

Flat Earth Society calls SpaceShipOne Flight 'Fraud' The Bentine

MOJAVE DESERT, California - For the employees of Scaled Composites, for founders Burt Rutan and Paul Allen, and for pilot Mike Melvill, today is a day that will be remembered for generations to come. "Our hope is that this will be a benchmark for a lot more people to not only have fun but to reap the benefits that we believe might be there," said Rutan after SpaceShipOne's successful landing. But for the members of the Flat Earth Society, today was just "another day of lies". So said Monterrey, Mexico's Flat Earth Society Meetup group organizer Jose Ortiz, "This is another crafty ploy to... make us accept ... foisted on us by... THERE IS A GOD... scientists with their... more like SPY-ence..." His speech after the alleged flight was available in transcript and RealAudio format on the group's web site.

"I have actually read much of what Chaz Johnson wrote," admitted Burt Rutan, "Not for enlightenment of course, more out of amusement. But I did read his work. It reads much like Mr. Ortiz speaks." Charles K. Johnson was the president of the International Flat Earth Society until his death in 2001. Though the reins of the organization were never officially passed on, and his newsletter "The Flat Earth News" has not been published since 1994, his beliefs are still carried by literally scores of people around the globe.

"Johnson was not the first president, nor was Flat Earth the first such society," related Professor Hubert Warnsforth, a senior fellow of the Institute for the Study of Alternative Science, "He succeeded Samuel Shenton, previously of the Universal Zetetic Society, who held the post until his death in 1971. Admittedly though, the organization enjoyed a much larger audience under Johnson, seeing its membership soar into the lower 200's in the late 80's."

The pilot's comments about the trip, "It's an awesome thing to see. You can see the curvature of the Earth," only serve as fodder for the Flat Earther's. "Mr. Johnson would love this guy," said Armin Delayah, of the Monterrey group, speaking of the SpaceShipOne pilot, "All this 'curvature of the earth' baloney is exactly the sort of thing he lived to debunk. I can almost hear him now, saying 'They still can't touch the Dome of Heaven!' What a man!"

Despite any fears of crashing into the Dome of Heaven, Rutan's group will make a second attempt on October 4th to seal their bid for the Ansari X-Prize, and the lucrative private space tourism market that will surely open up soon afterward.