

The Marshall Retiree Report

November 2017

NASA/MSFC Retiree Association P. O. Box 4492, Huntsville, Alabama 35815



Quarterly MRA Social

Tuesday, December 12, 2017

Social & Registration: 6 p.m. – Dinner: 7 p.m.

\$30.00 per person

Menu:

*Garden Salad, Sliced Roast Turkey with Cornbread Dressing,
Candied Sweet Potatoes, Green Beans, Dinner Rolls, Coffee &
Tea, Dessert: Southern Chocolate Pie*

Please RSVP to Bennie Jacks no later than **noon on Friday, December 8, 2017**, at benniejacks@att.net or cell phone: 256-603-0894.

A 72-hour cancellation notice is required by the Ledges.

Program: No speaker is scheduled to allow time for members to socialize.

From Parker's Desk.....

On November 7, 2017, we lost one of the most outstanding leaders of NASA, James Robert Thompson, Jr. J R was a faithful member of our NASA/Marshall Retirees Association, and his reach across Marshall and the Agency touched so many of our lives. Most all NASA and contractor employees from the early 1960's through the early 1990's have memories of J R's leadership, technical excellence, and friendship.

On a personal note, Jim Splawn and I were detailed to the west coast by J R to serve in the Marshall Space Shuttle Main Engine Resident Office at Canoga Park, California, in 1974 through 1977. During this time, the development and test of the Space Shuttle Main Engines was clearly the critical path to the initial launch of the Space Shuttle. J R made many trips to Canoga Park, and each trip he took the time to visit with the staff of the resident office, listen to our concerns, and implement appropriate corrective actions. We never felt stranded from our home office 2000 miles away.

I know many of you have your own personal stories, and through these memories we can celebrate the life of J R Thompson, Jr. Our thoughts and prayers are with Sherry and family.

Parker Counts, MRA President



MEMBERSHIP DUES REMINDER

If not already paid, 2017 dues are now delinquent. Also, 2018 dues will be due beginning January 1, 2018. Dues are \$30 per year and may be paid by mailing a check, made to MSFC Retirees Association to: MSFC Retirees Association, P. O. Box 4492, Huntsville, AL 35815, or by paying at the December Social on December 12th.

Membership in the Association is open to former or retired MSFC and other NASA Center employees. New retirees are automatically offered a free membership for the remainder of the year in which they retire. If retirement occurs after the first day of September, membership will be free for the remainder of the current year and for the entire upcoming year. Spouses of deceased MRA members may attain membership status with membership dues waived.

If your mailing address or e-mail address changes, please remember to let **Mary Spaulding** know by e-mailing her at **md_spaulding@comcast.net** or calling **256-883-2228** so we can keep our records up to date.

NEUTRAL BUOYANCY SIMULATOR (NBS) CELEBRATION



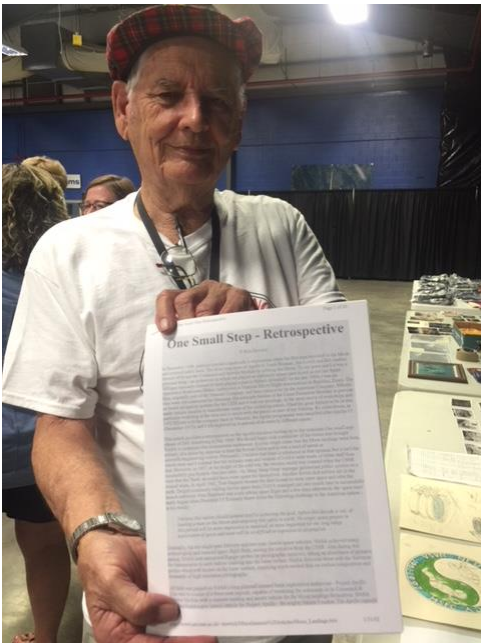
A bittersweet event was held on September 23, 2017, to celebrate the MSFC Neutral Buoyancy Simulator (NBS) and its significant history in the progress of manned spaceflight.

It was sweet to have so many of the people associated with the NBS gathered together at the MSFC Activities Building to reminisce about the adventures and accomplishments that happened from 1968 until the NBS closing in 1997. It was sad to be observing the passing of this most special and unique facility, as it is being crushed, (even though it is a registered National Landmark facility) in order for other newer facilities to be built for the Center.

Under direction of MSFC employees Jose Matienzo and Herb Sims associated with the MSFC MARS organization, the celebration brought together many old friends, acquaintances, and working cohorts for one last get-together. An excellent meal was served, tee shirts could be purchased, historical memorabilia was displayed, and MSFC's historian and associate of the MRA, Brian Odom, conducted video-taped interviews to capture the thoughts, remembrances, and historical significance of the NBS. Above is a group photo taken by MRA member and retired MSFC staff photographer, Dennis Keim. The event concluded with one last visit to the NBS, now in mothball status. The history which occurred in this colorful and grand facility was properly celebrated by those who made it happen. An appropriate tribute.

By Jack Stokes

NBS Reunion (Continued)



Charles Stocks



Helen Eddleman & Bill Dickson



Ed Buckbee Received 2017 John B. Medaris Award

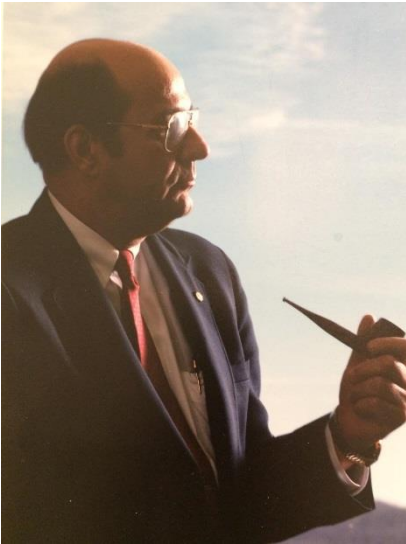


Ed Buckbee received the 2017 John B. Medaris Award from the National Defense Industrial Association (NDIA) Tennessee Valley Chapter at the Space & Missile Defense Symposium on August 9 at the VBC. The Medaris Award was established in 1981 and is presented annually to an individual who has made outstanding contributions to the defense industry base.

Photo: Ed and Gayle Buckbee with trophy.

(Photo courtesy NDIA)

MRA Mourns the Loss of J R Thompson, Jr., Former Center Director



The news of the sudden death of James Robert (J R) Thompson Jr., on November 7, brought shock to the NASA family, space industry colleagues and community leaders. The obituary in the November 10, 2017, issue of the *Huntsville Times* covered in detail the many leadership roles that J R played in both NASA and industry. Since his death, many of us have recalled great memories of J R as we worked with him and for him as he led NASA through difficult challenges and magnificent successes in the space program.

Here are shared memories:

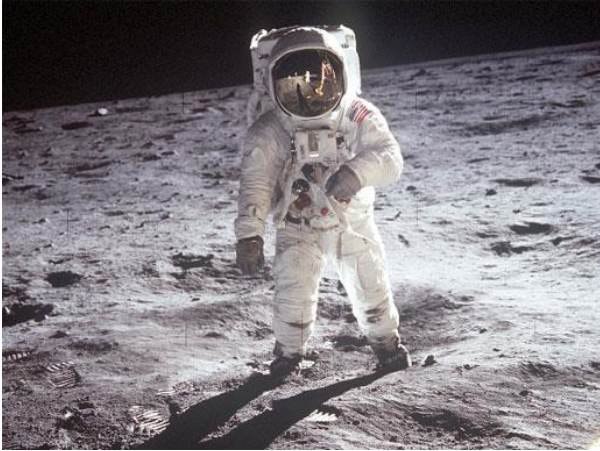
.... Among a crowd of pioneers in the art and science of rocketry and spaceflight, J R Thompson, Jr., stands out as a beacon on a hill. He was a man of many talents that he applied effectively throughout his entire professional career. Among his talents were an uncommon intellect, good judgment, imagination, decisiveness, and an excellent capacity to communicate, verbally and nonverbally. Perhaps his most important gift was his ability to disregard the unimportant and to focus his substantial array of talents to the resolution of specific problems while inspiring and motivating others through his personal example. J R was authentic. He excelled as a journeyman engineer, as a leader of technical talent and as a manager. He complemented his technical capabilities with a remarkable appreciation of the importance of personal relationships among his colleagues. His inherent drive did not allow him to accept defeat. Rather, he was stimulated by any technical challenge. His record of success in widely differing engineering situations is a living tribute to his effectiveness. He was a true pioneer in a challenging field. He will be remembered as one of the "greats" of his time.

William R. Lucas, former Center Director

.... J R Thompson, Jr., was an extraordinary leader. During the launch of Skylab the meteoroid shield which covered the outside of the Orbital Workshop and also served as a barrier between the sun and the workshop was lost. Without a barrier, the temperatures within the Workshop would make it uninhabitable. J R led a team which within ten days designed and built a shield which was deployed by the first crew bringing the temperatures down to acceptable levels. The Space Shuttle needed an engine which would have performance levels never achieved by any engine and require technology never used. J R led the project which designed and developed the Space Shuttle Main Engine. Without this engine, Space Shuttle would not have met its requirements. J R continued to use his exceptional talents to provide leadership to the nation's space program both within NASA and in private industry during a long and highly successful career.

Wayne Littles, former Center Director

50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE MOON LANDING



The Apollo 11 Anniversary Planning Committee has been established to coordinate two simultaneous celebrations during 2019; the 50th anniversary of man's landing on the moon and the 200th anniversary of the creation of statehood for Alabama.

The committee, chaired by Dr. Deborah Barnhart, CEO of the USSRC, has established several committees to define and develop the Apollo 11 celebration.

Two committees of interest to the MRA are: The MSFC Legacy Committee, chaired by Bennie Jacks, and the German-American Heritage Committee, chaired by Heidi Collier.

These committees have met together several times as their goals are very similar; the participants will, in many cases, be the same;

and the chosen celebration events can be best accomplished with joint efforts.

The target period for the Apollo 11 celebration will be the week of July 14 -20, 2019, though earlier events may occur with other associated committees. The two committees are concentrating on the week of the Saturn liftoff that carried Armstrong, Aldrin, and Collins to the Moon.

Ideas under consideration are having panel discussions with key people to discuss how the rocket program developed in Huntsville, how the German and American cultures were intertwined as all worked together, and what it was like for both men and women to find a place in the historical creation of such an incredible rocket.

Dr. Barnhart has requested that the committees define a spectacular international press-attraction event to call attention to Huntsville's piece of the moon-journey story. As plans progress, the committees are requesting that MRA members offer ideas, which will make the celebration a memorable event for all of Huntsville and Alabama.

Please contact Bennie Jacks if you have input or wish to be a part of the planning committee.



Former Astronaut Dr. Jan Davis Received Auburn's 2017 Distinguished Engineer of the Year Award



(Jan with Todd May, MSFC Director and Auburn Alumni)

Former astronaut and MRA member Dr. Jan Davis was recognized as Auburn University's 2017 Distinguished Engineer of the Year at ceremonies on

the Auburn campus in September 2017. Jan received her degree in mechanical engineering in 1977. Before coming to Auburn, she earned a bachelor's degree in applied biology from Georgia Tech. Following her undergraduate studies, she earned her master's and doctoral degrees from University of Alabama Huntsville in 1983 and 1985, respectively. After retiring from NASA, she was vice president at Jacobs Engineering and recently, was named V-P & General Manager of Bastion Technologies, Inc.

In addition to her many awards from NASA and other professional organizations, Jan is a member of the Alabama Engineering Hall of Fame and the Alabama Aviation Hall of Fame. She is a fellow of AIAA and ASME. Congratulations Jan!



Dr. Jan Davis represented Therapy Partners of Huntsville, during Safety Week 2017 at Marshall. Here, Davis, a former NASA astronaut who is a technical expert supporting the Safety and Mission Services Contract at Marshall for Bastion Technologies of Huntsville, kneels next to her therapy dog, also named Davis.

(NASA/MSFC/Emmett Given)

29th Annual Wernher von Braun Memorial Dinner

The 29th Annual Wernher von Braun Memorial Dinner was held on October 26, 2017 at the Space and Rocket Center under the magnificent Saturn V rocket. (Photos courtesy MSFC and 256 Magazine)



NASA Acting Administrator Robert Lightfoot received the von Braun Trophy



Jim and Joanne Splawn



Debbie & Parker Counts



Brooks Moore, Brenda & Rick Chappell

29th Annual Wernher von Braun Memorial Dinner

(Continued)



MRA Docents staffed the Registration Table. L-R: Sandra Turner, Dennis Foster, Linda Dinges, Craig Sumner, Bennie Jacks, Jack Stokes, Ann Towry and Kenny Mitchell.

MRA Scholarship for 2017-2018 –Taylor Herrin



Taylor is the recipient of the 2017-2018 MRA scholarship at UAH. He is majoring in mechanical engineering with plans to pursue advanced degrees in aerospace engineering. Taylor is an Eagle Scout and has a passion for 3D printing and additive manufacturing.

Photos from September 2017 MRA Luncheon

Speaker: Dr. Jim Green, “The Exploration of Mars: Past, Present and Future”



Speaker Jim Green & Rick Chappell



Gray Settle & Winston Hodge



Ken & Lynda Fernandez and Kathy & Bill Jones



Dan and Ann Clough



MSFC Holiday Reception

The 2017 MSFC Holiday Reception will be on December 5th, from 2:30 – 5:00 p.m., in Building 4316, MSFC Activities Building. All NASA retirees are invited!

August 21 Solar Eclipse



Former Spacelab 1 mission scientist Rick Chappell addresses Marshall team members during the Aug. 21 eclipse-watching event in Activities Building 4316. Chappell, a former associate director for science at Marshall and now a physics professor at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, joined a throng of Marshall personnel to marvel at the eclipse. **(Photo and Article Courtesy NASA Marshall Star)**



Schedule of MRA Meetings in 2018: Mark Your Calendars

Tuesday, March 13, 2018 – Luncheon

Tuesday, June 5, 2018 – Dinner

Thursday, September 6, 2018 – Luncheon

Tuesday, December 11, 2018 - Dinner



Docent Craig Sumner talks with future astronauts



Stay Up to Date with MSFC Activities

NASA Marshall Space Flight Center's weekly news releases and other information are available automatically by sending an e-mail message to MSFC-request@newsletters.nasa.gov, with the subject line "subscribe".



Obituaries of *Marshall Retirees*

- Barkley**, Hillard R. 97, Huntsville, died Sept. 2. Retired 1982 as personnel mgmt. specialist.
- Boyanton**, Arthur O., 85, Huntsville, died Aug. 20. Retired in 1987 as engineer.
- Brown**, Claude Kelley., 87, Huntsville, died Oct. 8. Retired 1987 as printing specialist.
- Bowen**, Robert O., 92, Huntsville, died Aug. 8. Retired 1994 as engineer.
- Christensen**, David, 85, Lumberton, TX died Sept. 1. Retired as aerospace engineer.
- Dickerson**, Sandra O., 75, Huntsville, died Oct. 29. Retired 2002 as human resources specialist.
- Evans-McCoy**, Rita, 62, Meridianville, died Aug. 13. Retired 2010 as human resources specialist.
- Garcia**, Raymond P., 81, Huntsville, died Aug. 29. Retired 2004 as propulsion engineer.
- Gresham**, Albert E., 96, Huntsville, died Aug. 11. Retired 1973 as an engineer.
- Graham**, Frank M., 82, Athens, died Sept. 27. Retired 1995 as aerospace engineer.
- Herring**, James B., 80, Owens Cross Roads, died Sept. 22. Retired 1994 as aerospace engineer.
- Hill**, Kenneth A., 87, Huntsville, died Oct. 14. Retired 1986 as aerospace engineer.
- Hinton**, Wylie "Mack", 84, Rogersville, died Aug. 20. Retired 1989 as program analyst.
- Hopper**, Edgar H., 93, Madison, died July 23. Retired 1980 as a mathematician.
- Huff**, William A., 93, Huntsville, died June 15. Retired 1979 as aerospace engineer.
- Jackson**, Bernardine R., 61, Birmingham, died Sept. 3. Retired in 2015 as contract specialist.
- Jenkins**, James E., 88, Huntsville, died Sept. 17. Retired 1990 as flight systems engineer.
- Keith**, Rita S., 63, Huntsville, died Aug. 10. Retired 2006 as management support assistant.
- Kirby**, Fernander R., 102, Huntsville, died Sept. 17. Retired 1984 as program analyst.
- McGraw**, James R., 86, of Union Grove, died Aug. 28. Retired 1989 as a program analyst.
- Mize**, Rondal C., 79, Cullman, died June 8. Retired 2005 as facility safety systems supervisor.
- Miner**, Robert, 80, Huntsville, died July 19. Retired as aerospace engineer.
- Norton**, Orea A., 83, Hazel Green, died Sept. 15. Retired 1995 as materials engineer.
- Robertson**, Lois M. 87, Huntsville, died Oct. 22. Retired 1986 as administrative officer.
- Simpson**, William G., 96, Ardmore, died Oct. 8. Retired 1988 as flight systems engineer. He was 1991 NASA Inventor of the Year for sprayable lightweight ablative coating.
- Stephens**, Teddy W., 79, Huntsville, died Sept. 11. Retired 1999 as aerospace engineer.
- Venus**, James D., 87, Harvest, died Sept. 20. Retired 1986 as a program analyst.
- Watts**, Linwood, 76, Huntsville, died Aug. 13. Retired 2003 as electronic instrumentation assistant.
- Webster**, Loyce E., 85, Gurley, died July 31. Retired 1987 as model maker.