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***NASA/MSFC Retirees Association***

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

**FEBRUARY 2026 ISSUE**

**QUARTERLY MRA LUNCHEON**

*Tuesday, March 10, 2026 The Ledges*

*Social & Registration 11 - 11:45 a.m.;*

*Lunch. 11:45 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.*

*Business & Speaker 12:15 - 1:00 p.m.*

*Menu:*

*Chicken Marsala, Mashed Potatoes, Southern Green Beans,*

*Dinner Rolls, Coffee & Tea.*

*Dessert: Black Forest Cake*

*Cost: \$35.00 per person*

Please RSVP to Bennie Jacks no later than **Noon, March 5, 2026** at  
benniejacks@att.net, or cell phone: 256.603.0894.

A 72-hour cancellation notice is required by The Ledges. No shows are expected to pay for meals to MRA.

**UPCOMING LUNCHEON IN 2026:**

June 9, 2026

September 15, 2026

December 8, 2026

## **PROGRAM SPEAKER**



**COL. ERIN N. EIKE**

**U.S. ARMY GARRISON –  
REDSTONE ARSENAL  
COMMANDER**

**TOPIC: UPDATE ON  
ACTIVITIES ON  
REDSTONE ARSENAL**

Col. Erin Eike assumed duties as the U. S. Army Garrison-Redstone Arsenal Commander on August 1, 2024. In her role, she oversees support services for more than 65 tenant organizations that include a four-star Army Materiel Command, NASA’s Marshall Space Flight Center, the FBI and other federal and DOD agencies that operate from the installation.

The Windom, Minnesota native began her military career in 1998 by enlisting and serving in the Minnesota National Guard. Upon graduation from Minnesota State & Gustavus Adolphus College, she was commissioned as a second lieutenant. Along with her bachelor’s degree in psychology, she earned a master’s in strategic studies from the U. S. Air War College.

Prior to her assignment at Redstone, Eike served as the Chief of Requirements Division, in the J6 Command, Control, Communications and Computers Cyber at the Pentagon.

Upon her assignment, she commented that “Redstone is not just a place of history but a place where history is made. I’m humbled to be the first woman to serve in this role in the storied 83 years of the Arsenal’s existence.”

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT ....

Greetings to the MRA from your new leadership team! We are excited to get to work for this wonderful organization.

We extend our deepest appreciation and thanks to the outgoing leadership team. President Steve Cash did an exceptional job. He was professional but fun to work with and he served most of his 3-year term without the assistance of a Vice President. Gray Settle not only served as MRA Treasurer for six years, but also played a fundamental role in establishing the Wall of Honor database of 21,000+ names, and bringing to fruition the Wall of Honor kiosk, which provides the location of a name on the Wall, and also provides a thumbnail biography and picture for those who have entered this information into the Space Explorers Database. (It's never too late to do that. Go to <https://www.marshallretirees.org/memorial-database/> ).

Among other things, this outgoing leadership team oversaw the dedication of the Wall of Honor, the establishment of a new endowed scholarship fund for Alabama A&M University, the addition of a new venue for our quarterly luncheons, and support of STEM and other outreach activities too numerous to list. THANK YOU Steve and Gray!!

We stand now at a crossroads for NASA and Marshall Space Flight Center. We have witnessed in the last few years the beginning of a transformation of the Center, both in infrastructure and in people. We have watched with sadness the demolition of many historic buildings and structures including Bldg. 4200, and most recently the loss of Huntsville's beloved and iconic test stands. I always loved seeing them when I flew back to Huntsville. For me, they epitomized "home" and the pride of being a NASA employee. However, loss of these beloved structures is paving the way for an exciting future of renewed human space exploration with the impending Artemis launch. Our new NASA Administrator is also emphasizing the need to reinvigorate in-house capability at NASA Centers.

With these things in mind, the new MRA leadership team is prioritizing the goal of "paying it forward." We hope to complete funding of the A&M Scholarship fund ahead of schedule and then look for additional scholarship opportunities. We endeavor to bolster significantly the MRA membership numbers. We hope to step up our communication and outreach capabilities to excite you to support our outreach efforts.

We will continue to honor NASA MSFC's past magnificent accomplishments, while we seek to inspire and support the people who will achieve the next great milestones of space exploration. Please join us by getting actively engaged in the MRA's efforts! Read on to find out how you can do that.

We look forward to seeing you on March 10<sup>th</sup> at our first luncheon of 2026.

*Melissa McGrath*

## 2026 MEMBERSHIP DUES

At this time of year, we are collecting dues for 2026. Dues are \$50 and may be paid by mailing a check, made payable to MSFC Retirees Association to: MSFC Retirees Association, P. O. Box 4492, Huntsville, AL 35815, or by paying at the next luncheon on December 9, 2025, at The Ledges.

For the convenience of our members, we have added a feature to the [www.marshallretirees.org](http://www.marshallretirees.org) website, whereby you can pay membership dues and meals at the luncheons, on-line. If on a phone, click on the 3 bars at the right-hand top of the screen and select MAKE A PAYMENT. If you are on a computer, select MAKE A PAYMENT from the top menu. We will have a list of those who have paid on line, but will continue to set up a table at the luncheons for payment of meals and annual membership dues for those of you who prefer the cash or check methods of paying. If you have issues with online service, please contact Gray Settle for assistance, [gsettle@gmail.com](mailto:gsettle@gmail.com), 256.682.0334.

Membership in the Association is open to **former MSFC and other NASA Center civil service 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 e

If your mailing address or e-mail address change, please remember to let Mary Spaulding know by e-mailing her at [md\\_spaulding@comcast.net](mailto:md_spaulding@comcast.net) or calling 256-682-0441 so we can keep our records up to date.

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## MRA NEWSLETTER

As you are aware, you receive an advance email newsletter, followed by the snail mail copy at your home address a week or so later, as a part of your membership, which you can share with family or fellow MSFC colleagues. If you prefer to receive the **email newsletter only**, please notify the Newsletter Editor, Jean Lee, at 256.508.4203 (text) or email: [bjeanlee@aol.com](mailto:bjeanlee@aol.com).

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## MRA MEMBERSHIP HANDBOOK

Plans are underway to issue an updated MRA Membership Handbook in the near future. Please make sure your dues are paid and that your information is correct in Mary's membership database. Please contact Mary Spaulding at [md\\_spaulding@comcast.net](mailto:md_spaulding@comcast.net) or call 256-682-0441, if you have questions.

## WELCOME NEW MRA BOARD



**L to R: Mark King, Treasurer; Melissa McGrath, President; Jim Turner, Vice-President  
(Not pictured Secretary: Charlie Finnegan)**

Below is a photo of outgoing and incoming members of the Board and Committees.



**Back Row: Gray Settle, Jim Turner, Rick Chappell, Bruce Tiller, Amy Epps, Mark King,  
Steve Cash. Middle Row: Parker Counts, Jack Stokes, Jean Payne, Mary Spaulding,  
Melissa McGrath. Seated: Bennie Jacks, Jean Lee, Annette Tingle.**

## MRA MEMBERS SAY GOODBYE TO TWO OLD FRIENDS



MRA received a gracious invitation from Acting Center Director Rae Ann Meyer for 20 participants to view the demolition of the historic “T-Tower” and Dynamic Test Facility test stands from the Director’s suite on Saturday January 10, 2026. The retirees were treated to refreshments and a presentation from Director Meyer about the rationale and procedures used for the demolition. Remarks were also made to the group by the Center Director of Operations Bill Marks and the Redstone Garrison Commander Col. Erin Eike. After a several-hour delay due to rain and clouds, the demolition of both test stands was sadly, but successfully, accomplished.



# MRA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

As professionals who've spent our careers at the intersection of curiosity and calculation, we know that tomorrow's breakthroughs depend on the talent we cultivate today. Living in the Rocket City, we see firsthand the potential of students at Alabama A&M University. Therefore, MRA plans to endow a scholarship at Alabama A&M.

**In just over a year, we've raised \$10,750 toward our \$25,000 goal—more than 40% of the way to fund the creation of the MRA Endowed Scholarship.** We're deeply grateful to those who have already contributed. This annual scholarship will help defray the educational costs for one deserving engineering or space science student each year.

By contributing to this endowment, you're making a permanent investment in our local aerospace pipeline. Once fully funded, this scholarship will support a student every year, in perpetuity—creating a lasting legacy that extends far beyond any single semester or graduate. Your generosity helps bridge the gap between academic potential and professional success.

**We're closer than ever to our goal. Will you help us complete this mission?** You may donate by three methods:

**-Scan the QR Code:** the code will take you directly to the NASA MSFC Retirees Association Endowment Fund form on Qgiv. Simply, select your giving amount and follow the prompts.



**-Qgiv: give online by clicking this link:** [NASAMSFCRetAssocEndowment](#). The link will take you directly to the NASA MSFC Retirees Association Endowment Fund. Follow the prompts to continue processing your donation.

**-By Check/Money Order:** Make payable to AAMU Foundation – *note NASA MSFC Retirees Association Endowment Fund* in the memo section. Mail to:

AAMU Foundation  
Attn: Kim M. Davis  
P. O. Box 1057  
Normal, AL 35762

All donations are **100% tax deductible**. If you work for a corporation or private company, please check with your HR department about the matching gift process.

**UAH:** At the end of February, UAH will host their annual Scholarship Breakfast where they will present this year's recipient of the MRA endowed UAH scholarship.

## **SAVE THE DATE: OCTOBER 2, 2026**

On October 2, 2026, MRA in partnership with USSRC will host the Second Annual Space Explorer's Celebration in the Davidson Center at the USSRC. Mark your calendar! The celebration will include adding the names of new permanent NASA employees to the Wall of Honor. This is an opportunity for employees, retirees, and their families to fellowship and celebrate the teamwork of the space explorers. More information will follow in future newsletters.

## **ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS AT UAH**

An effort to conduct oral interviews and recordings of Marshall retirees began in 2006, but were discontinued for a period of time following the death of Dr. Chuck Lundquist. These oral history interviews preserve and celebrate the voices, stories, and experiences of individuals who have contributed to the rich history of the space program.

Jack Stokes picked up the torch and scheduling of interviews are ongoing under an agreement between MRA and the UAH Special Collections Division of the Salmon Library. The interviews are conducted in an informal and comfortable setting on the campus of UAH. Think about the potential for future members of your family being able to view and hear your voice as you share your stories of your career. Don't miss this opportunity. To check out these interviews, visit <https://www.libarchstor.uah.edu> to view other Marshall retirees' interviews.

If you would like more information or would be willing to participate, please contact Jack Stokes at 256-468-2743 or email: [jackstokes1962@gmail.com](mailto:jackstokes1962@gmail.com), or Kathryn Cataldo at 256.797.0995, or email: [katknews@gmail.com](mailto:katknews@gmail.com). Both are conducting interviews.

## **OPM IMPORTANT NUMBERS AND ON-LINE CONTACTS:**

**Taxes:** Annuitant Express, change in tax withholding (1-800-409-6738)

**Federal Long-Term Care:** 1-800-582-3337; [www.LTCFEDS.COM](http://www.LTCFEDS.COM)

**Thrift Savings Plan:** 1-877-968-3778; [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov)

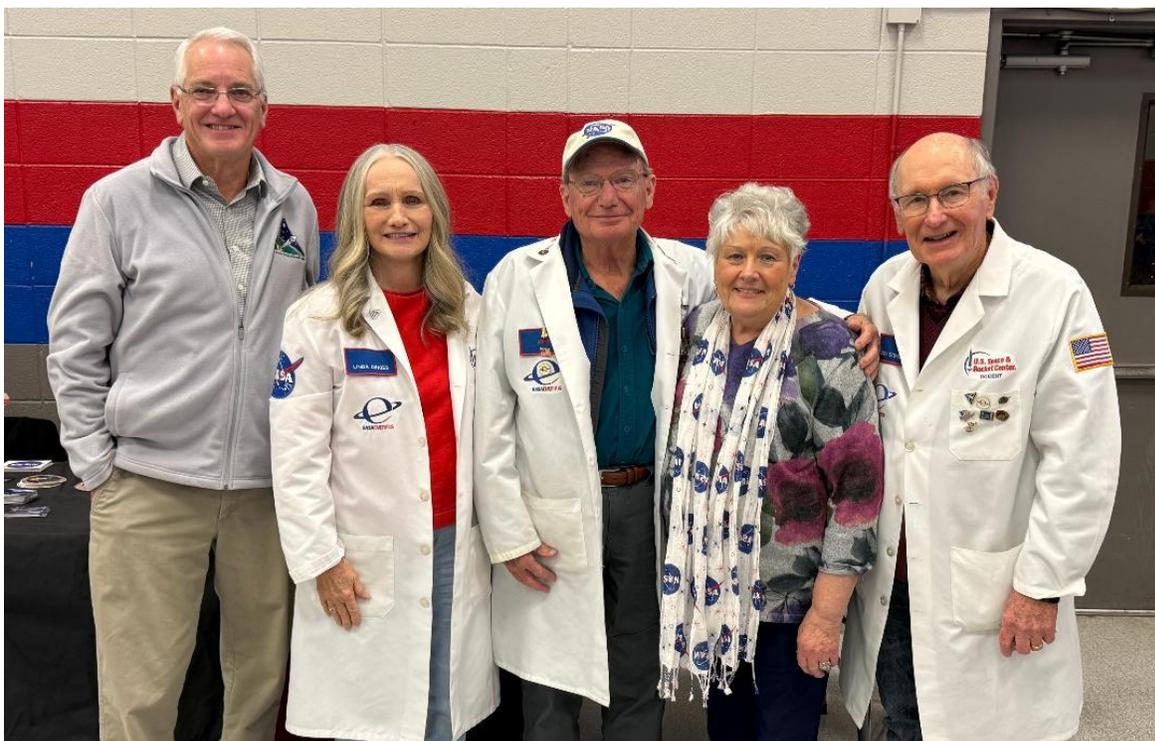
**Social Security:** 1-800-772-1213; [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)

**Report Death of Employee/Spouse:** 1-888-767-6738; [retire@opm.gov](mailto:retire@opm.gov)

**Point of Contact for MSFC Retirees:** Debbie Allen: 256.544.7536;

[Deborah.a.allen@nasa.gov](mailto:Deborah.a.allen@nasa.gov); [allenda0927@gmail.com](mailto:allenda0927@gmail.com)

## RETIREES AND DOCENTS AT WORK



**L to R: Bruce Tiller, Linda Dinges, John Reaves, Bennie Jacks & Jack Stokes**

On January 29<sup>th</sup>, retirees and docents participated in the Challenger Elementary School STEM night by sharing their career experiences and knowledge of space programs and hopefully inspiring students to seek a career in space exploration. Being there brought back memories from early space exploration years where many of our Marshall retirees' children went to school and now their grandchildren. The school was built to honor the legacy of the Shuttle Challenger crew and to inspire future generations to explore space. The event brought together parents, students and over 30 companies, universities, club and organizations.

We encourage retirees to get actively engaged in our many outreach efforts and join in the opportunities to share your career with the young future engineers, scientists and astronauts.

Another event is planned at Mt. Gap Middle School on April 2, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. Contact Bennie Jacks, MRA Community Outreach Coordinator for more information at [benniejacks@att.net](mailto:benniejacks@att.net), or text 256.603.0894.

**NASA Emeritus Docents (USSRC):** Several MRA retirees participate weekly as NASA Emeritus Docents at the USSRC. Please consider joining this group. You pick your dates and times to volunteer, as your schedule permits. Contact Sondre Stough at USSRC at [sondresto@spacecamp.com](mailto:sondresto@spacecamp.com), or 256.721.7840.

## SPACE EXPLORATION DATABASE

The Wall of Honor is up and MRA will continue to encourage MSFC retirees and their families to add their stories to the database by submitting them on line at the MRA website: [www.marshallretirees.org](http://www.marshallretirees.org). Contractors are also encouraged to add their stories on line for inclusion in the database and the kiosk at the Wall.

We've encouraged you to take advantage of the opportunity to include your information over several years. Please take the time to do it soon. We were made aware of the fact that students are given assignments to go to the database and research engineers and scientists for term papers. It could be you!

## SSL BREAKFAST GROUP



**Left to Right: Bill Henze, Ann Whitaker, Jim Fountain, Richard Hoover, Bill Snoddy (Group Coordinator), Ken Wright, Caroline Wang and Ron White**

Retirees from the Space Sciences Laboratory enjoy breakfast and fellowship at local restaurants. If you know of a retiree group that meets regularly to talk about the good old days, please let the Newsletter Editor, Jean Lee, know so that we can share their photos in this newsletter.



## OBITUARIES

**Anderson**, Wannie Hollman (Andy), 96, of Hazel Green, died December 30, 2025.

**Bandgren**, Harry J., 86, of Huntsville, died December 22, 2025.

**Bradford**, William Clifford “Cliff”, 93, of Camden, AL, died December 9, 2025.

**Brock**, Rita Jean Wyatt, 78, of Athens, died January 22, 2026.

**Edwards**, Katherine Lucile, 95, of Huntsville, died January 11, 2026.

**Hodo**, James David, 78, of Huntsville, died December 22, 2025.

**Johnson**, Bobby G., 84, of Decatur, died January 25, 2026.

**King**, Charlie Alton, 94, of Huntsville, died November 23, 2025.

**Leto**, Salvatore (Sam) Anthony, 90, of Huntsville, died January 11, 2026.

**Nicaise**, Placide Donald “PD”, 90, of Huntsville, died January 21, 2026.

**Nebrig**, John Robert, 78, of Decatur, died December 22, 2025.

**Smith**, Robert Edward “Bob”, Jr., 83, of Huntsville, died January 5, 2026.

**Rathz**, Thomas Joseph, 74, of Huntsville, died February 7, 2026.

**Schutzenhofer**, Luke A., 86, of Huntsville, died February 6, 2026.

**Thompson**, Joyce Honea, 91, of Meridianville, died December 27, 2025.

**Paludan**, Charles “Ted”, 94, of Huntsville, died November 7, 2025.

**Vickers**, Lyndall Jackson, 88, of Huntsville, died January 29, 2026.

**Wooldridge**, James Thomas (J.T.), 94, of Jonesboro, AK, died February 2, 2026.

## DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

Each January, NASA pauses to honor members of the NASA family who lost their lives while furthering the cause of exploration and discovery, including test pilots, the Apollo 1 crew, and the crews of space shuttles Challenger and Columbia.

On January 22, the Marshall team gathered for a candle lighting ceremony and a moment of silence in their memory as they reflect on the importance of maintaining a strong safety culture. As retirees, we join in this day of remembrance.