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# NASA HISTORY: NEWS AND NOTES

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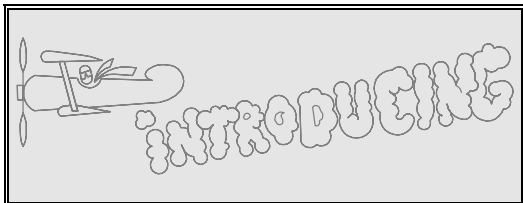
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Vol. 7, Nos. 1 and 2

Autumn 1990

## **FACELIFTING THE NASA HISTORY NEWSLETTER**

It has been more than a year since this newsletter last appeared. During this hiatus we decided to give the NASA history newsletter a new look. We hope to adhere to a Spring and Fall issue cycle, with this issue containing both numbers for 1990. With the new year, however, we will be back on schedule. You should expect to receive vol. 8, no. 1 in April 1991. As always, items of news relating to NASA history, information on recent or proposed publications, or other subjects of interest to readers of this newsletter are welcome. If you have suggestions for improvement of either the newsletter's content or format please do not hesitate to contact the Chief Historian, Dr. Roger D. Launius, NASA History Division, Code ADA-2, NASA Headquarters, Washington, DC 20546, 202-453-8300.



## **NEW NASA HISTORIAN TAKES OVER**

On October 7th the new historian for NASA began work at headquarters. Dr. Roger D. Launius came to NASA from the Air Force, where he had been a historian for nearly nine years. Dr. Launius replaces Dr. Sylvia D. Fries, who has been promoted to the position of Director, Office of Special Studies, for NASA. We wish her well in her new responsibilities; and know that she will still be very much involved in the History Division's activities. Dr. Fries conducted

the search that led to the selection of Dr. Launius as her replacement.

Prior to coming to NASA Dr. Launius had been, between 1987 and 1990, Command Historian for the Military Airlift Command (MAC), headquartered at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois. That office had been responsible for preparing histories, monographs, and special studies on the origins and development of American military airlift; managing an archives for the Command; and providing historical services to the MAC staff. As Command Historian, he was responsible for formulating policy for the effective management of the MAC history program and directing the affairs of the function in a both a central office and at 24 field offices scattered from Germany to the Philippines.

Growing up in Greenville, South Carolina, Dr. Launius graduated from Graceland College, Lamoni, Iowa, with a major in history in 1976 and received the M.A. (1978) and Ph.D. (1982) degrees in history at Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, with concentrations in American frontier, military, and religious history.

After completing his Ph.D., Dr. Launius became a staff historian with the Office of MAC History, concentrating on the development of airlift operations and management. In 1984 he became Chief of the Office of History at the Ogden Air Logistics Center, Hill Air Force Base, Utah. While in that position, Dr. Launius served as an expert witness on behalf of the Air Force in a noise pollution case, providing historical context and background information for the successful government position. In 1986 and 1987 he was the Deputy Command Historian with Air Force Systems Command, Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, before returning to the Military Airlift Command as head of that program.

In addition to his civil service career, Dr. Launius has also served as an adjunct professor of history for McKendree College, Lebanon, Illinois;

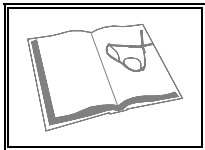
Weber State College, Ogden, Utah; and Graceland College, Lamoni, Iowa.

Dr. Launius has lectured widely on historical subjects to both civilian and military audiences. He has acted as a reader for publishers, as a member of the governing councils of several historical associations, and serves on the editorial boards of several journals. He remains an active member of several professional associations, including the Organization of American Historians, the Society for History of Technology, the Western History Association, and the American Military Institute.

He has written or edited six books, several monographs, and more than 40 articles on historical subjects. Some of the more recent works have included *MAC and the Legacy of the Berlin Airlift* (1989); *Consolidation by Decree: The Air Force and Navy Strategic Airlift Merger of 1948* (1989); and *Joseph Smith III: Pragmatic Prophet* (1988), which won the prestigious Evans Award for western biography.

With a strong commitment to research and writing, experience in management of historical offices and projects, and an avid interest in varied subjects, Dr. Launius looks forward to the challenges offered in the NASA History Program. "It is an excellent program," he commented, "one in which I hope to make a positive contribution. I especially look forward to extending my interest and research in aeronautics toward astronautics."

#### RECENT NASA HISTORY PUBLICATIONS



Since our last newsletter several new historical publications have appeared sponsored by the NASA History Division. Two new and important books were published under NASA auspices, while another was issued by an academic press. Bette R. Janson and Eleanor H. Ritchie prepared *Astronautics and Aeronautics, 1979-1984: A Chronology* (NASA SP-4024), which recapitulates the record of accomplishment related to flight. Concerning the development of the space station, in July 1990 NASA published as contractor report number 4272, Thomas J. Lewin's and V.K. Narayanan's *Keeping the Dream Alive: Managing the Space Station Program, 1982-1986*, dealing with the internal management of the program. Both of these publications are available

from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402.

NASA also sponsored the writing of Howard E. McCurdy's book, *The Space Station Decision: Incremental Politics and Technological Choice*, which recently appeared from The Johns Hopkins University Press. The second book in the New Series in NASA History published by Johns Hopkins, *The Space Station Decision* carefully analyzes the origins of the program, the political issues involved in the decision, and the scientific and technological challenges resulting from these developments. Comparing the space station decision to earlier decisions to complete the Apollo program and to build the space shuttle, McCurdy details how long-term science and technology policy fared in a political environment that demands short-term flexibility.

Finally, at the end of 1989 the NASA History Division published the *Aeronautics and Space Report of the President, 1987 Activities*. An annual publication, this document reports to Congress the annual accomplishments in aeronautics and astronautics of 14 government agencies. Its audience is quite varied, from the Congress and policy analysts to the interested public.

#### NASA HISTORY IN THE PIPELINE

Several new NASA-sponsored history publications are in production and will be appearing in the coming months. Karl Hufbauer's *Exploring the Sun: Solar Science Since Galileo* is now in the final stages of production from The Johns Hopkins University Press and will appear in the spring of 1991. A broadly conceived work, this book interlinks cultural and technological change with the quest for scientific knowledge about the sun.

Virginia P. Dawson's institutional history of the Lewis Research Center, *Engines and Innovations: Lewis Laboratory and American Propulsion Technology*, is forthcoming in January 1991 as a NASA special publication from the Government Printing Office. Covering the period between 1940 and the recent past, this book describes and analyzes the development of this important NASA field center.

Also soon to appear from GPO is *NASA Engineers and the Age of Apollo*, a study of the Apollo engineers by former NASA Chief Historian, Sylvia D. Fries. In addition, John E. Naugle's monograph, *First among Equals: The Selection of NASA Space Science*

*Experiments*, is in the production phase at GPO and should appear in 1991.

The *Aeronautics and Space Report of the President, 1988 Activities* is currently in press at GPO and will be issued in December 1990. A combined 1989-1990 report in the same series will be published in the spring of 1991.

As a final note on these upcoming publications, Howard E. McCurdy's manuscript, "Organizational Culture and Crises: NASA's Changing Organizational Culture," is under consideration for publication in the NEW SERIES IN NASA HISTORY at The Johns Hopkins University Press. This book seeks to characterize the institutional culture of NASA as it developed over time, analyzing in depth the culture of the organization during the Apollo era and how it has changed in the more recent past.

#### **DOCUMENTARY HISTORY OF THE SPACE AGE**

One of the major history contracts under way for NASA is with The George Washington University for a collection of documents related to the development of the American space program. The team of researchers, headed by John M. Logsdon, have already identified and accessioned more than 900 key documents from which they will compile the projected two-volume book. Interpretive essays on various aspects of the space program are also under way to illuminate the documentary materials included in the work. Once complete, this work will be an invaluable reference for both scholar and novice. Stay tuned for more as the project unfolds.

#### **NASA HEADQUARTERS HISTORY DIVISION ARCHIVES PROJECT**

For more than a year Sarah Turner and William Skerrett have been laboring to create a data base describing the NASA History Division's Reference Collection. Using the Inmagic software package, they have now completed an important part of the project, the cataloging of the biographical files. This amounts to more than 100 linear feet of material, organized alphabetically by name from John Aaron to Fritz Zwicky. Although the emphasis is on collections of material by and about NACA and NASA employees, there are some documentary items highlighting the activities of other people important in astronautics and aeronautics. It also includes some very interesting

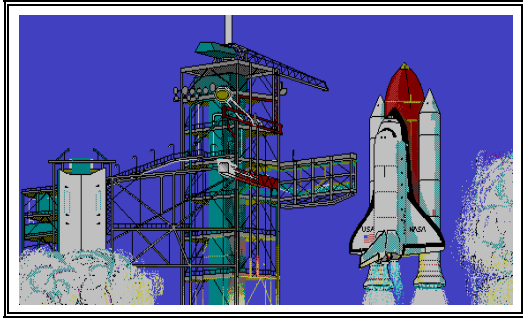
items that concern such fictional characters as Dick Tracy (after all he went to the moon). The data base is currently available at NASA Headquarters for subject searches and will be an invaluable reference to historians working in the NASA collections. A printout of the data base is also planned to be available in the reference archival holdings at the Johnson, Kennedy, and Marshall Space Flight Centers where researchers can "preview" holdings.

#### **NASA-SPONSORED BOOKS IN THE NEWS**

Books that were sponsored by the NASA History Division are now being advertised and find a readership beyond the normal Government Printing Office outlets. Howard McCurdy, *The Space Station Decision*, and Henry S.F. Cooper, Jr., *Before Lift-Off: The Making of a Shuttle Crew* (1987) are both part of The Johns Hopkins University Press New Series in NASA History and have a broad distribution. Roger E. Bilstein revised and expanded *Orders of Magnitude: A History of the NACA and NASA, 1915-1990* which NASA published in 1989 and issued in hardcover under the new title, *NACA NASA: A History* (New York: Crown Books, 1990). The widespread distribution of these publications is a positive step forward and represents one way in which NASA helps to disseminate information about space activities to the American public.

#### **NACA'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY**

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the creation of the National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics (NACA). For more than forty years NACA quietly but effectively furthered knowledge of powered flight in ways not usually recognized. As the direct descendant of NACA, NASA is most pleased to celebrate and to take this opportunity to review and reflect on our heritage and to look forward to future activities.



### **A PERSONAL NOTE**

All the best for the coming holiday season.

Roger Launius  
Rebecca Miller  
Sarah Turner

Lee Saegesser  
Patricia Shephard  
William Skerrett