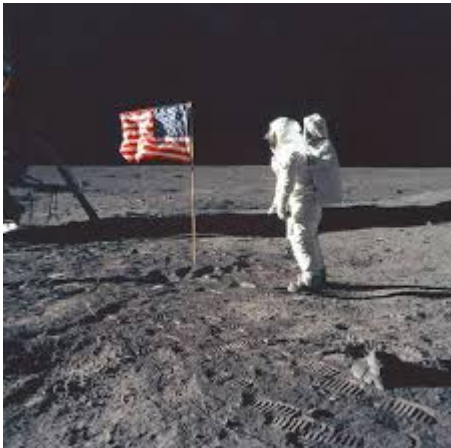


The Men on the Moon

by Con Chapman

It was the summer of '69, and men were preparing to land on the moon, at the same time that an event of far greater consequence was about to occur; a declaration of troth between two star-crossed lovers here on earth.



The girl was unknown, disreputable; the boy, from a family that mattered, trying to catch up with her. His parents had asked where he would watch the historic event, and he had replied, to their consternation, that he had a date.



It was a gesture on their part, an act with meaning; they didn't care about country or science; their love was their art, their art was their love. They cared no more about the men on the moon and all it meant than—they laughed—the man in the moon.

They walked out in nature; it was summer-hot, and it wasn't clear where they were going, but they knew why. The field was buggy, though, and so after a while they went back to the car to consummate the collision of their worlds in air-conditioned comfort.

He had chosen words he'd heard, he wasn't sure where, "When you cry, I will taste salt." That's how close he promised to be to her as she straddled his lap in the front seat. She laughed, thinking he was striking a pose. He wasn't hurt; these misunderstandings would happen, no big deal.

He took her home, after pizza and a Coke; he wasn't old enough to buy beer, and didn't have any pot to smoke. Her mom wasn't even home; he could have spent the night except that his parents would have raised holy hell; he was going to college two months later, in the fall.

He never went back to that little town, but years later, looking out the window of a women's apartment onto a parking lot below, he listened to Louis Armstrong sing "I could cry salty tears," and thought back to that solemn promise that was misconstrued, and laughed at his innocence.

