



## ***NASA/MSFC Retirees Association***

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

**MAY 2026 ISSUE**

# **QUARTERLY MRA LUNCHEON**

*Tuesday, June 9, 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:*

*Braised Beef Tips with Gravy, Mashed Potatoes, Vegetable  
Medley, Dinner Rolls, Coffee & Tea.*

*Dessert: Southern Peach Cobbler with Ice Cream*

*Cost: \$35.00 per person*

Please RSVP to Bennie Jacks no later than **Noon, June 4, 2026** at benniejacks@att.net, or cell phone: 256.603.0894. Help us avoid the long line in the entryway by purchasing your lunch ticket in advance

here: <https://www.marshallretirees.org/product/quarterly-luncheon-ticket/> A 72-hour cancellation notice is required by The Ledges.

No shows are expected to pay for meals to MRA.

**UPCOMING LUNCHEON IN 2026:**

September 15, 2026 (Valley Hill Country Club) December  
8, 2026 (The Ledges)

## **PROGRAM SPEAKER**



### **CHAD SUMMERS, DIRECTOR, TEST LABORATORY MARSHALL SPACE FLIGHT CENTER**

#### **TOPIC: CURRENT AND FUTURE TEST ACTIVITIES**

As Director, Chad Summers provides executive leadership for all aspects of the MSFC Test Laboratory, including workforce, budget, infrastructure, the operations for propulsion, structural strength, structural dynamics, and environmental testing as well as design analysis for Special Test Equipment (STE).

Prior to assuming this role in 2024, Summers served as the chief of the Structural Design and Analysis Division at MSFC from 2019 to 2024.

Summers joined the MSFC team in 2001, transferring from Stennis. From 2001 to 2004, he served as Test Operations Manager in the Space Launch Initiative/Next Generation Launch Technology Project Office. Chad transferred to Stennis from KSC in 1997 where he served as a test conductor for various launch and rocket engine test programs.

He received his BSME degree from the University of Central Florida in 1994.

## *Letter from the President.....*

Greetings MRA members!

I hope you are having a wonderful spring, enjoying our beautiful weather.

The past few months have taken us through exciting highs and sad lows. The Artemis II launch, which proceeded flawlessly, and the ensuing mission taking humans further into space than ever before was very impressively executed and very inspiring. Hopefully, this heralds a reinvigoration and lasting commitment to establishing a human presence on the Moon.

At the same time, we lost several renowned leaders in the local space exploration community, including past MRA President and the first US Space and Rocket Center CEO Ed Buckbee (please see the tribute to him later in this newsletter) and retired USSRC CEO Deborah Barnhart. We salute both our present courageous astronauts and workforce who made the Artemis II mission such a great success, and our past visionary leaders, who dedicated their careers to achieving such glorious successes in space exploration.

The MRA has just added 3 new Board members to replace those who stepped into Officer and Committee Chair positions. Please welcome Pete Allen, Tia Ferguson, and Regina Grant. As always please feel free to contact any of us on the Board (see contact information on the last page of the newsletter) with comments, concerns or suggestions.

In the next few months, the MRA will have many opportunities for new and fun activities. Please see details in the newsletter, and please join us for one of more of these events.

We hope to see all for the first in the series at our quarterly luncheon on June 9th at the Ledges. Reach out to your MSFC colleagues and invite them to join us.

Ad astra, Melissa McGrath

## **2026 MEMBERSHIP DUES**

As of April 1, your 2026 membership dues are late. Dues are \$50 and may be paid by: (1) mailing a check, made payable to MSFC Retirees Association to: MSFC Retirees Association, P. O. Box 4492, Huntsville, AL 35815, (2) paying at the next luncheon on June 9, 2026, at The Ledges, or (3) paying on-line.

For your convenience, we have added a feature to the [www.marshallretirees.org](http://www.marshallretirees.org) website, whereby you can **pay membership dues and pay for 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 at the registration table, but will continue to accept payment of meals and annual membership dues for those of you who prefer the cash or check methods of paying.

## MEMBERSHIP DUES (CONT'D)

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 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 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. Your membership is important to help fund scholarships to deserving students in the engineering field through local colleges and trade schools.

## 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).

## MRA MEMBERS VOLUNTEERING



Special thanks to MRA members who helped “pay it forward” by supporting the Mountain Gap Elementary School STEAM night on April 2: **(left to right) Richard Hoover, George Hamilton, Jack Stokes, John Reaves, Rick Chappell, and Dennis Foster.**

Please consider joining MRA volunteers for future outreach events listed on the following page.!

## UPCOMING EVENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR MRA

The MRA has been graciously invited by the Deputy Garrison Commander at Redstone Arsenal to visit the Army office of Dr. Wernher von Braun. If there is enough interest, we will target a visit or visits in the late May or June timeframe. If you would like to participate, please contact Bennie Jacks [benniejacks@att.net](mailto:benniejacks@att.net), or cell phone: 256.603.0894.

Mid-July is soon to be designated as “Space Festival” week+ in Huntsville. There will be several space and Apollo-themed events this year, including a July 16 “launch” event on the anniversary of the Apollo moon launch; July 18- Space Night for the Huntsville Football Club; July 20- Apollo Day with a Concert in the Park and Space Night for the Rocket City Trash Pandas; and July 23-the MRA is the designated sponsor for the USSRC Biergarten.

The MRA has an opportunity to purchase a block of tickets for a field suite for the July 18 Space Night Huntsville City Football Club match vs Atlanta. Each field suite comes with 25 tickets to the match and 5 parking passes. A food and beverage package can also be purchased. These suites are located on field level, behind the south end goal, and include tables and chairs. We would need to have 25 people, \$30 per person, to purchase a field suite. The match starts at 7pm. We would need to commit in the late June time frame. If you would like to participate in this event, please contact Bennie Jacks by June 26 at [benniejacks@att.net](mailto:benniejacks@att.net), or cell phone: 256.603.0894.

**Save the date - Biergarten at the USSRC on July 23:** The Biergarten runs from June through September on Thursday nights at the USSRC. Each week, the USSRC selects a non-profit organization to receive 10% of the proceeds to support that organization’s goals. MRA will be the non-profit organization represented at the USSRC Biergarten on **Thursday July 23**. Please save the date and invite your family, friends, and neighbors to attend. We will enjoy a German style dinner & dancing underneath the beautiful Saturn V Rocket!

We will also host a book signing with authors: Astronauts Jan Davis, Bob Stewart, and Rick Chappell; Bill McDonald, and David Hitt. Dennis Foster will also showcase his musical CD’s and more. Artist Caroline Wang has designed a flyer for us to share. Hope to see you there! If you need more information contact Bennie Jacks at [benniejacks@att.net](mailto:benniejacks@att.net), or 256.603.0894.

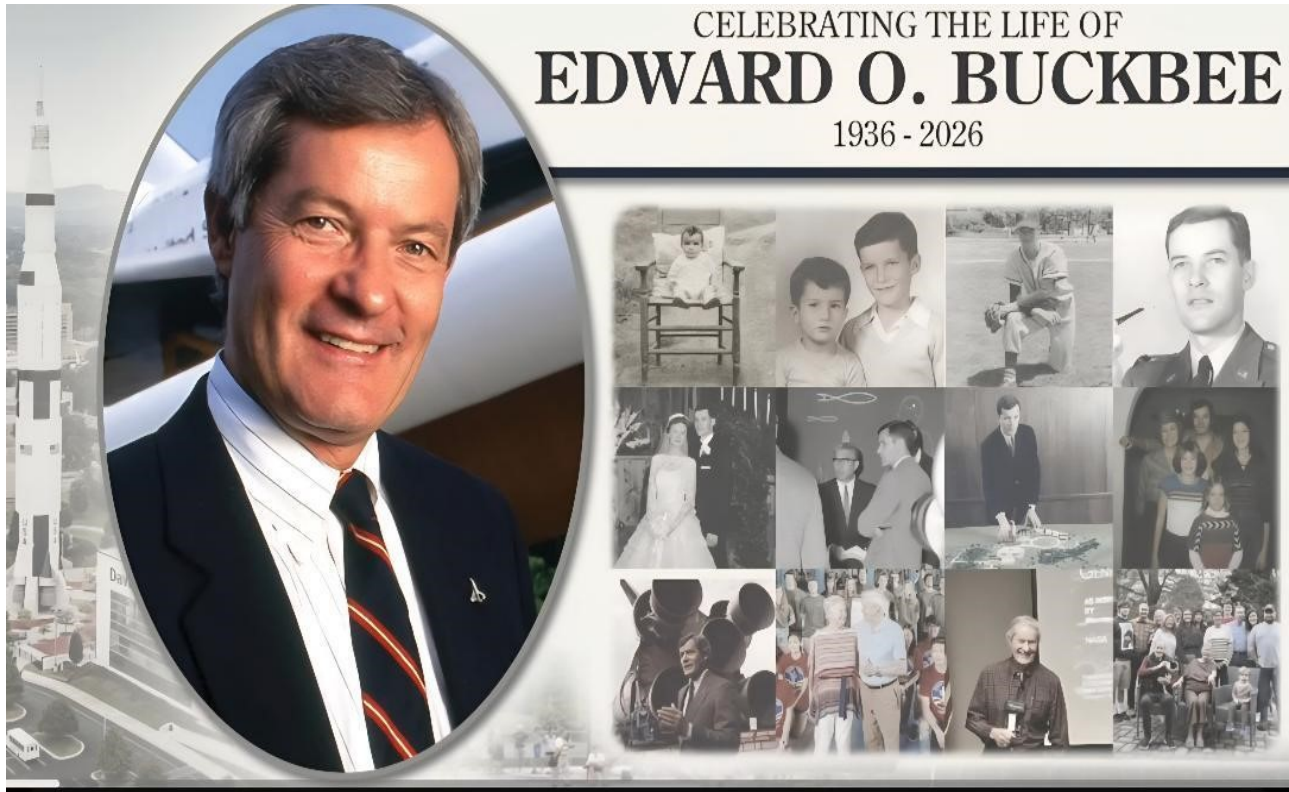
**Save the date- Space Explorers Celebration and Dinner on October 2, 2026:** Planning is underway for the second annual Space Explorers Celebration on October 2, 2026 at the USSRC Davidson Center. This event kicks off a month of celebrations each year in recognition of October as Space Exploration Month proclaimed by the City of Huntsville and Madison County.

The event will begin with adding names of new permanent NASA employees over the past year to the Wall of Honor. Then attendees to join together at the Davidson Center for fellowship and dinner. The guest speaker at the dinner will be Charlie Bolden, former Space Shuttle Commander and NASA Administrator. The focus of the entire event is to acknowledge and honor the families

of the space explorers who made America's space program a success. Please plan to join us. If you have any questions, please contact Rick Chappell at [rick.chappell@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:rick.chappell@vanderbilt.edu).

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## TRIBUTE TO EDWARD O. BUCKBEE



It is with sadness that we learned of the passing of Ed Buckbee on April 5, 2026. Ed was the cornerstone of MRA, having been a leader in organizing the association and serving as President from 1999-2002. He was a dedicated member of the Board by attending all Board and Committee meetings until his health started declining.

Ed's commitment to the space program ran the spectrum from documenting the history in published books to establishing Space Camp to develop future space explorers for future explorations. MRA sponsored the publishing of *50 Years of Rockets & Spacecraft* in 2002, compiled and edited by Ed. This book focused on the technical aspects of the programs and projects within the space program. In 2009, MRA sponsored the publishing of a second book, *50 Years of Rockets & Spacecraft-MSFC*. This book focused on the human side of the program with personal stories and experiences by program and project leaders. Ed compiled and edited this book as well. Both books are available through used book stores.

He was an ambassador for the space program around the world from the time Dr. von Braun appointed him as his Public Affairs Director until his death. He appeared on the David Letterman show in the late 80's and notoriously strapped Letterman into the Multi-Axis Trainer sending the comedian into spun head over heels zero gravity.

At his Celebration of Life, local TV anchor Liz Hurley shared wonderful stories and ended with these words. "You have earned your wings. Now rest upon the stars."

## MRA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM UPDATE

As a reminder, the MRA is raising and contributing funds for the establishment of an endowed scholarship at Alabama A&M University. Thanks to those who have made contributions we have raised almost half of the needed \$25,000 goal.

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, empowering generation after generation to reach for the stars, propelled by those of us who charted the course before them.

You may donate by three methods:

1. **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.



2. **Qgiv: give online by clicking the following link:** [NASAMSFCRetAssocEndowment](#)

The link will take you directly to the NASA MSFC Retirees Association Endowment Fund. Follow the prompts to continue processing your donation.

3. **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 human resources department to inquire about the matching gift process, which could multiply to your gift.

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## **MRA SCHOLARSHIP SPOTLIGHT: Andrew R. Jackson**

MRA is about more than financial support. It is an investment in promising students who are preparing to carry forward a tradition of engineering excellence, service, and innovation. We are proud to recognize **Andrew R. Jackson**, a MRA scholarship recipient whose academic progress, leadership, and hands-on research reflect the very purpose of this program.

Andrew recently graduated from Drake State with a degree in **Computer Information Systems** and is continuing his studies at Drake in **Engineering Design**, with a goal of helping create parts and systems that improve performance and safety. In his thank-you note to MRA, he wrote that the financial support did not simply help pay a bill, it helped change the trajectory of his life.

Through the **NASA MUREP Internship at Drake State Community and Technical College**, as an intern he contributed to a research project titled “**Mechanical Characterization of Additively Manufactured Cementitious Material.**” The project focused on improving the properties of **3D-printed concrete mixes**. The project also gave Andrew experience with practical engineering tools and methods, including CAD modeling, mechanical testing, data analysis, fracture imaging, and evaluation of manufacturing processes.

Andrew’s accomplishments extend beyond the lab. He serves as **President of the Blue Eagle Ambassador program** and is part of the **Data Analytics Team**. He also expressed a desire to mentor students who come behind him, continuing the cycle of encouragement and opportunity that helped him along his own path.

On behalf of the Board, we congratulate Andrew R. Jackson on his achievements and thank him for reminding us why this scholarship matters. His story is a powerful example of what can happen when talent, hard work, and encouragement come together. We are proud to support him and look forward to seeing the impact he will make in engineering, technology, and service to others.

## **ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS AT UAH**

Under an agreement between MRA and the UAH Special Collections Division of the Salmon Library, we are conducting interviews in an informal and comfortable setting on the campus of UAH, giving you an opportunity to share your stories and experiences during your career. Think about the potential for future members of your family being able to view and hear your voice as

you share your stories. 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.

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## SPACELAB RETIREES



Spacelab retirees' semi-annual luncheon was held on May 6, 2026 with the following in attendance at Valley Hill Country Club:

**LtoR: First Row-**Bill Johnson, Joel Best, Tom Lynch, Bill Lokken. **Second Row:** Cathy White, Ann Whitaker, Kimberly Robinson, Melinda Naderi, Tony O'Neil. Renee Cox, Homer Hickman. **Third Row:** Keith Robinson, Willie Weaver, Mickey White, Bill Patterson, C. H. Oliver, Bryan Barley, Harry Craft, Randy Bounds and Gray Settle.

If you would like to attend or want more information, contact Bill Johnson at email: [guesscreek@gmail.com](mailto:guesscreek@gmail.com), or 256.756.8017.

## 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)

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## PHOTOS FROM THE MRA MARCH LUNCHEON



L to R: Jack Stokes, Melissa McGrath, John Reaves, and Debbie Counts



L to R: Marisa Wofford and Cheryl Harrell

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS SINCE 11/2025

Reginald Alexander, Randy Baggett, Icle Blankenship, Tammy Brandon, Renee Cox, Rosemary Finley, Catherine Gant, Cheryl Harrell, Kathy Harvey, Paul Hilliard, Jr., Larry Leopard, John Livingston, Pat Patterson, Mark Stiles, Michael Suits, Johathan Tam, Joan Trolinger and Arthur Werkheiser. The Membership Chair has experienced computer issues, so we apologize if your name is not listed here. Please contact Mary Spaulding, at [mary\\_spaulding@comcast.net](mailto:mary_spaulding@comcast.net) or 256.682.0334.

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## OBITUARIES

**Ball**, James Arnold, 88, of Laceys Spring, died March 5, 2026.

**Buckbee**, Edward O., 89, of Huntsville, died April 5, 2026.

**Hall**, Jeanette M., 83, of Meridianville, died April 6, 2026.

**Heckman**, Richard Thomas, 92, of Huntsville, died March 23, 2026.

**Jackson**, Lorna Graves, 67, of Huntsville, died March 21, 2026.

**Kennamer**, Marcus (Mark) Leon, 72, of Woodville, died February 17, 2026.

**Mick**, Bobby “Janet” Dorning, 84, of Huntsville, died March 28, 2026.

**Mobley**, Dave, of Huntsville, died February 12, 2026.

**Parnell**, Thomas Alfred, Dr., 94, of Lumberton, NC, died April 25, 2026.

**Sanders**, Fred Giles, III, 79, of Huntsville, died March 15, 2026.

**Sumner**, Craig Edward, 76, of Huntsville, died April 27, 2026.

(Craig was a devoted member of the NASA Emeritus Docent Program at the USSRC.)

**Taylor**, Ellen Leder, 86, of Huntsville, died May 15, 2026.

**Weisskopf**, Martin C., Dr., 84, of Huntsville, died May 2, 2026.

**Woods**, Warren Keith, 62, of Toney, died May 6, 2026.

**Zurasky**, James L., 91, of Madison, died March 2, 2026.

Dr. Deborah Barnhart, of Huntsville, died March 11, 2026. While not a member of MRA, Deborah was a partner and friend to MRA in her role as CEO and Director of

USSRC and after her retirement. She attended and participated in many of the activities and events of MRA. She will be sorely missed.

**NOTE:** The obituaries listed here are collected from local funeral homes and information received from friends/colleagues. If you know of the passing of a Marshall retiree that lived outside of the local area, please notify the Newsletter Editor, Jean Lee, [Bjeanlee@aol.com](mailto:Bjeanlee@aol.com), or text 256.508.4203 for inclusion here.

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