

E. Margaret Burbidge ends her term as this years president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and expresses her feelings that space be preserved for peaceful purposes and not as a battleground for a global war between nations

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Dr. E. Margaret Burbidge, director of the Center for Astrophysics and Space Sciences at the University of California, San Diego, has advocated that space be preserved for peaceful purposes and not as a battleground for a global war between nations.

Burbidge has just completed a year's term as president of the 130,000-member American Association for the Advancement of Science. In a presidential address presented to the Association in Detroit, Michigan, and published recently in Science Magazine, the world renowned astronomer advocated space colonization and international space exploration as the ways of preserving mankind.

She said she prefers to envision space exploration rather than the construction of military satellites as a goal for both the Soviet and U.S. space programs.

Space exploration is an expensive operation, she points out, but however costly, the budgets for the exciting ventures of the past two decades, and those planned for the remainder of this century, are but a tiny fraction of the U.S. military budget.

"Also, the expenditures during the past 20 years have pushed technology in many useful fields, especially the development and miniaturization of computers and instruments, advances in the science of communications, and the flow of data from the Landsat and weather satellites," she said.

"I am going to assume that we will achieve peace and cooperation and that this will free our resources to face the frontier of space," Burbidge said. "The idea of constructing a giant space vehicle in which humans could create a pleasant environment, live their entire lives, and bring up their families would have sounded like science fiction 50 years ago. So, however, did travel to the moon seem in the 19th century, and we have seen that successfully achieved," she said.

"We are seeing now the steady progress of the Soviet Salyut program and the beginning of the U.S. Space Shuttle program. These and their future developments will be necessary preliminaries for embarking on the construction of a very large, perhaps toroidal, self-contained space colony, perhaps slowly rotating to produce a gravity-like force to help keep the colonizers comfortable and healthy.

"I prefer to envisage this rather than the construction of military satellites as a goal for both the Salyut and Space Shuttle programs," Burbidge said.

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