

NASA HISTORY: NEWS & NOTES

NASA History Office · NASA Headquarters · Washington, D.C. 20546 · Spring, 1984

Greetings from NASA Headquarters, where we in the History Office busily thrive, waiting for an invasion of carpenters and electricians: we have been promised a "re-do." We will soon be battenning down the hatches and our crew--Sylvia Fries, Lee Saegesser, Ellie Ritchie, Marion Davis, and Linda Neuman Ezell--is preparing to bail archive folders from threatened locations to more secure ones.

The year has begun with a rush as we work to sustain ongoing efforts in NASA-related history and to inaugurate some new ones. Ellie Ritchie is laboring valiently to keep up the annual chronology, Astronautics and Aeronautics, while Linda Ezell is beginning to wrap up work on the NASA Historical Data Book, 1958-1968: Programs and Major Projects.

Down at Langley Research Center Jim Hansen is also coming to the end of his history of Langley up to 1958. In the fall he will move north to the University of Maine, where he will take over the history of science and technology for Russell Fries (who came to Washington in June to infuse some historical sense into one of the city's more venerable "think tanks," the Institute for Defense Analysis). We have advised Jim to pack many sets of long underwear and to sharpen his axe. We have a good number of publications due out this year, about which, more below.

Out at NASA's Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas, a monumental effort is under way to prepare a chronology of the Space Shuttle. Joe Guilmartin and John Mauer of Rice University are doing the project for NASA, and their work includes the preparation of an Index to the Shuttle files.

Also at JSC is Dave Compton, now well into a history of the Apollo lunar missions. Rice University will be the final resting place of NASA's historical documents pertaining to the Apollo and Shuttle programs, as well as the Mercury, Gemini, Skylab, and Apollo-Soyuz projects. All of these documents will be stored at the Woodson Research Center under the capable supervision of center director Nancy Parker; they will be indexed in the "Word One" system, and thus be accessible by computer.

NEW STARTS: A LEWIS HISTORY, AND EXPLORING THE SUN

Our next center history effort is dedicated to NASA's Lewis Research Center, scene of important advances in flight propulsion (not to mention other areas of aeronautical research). Virginia Dawson, currently adjunct professor of history at Case Western Reserve, expects to begin her work this summer.

We are also launching a new series of survey histories of major themes in NASA-related science, technology and management. The series is intended to offer more analytic and thematic treatment of topics in space science and engineering than we have attempted before, while presenting volumes in a style and format attractive to undergraduate and nonspecialist readers as well as aerospace devotees. Karl Hufbauer of the University of California has agreed to do the inaugural volume for us--a history of the exploration of the sun from the Copernican Revolution through the space age. Karl is a historian of science with a broad background ranging from 18th century German chemistry to twentieth century solar physics; he will begin work this summer.

COMINGS AND GOINGS

First, the coming: in October, 1983 Sylvia Fries arrived at the NASA History Office to take over as Director--Monte Wright having departed a year earlier. In the interim NASA's Tom Chapelle served as director, ably assisted in the office by Carrie Karegeannes. Sylvia brought a U-Haul truck and two little children to town from distant Maine not 36 hours before arriving in the office, and it has been that way ever since. Russell Fries came down in early June.

The going has been Carrie's. Carrie left us in February, to our considerable loss and dismay, to spend more time with Peter Karegeannes, who died in early May after a long illness. Those of you who know Carrie, and have benefited from her patient and skillful editing, will appreciate our loss; we hope that we will be able to entice her to do some part-time editing for us in the future.

NASA HISTORY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A first order of business for Sylvia last fall was appointing a new advisory committee to the NASA history program. The committee is a subcommittee of the NASA Advisory Council, which has been likened by NASA Administrator James Beggs to a "board of directors." This means that we have, through the committee, an important voice for our hopes and our concerns.

The reconstituted NACA/HAC is composed of some veterans and some welcome newcomers. Chief among the veterans is Mel Kranzberg of the Georgia Institute of Technology, who serves as chairman. Mel is a priceless combination of foot soldier and patron saint, and we are grateful for his help and support. Another veteran is Tom Hughes of the University of Pennsylvania, who has been serving us long-distance from the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, where he has been spending the year as a Fellow. Both Mel and Tom are past chairmen of the NAC/HAC. Walter Vincenti, recently retired from Stanford University, and Carroll Pursell of the University of California at Santa Barbara have kindly agreed to serve again.

Our newcomers to the committee reflect our interest in broadening the frame of reference of NASA-related history. Tom McCraw of the Harvard Business School brings a finely honed expertise in the history of large-scale enterprise in a public regulatory environment, while veteran NASA watcher John Logsdon, director of the George Washington University's Graduate Program in Science, Technology, and Public Policy will keep us on course as we become more alert to the effect of its public policy environment on the U.S. space effort. Last but not least is Alex Roland. Alex, now at Duke, paid his dues generously in our office as historian. You will soon have an opportunity to savor the fruit of his labors here when his Model Research, a history of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, comes off the press this summer.

OPPORTUNITIES:

Alert! NASA is looking for a historian of science and/or technology to come join us in research, writing, and editing, for a year beginning in October or January of '85. Compensation negotiable. If interested, contact Sylvia Fries (202-453-2999). An application should consist of a complete Vita, including the names of 3 references, and a 3-5 page statement of research interests. The deadline is July 14, 1984; applications should be sent to Dr. Sylvia D. Fries, LBH/History Office, NASA, Washington, D. C. 20546.

WHAT YOU ARE DOING: WE ARE YOU!

Dave (W. David) Compton, contract historian at the Johnson Space Center, was recently awarded the 1984 Goddard Essay Prize by the National Space Club. The award is given annually for the best historical essay on astronautics or rocketry. Dave received a cash award and a plaque at the National Space Club's annual Robert H. Goddard Memorial Dinner in April. His prize-winning essay, "The Rocket as Spacecraft: Spent Stages in Manned Spaceflight," will be included in the British Interplanetary Society's yearly historical issue of the Journal of the BIS.

Linda Neuman Ezell, active in NASA's history program as a contractor since 1974, assumes the new position of historian of manned spaceflight at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum this summer. Lin was coauthor of the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project and Viking Program histories and author of the second volume of the NASA Historical Data Book series. She is finishing the third volume, which will bring the programs and projects story through the agency's second decade. At the NASM, Lin will be working on a new space station exhibit gallery and learning about the museum's artifact loan program.

Let us have your news!Let us have your news!***

OFF THE PRESS THIS SUMMER . . .

. . . will be quite a line-up of NASA histories, sponsored and funded by this office. In addition to the Astronautics and Aeronautics for 1976 and Roland's Model Research, be on the look out for: Living and Working in Space: A History of Skylab (by Dave Compton and Charles D. Benson), Edward C. and Linda N. Ezell, On Mars: Exploration of the Red Planet, Richard P. Hallion's On the Frontier: Flight Research at Dryden; and Elizabeth A. Muenger's history of Ames Research Center. A collection of the papers delivered at the 1981 Yale University-NASA sponsored conference on the space age is also due out this autumn. To be published in paperback, the collection will provide a useful introduction to some of the themes and issues arising out of the U.S. space program to students and other new initiates into the world of aerospace history.

A FINAL NOTE:

This newsletter is a reincarnation of a NASA history newsletter begun in the 1960s. It is our way of letting you know what we're up to, but we hope that most of all it will be your way of sharing news of your own activities. We're a hardy lot, and bound to increase. Be sure to send us word--however informally--of your activities, and we shall be sure to keep you posted on developments here that might be of interest to you, your students, and your colleagues.

Have a good summer!

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