

NASA HISTORY: NEWS & NOTES

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"SKYLAB" HISTORY NOW AVAILABLE

In the early afternoon of May 17, 1973, the United States launched Skylab, the first orbiting space laboratory. Six years later Skylab returned to earth, having in its three missions provided 28, 59, and 84 days respectively of experience in manned space operations and thousands of hours of successful scientific investigations in astronomy, earth sciences, engineering, and into the biomedical aspects of human spaceflight.

The Skylab story--its planning, politics, technology, and accomplishments--is now available in W. David Compton's and Charles D. Benson's Living and Working in Space: A History of Skylab, NASA SP-4208 (Washington, D.C., 1984). An early appraisal from H. J. P. Arnold of England's Space Frontiers calls Living and Working in Space "a reliable and comprehensive account" written with "a lively touch . . . firm opinions . . . [and] a touch of humor now and again."

. . . AND ALSO ON MARS

The first American journey to Mars is not only a fascinating story of the first in-situ search for extraterrestrial life, but may prove someday to be the first critical chapter in the story of human interplanetary travel. The history of NASA's Mars exploration program--project Viking--is told in Linda N. Ezell and Edward C. Ezell, On Mars: Exploration of the Red Planet, 1958-1978, NASA SP-4212 (Washington, D.C., 1984). Detailing the complex interactions of people, organizations, science and innovative technology, On Mars serves as a significant case study in the history of modern science and technology.

Both Living and Working in Space and On Mars are not only amply illustrated and annotated, but provide copious appendixes useful for reference. Each may be ordered from the U.S. Superintendent of Documents. For your convenience, order forms appear on the last page of this Newsletter.

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This promises to be a very productive year for NASA-supported historians of aerospace science and technology. Besides Compton's and Benson's Skylab history and Lin and Ed Ezell's On Mars, we hope this year to publish Alex Roland's Model Research, a two-volume history of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics; Richard Hallion's On the Frontier, a history of the Dryden Flight Research Center (you had a glimpse of that story in the film, "The Right Stuff"); and A Spacefaring People, a collection of papers given at Yale University on the early decades of space exploration edited by Alex Roland.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR HISTORIANS . . .

As we mentioned in our last Newsletter, NASA is launching a "New Series" of histories to complement the already substantial shelf of NASA-sponsored volumes on NASA aerospace science and technology. The "New Series" is

intended to provide concise and synthetic treatments of themes in aerospace-related science, technology, and management, putting NASA's activities into broad historical context. Designed for collegiate and educated general audiences as well as for historians of science and technology, the first volume by Karl Hufbauer of the University of California, "Exploring the Sun from Copernicus through the Space Age," is already under way.

To continue from this auspicious beginning, the NASA History Office, starting FY 85, plans to fund the research and writing of a publishable history either of the Apollo program or of Visions of Space Exploration. Preferred treatments would consist (for the Apollo program) of a broad overview synthesizing technological, cultural, and political aspects; or (for Visions of Space Exploration) of an interpretive historical account of expectations of space travel and exploration expressed in the arts, letters, and public discourse. Address letters of interest (with vita) to: Dr. Sylvia D. Fries, NASA History Office, Code LBH, Washington, DC 20546. Prefer Ph.D. in history of technology and/or American studies. Deadline: January 1, 1985. EFO

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The NASA History Office has reopened its search for an historian to engage in research and writing in an area of NASA-related history of technology, management and/or policy. Primary location of work must be in the NASA Historical Documents Collection in Washington, D.C. Incumbent may also be asked to engage in some manuscript editing and proposal evaluation. Ph.D. required and publications preferred. Applicants should submit, in addition to VITA and three references, a 500 - 1,000 word statement outlining their proposed research, how their work may benefit from the opportunity to research in the NASA Historical Documents Collections, and how their work may contribute to related areas of scholarship. Compensation and starting date are negotiable. For more information and copies of the "Guide to Research in NASA History," telephone Dr. Sylvia D. Fries, (202) 453-2999, or write to Dr. Fries at: Code LBH, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Washington, D.C. 20546. Deadline for applications is December 31, 1984. EFO.

RESEARCHING AND WRITING FOR NASA . . .

The questions most often put to us by historians considering work under NASA sponsorship concern scholarly independence and the government's contracting process. One of the early accomplishments of the newly reconstituted NASA History Advisory Committee was to develop with NASA a policy statement on academic freedom, to make "official" policy of what has always been the actual practice of the History Office. As a result of Committee recommendations to the NASA Advisory Council (of which the History Advisory Committee is a standing subcommittee), NASA has assured the Committee that:

historians working with NASA . . . will enjoy academic freedom as they research and write in the area of NASA history. In turn, NASA expects its scholars to work with integrity in their

handling of evidence, asking only that speculations be acknowledged as such, and that legitimate differences of interpretation be acknowledged in the texts of their works.

A contractual obligation, like that under which NASA-sponsored historians work, is largely an instrument of accountability. The paperwork necessary to negotiate and conclude a contract with NASA for research and writing is an admitted nuisance, but we are trying to keep our contracts flexible; they need not demand more than any agreement a historian might make to produce a manuscript for a private or university press publisher or, for that matter, with a university to teach specified courses for a given period of time. Historians interested in doing NASA-sponsored research should not hesitate to explore with us contractual agreements that serve their own interests, as well as ours.

OTHER NASA HISTORY NEWS

Sally Kohlstedt, historian of science at Syracuse University, is the newest member of NASA's History Advisory Committee. * * * Linda Ezell has joined the staff of the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum as Curator of Manned Space Flight. * * * We have survived a tumultuous relocation (with the loss of about 20 feet) and refurbishing. We remain, however, in the same building. Space for visiting researchers is limited, and we encourage all our friends to give us advance warning of a visit, so that we can try to accommodate them.

VISITING RESEARCHERS IN THE NASA HISTORY OFFICE

Although this newsletter has emphasized our publications, one of the History Office's principal services to researchers is archival support in the substantial collection of historical documents located in our office. Visitors researching in our collection during the past few months have included: Thomas O'Toole of the Washington Post; Adam Gruen, Susan Gould, Robert Smith, and Paul Ceruzzi of the National Air and Space Museum; Jeff Stine of the House Committee on Science and Technology; W. H. Lambright of Syracuse University; Donald MacKenzie of the University of Edinburgh; John Mauer of Rice University; Virginia Dawson, writing a history of NASA's Lewis Research Center; Pamela Mack of Virginia Polytechnic University; John W. Upton of the Independent News Service; John Holmes of the Washington Times; Jim Tomayko of Wichita State University; and Philip Barger of the Department of State, among many others.

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Keep us posted on your activities, and
have a happy and peaceful holiday season!

(Order forms for Living and Working in Space and On Mars on reverse side.)