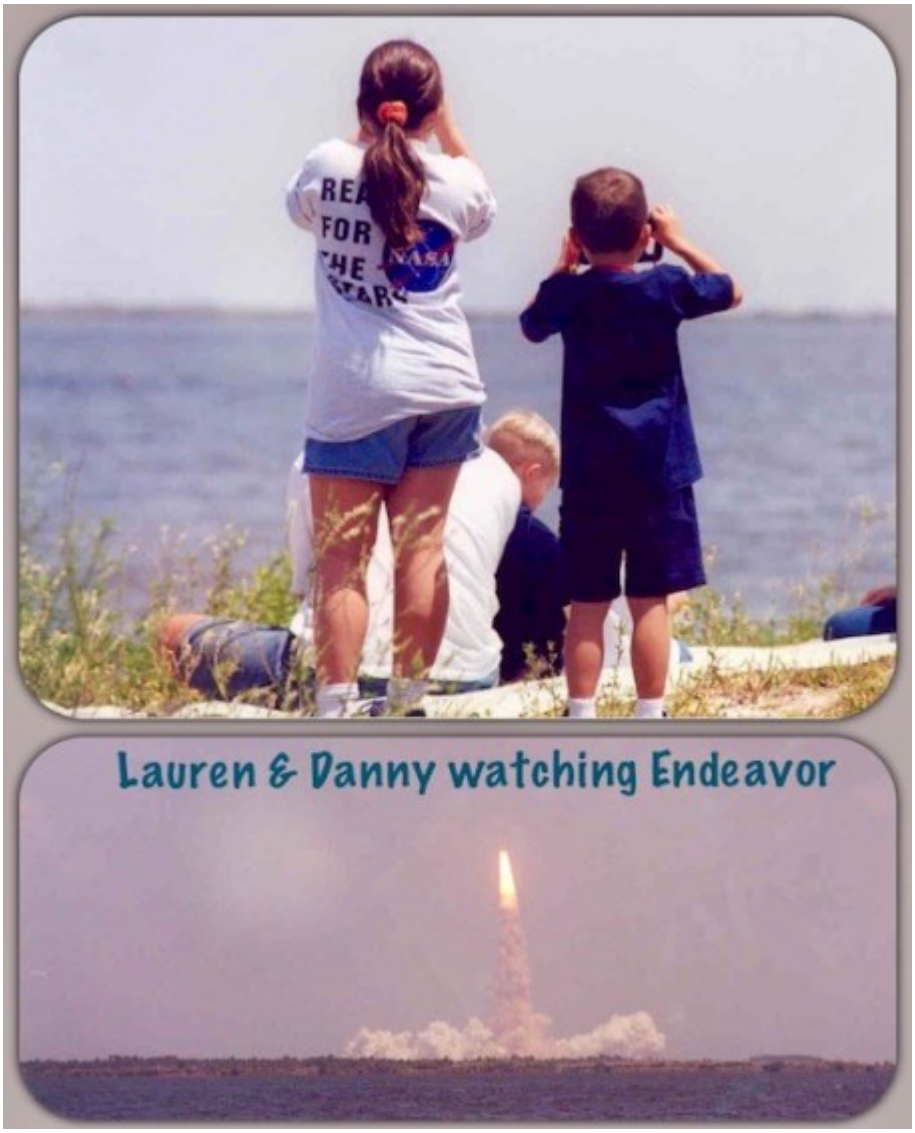


Page from my Cuban passport.

That summer of '69 in Havana, I watched the moon landing thanks to a neighbor armed with a super duper antenna. The historic broadcast also could be heard on shortwave radio. At the time, in a Cuba already neck-deep in communism, there was something else brewing in my home besides the excitement of the moonwalk. While the world stopped for a brief instant to witness this unforgettable accomplishment, my family was anxiously preparing for our own "giant leap" – – a life-changing exile flight that would take place four months after the lunar landing. Heading that expedition were my parents, also full of courage.

I was six years old when I boarded our flight that November day, and I thought our turboprop plane would fly as high as Neil did on that rocket of his. I remember I could not sit still in my seat. Hours after takeoff, on November 20, 1969, exactly four months after the moon landing, I set foot on what seemed to me like a different planet. But no, it was Spain. Unlike the

crew of Apollo 11, I would not return home, though. Mine was a one-way ticket to freedom.



April 19, 2001 * * * Photos by CCP



May 14, 2010 * * * Photos by CCP

Over the years, long-time space enthusiasts that we are, we have followed the space program. In April 2001, we were fortunate enough to catch Endeavor's launch and, in May 2010, Atlantis' second to last launch. Both were very thrilling experiences. I highly recommend taking a trip to Florida's space coast to view one of today's rockets take off. So cool.

These days, we run outside whenever we get alerts on our phones that the ISS is about to pass over us. If it happens to be a clear night, the space station is quite a sight.

By the way, you can now see Atlantis up close and personal at Kennedy Space Center where it is retired.

Today, as I think back on that life-changing flight when I was six, I thank God for looking out for us during our journey, and for looking out for Neil, Collins, and Buzz, too, during theirs.



May we continue to reach for the stars and beyond.

Just the other day. * * * Photo by KSC

What are you thankful for today?

Until next Thursday's post…si Dios quiere.

"That was a memorable day to me, for it made great changes in me. But it is the same with any life. Imagine one selected day struck out of it, and think how different its course would have been. Pause you who read this, and think for a moment of the long chain of iron or gold,

of thorns or flowers, that would never have bound you, but for the formation of the first link on one memorable day."
-Charles Dickens

"We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win."
-John F. Kennedy

"Man on the moon!"
–Walter Cronkite, CBS News anchor

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