
Books: And Speaking of Lunar Water...

Bova's 'Moonrise' and 'Mt Wasser'

A book for space activists: Ben Bova's 'Moonrise' novel sheds light on a possible space future.

This publication is always pleased to bring to readers' attention new books incorporating some of the ideas passionately advocated by space activists. Examples are **Buzz Aldrin's** *Encounter With Tiber* [October 1996], **Bob Zubrin's** *The Case for Mars* [November 1996], **Fred Ordway's** *Mars: Target for Tomorrow* [November 1996].

The latest in this line is *Moonrise*, by famed science fiction author and former NSS President **Ben Bova** [Avon 1996].

In this novel Bova describes in all its grungy, claustrophobic detail how the first U.S. bare-bones, barely profitable (at best) privately financed moonbase struggles to develop both self-sufficiency and a commercial viability, as well as the intra-corporate struggles needed to keep it alive.

Three major themes of the novel, all dear to space activists' hearts, are: (1) the need — both human and economic — to expand off Earth; (2) the critical importance of nanotechnology to the low cost building of a lunar outpost (and to medical treatment); (3) the legal structure which would allow private interests who first develop portions of the Moon to claim it.

Other elements described by Bova:

- the Earth-orbiting space stations that facilitate Earth-Moon travel.

- the first efforts to claim and exploit water at the south pole of the Moon.

- the plan to capture carbonaceous asteroids and bring their water to the Moon to augment the sparse lunar deposits.

- the competition between the American corporation owning Moonbase and the Japanese government's Yakamichi moon-base, both for land and for commercially viable products. [One neat touch is the naming of "Mt. Wasser" at the lunar south pole (where a good part of the action occurs); NSS Director Alan Wasser has long been an articulate advocate of lunar land grants to those who actually develop it.]

- the methods and emotions of traversing the lunar surface.

- the utilization of lunar Helium 3 for fusion (with a warning that there will be a temptation to go to the Moon just to pick up He3, rather than to settle there).

- the rise of the new Luddites and anti-technology, anti-intellectual laws on Earth.

The story is multi-generational and includes murder on two worlds, family feuds and cliché sexual encounters. As a story the novel probably does not break much new ground, but it knits together in an engrossing fashion all the elements of a possible future that (a) hopefully will open the eyes of the public to those vast possibilities and (b) certainly will have space activists mumbling to themselves, "If only...."

- Jeffrey Liss