

# NASA HISTORY: NEWS & NOTES

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## NEW HISTORIES OFF THE PRESS

Two new NASA histories have become available since our last newsletter: ALEX ROLAND's Model Research: A History of the Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, and RICHARD P. HALLION's On the Frontier: Flight Research at Dryden, 1946-1981. Roland's book is the first comprehensive history of the NACA, NASA's predecessor agency, which performed most federally funded aeronautical research in the U.S. from 1916 to 1958. While offered as an "institutional history," Model Research includes a good bit of technological and political history as well. The first of its two volumes contains Roland's narrative, while the second contains a wealth of reference material in its appendixes. Appendix F, "Research Authorization 201," is in itself a history of the selection and conduct of NACA's research into an important problem in aerodynamics.

Dick Hallion's On the Frontier tells the story of early flight research in the problems of supersonic flight, and extends into flight testing in "the heroic era of manned spaceflight," culminating in the landing of the Space Shuttle Columbia on Rogers Dry Lake in 1981. The research and testing of the X-1, the X-15, and numerous other "exotic" craft, and the people who tested them, are all a part of On the Frontier.

Both Model Research and On the Frontier are available from the U.S. Superintendent of Documents. An order form is at the end of this newsletter. When ordering, be sure to give the GPO stock number. For Model Research: 033-000-00-894 (\$26.00), and for On the Frontier: 033-000-00893-7 (\$10.00).

## NEW PEOPLE, NEW FACES

The number of talented and energetic people involved in the study of NASA-related aerospace history continues to grow. A. MICHAL McMAHON joined the NASA Headquarters History Office in March as a contract historian. In

addition to doing his own work in the history of the development of modern electronics and NASA's relations with the university and industrial communities, he will be providing collegial and editorial support to other NASA contract historians still in the throes of research and manuscript preparation.

Just beginning the first phase of our Space Station history project, a history of the Space Station Task Force (1981-84), is HOWARD E. McCURDY, a specialist in science policy in the College of Public and International Affairs at the American University. Howard will be tracing NASA's efforts to develop a comprehensive space station plan as well as the development of the White House decision to endorse a civilian space station program.

(NASA will also be making a decision shortly on the contract historian to continue with the history of the Space Station project at NASA Headquarters from 1984 until the Space Station is "operational." Roger Bilstein, at the University of Houston at Clear Lake, has already begun work on a separate Space Station history project for NASA's Johnson Space Center.)

Finally--in the "new people" category--the headquarters history office welcomes MARGARET RUNG, a recent graduate of Oberlin College, who has joined us as a summer employee. Margaret will be assisting Lee Saegesser in the ongoing task of maintaining and microfiching our historical documents collection.

#### AHA FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM IN AEROSPACE HISTORY

We are delighted to welcome to the family the AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, which will administer, on behalf of NASA, a postdoctoral fellowship program in aerospace history. The AHA will be working closely with the Society for the History of Technology, the History of Science Society, and the Economic History Association, each of which will provide a member of the fellows' selection committee. Selected fellows will work out of NASA Headquarters on topics of their choice in space and aeronautical history. The stipend is expected to be on the order of \$23,000 for twelve months, with a moving and travel allowance. The AHA will soon be announcing the fellowship and application procedures.

## KUDOS

NASA sponsored historians continue to receive recognition from various quarters for their work. W. DAVID COMPTON, who is finishing up his history of the Apollo lunar missions, wrote the prize essay in the 1983 Robert H. Goddard Historical Essay Competition; his essay, "The Rocket as Spacecraft: Spent Stages in Manned Space Flight," appears in a slightly expanded version in Vol. 38 (1985) of the Journal of the British Interplanetary Society.

Also honored in the Goddard Historical Essay Competition was JAMES E. TOMAYKO, who received an honorable mention for his essay on "The Evolution of Redundancy to Ensure the Reliability of Manned Spacecraft Computers." Jim is working on a history of the use of computers in NASA manned spaceflight under a contract to the NASA history office. His "NASA's Manned Spacecraft Computers" appeared in the January, 1985 issue of Annals of the History of Computing. University and professional audiences around the country have had a chance to learn about Jim's work, for he has been one of this year's National Lecturers for the Association for Computing machinery.

KARL HUFBAUER, who is working on the first volume of the New Series in NASA History--a history of solar exploration from Copernicus through the Space Age--gave a paper at the National Air and Space Museum's historical seminar in contemporary American technology and science in April. His presentation: "Co-operative Solar Research, 1670-1970: Trends, Causes and Some Consequences." VIRGINIA P. DAWSON, working at NASA's Lewis Research Center, on a history of the center, was also recognized with a History of Science Society travel award to attend the International Congress in the History of Science at Berkeley in August.

Members of the NASA History Advisory Committee continue to distinguish themselves. SALLY KOHLSTEDT and ALEX ROLAND will have essays appearing in the first two volumes (now in press) of the second series of OSIRIS, a research journal devoted to the history of science and its cultural influences. And last but not least, THOMAS K. McCRAW, historian at the Harvard Business School, has received the 1984 Pulitzer Prize for his Prophets of Regulation:

Charles Francis Adams; Louis D. Brandeis; James M. Landis; Alfred E. Kahn  
(Belknap Press).

THE "NEW SERIES" IN NASA HISTORY

The June deadline for proposals to prepare individual volumes for our "New Series" in NASA history has passed, but we will continue to consider proposals twice annually. (Deadlines are June 1 and January 1.) NASA may provide 18 months to 2 years of support for research and writing and associated expenses to qualified historians having well-conceived and well-developed proposals for book-length manuscripts on appropriate themes. The New Series is designed to place NASA's programs in broad historical contexts, and should be attractive to non-specialist as well as academic audiences. Proposals will be funded on the basis of merit and available funds.

Have a good summer, and let us hear from you!