



NASA/MSFC Retirees Association

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

FEBRUARY 2024 ISSUE



QUARTERLY MRA LUNCHEON

TUESDAY, March 12, 2024 THE LEDGES
Social & Registration: 11-11:45; Lunch: 11:45 - 12:15; Business & Speaker 12:15 - 1:00 p.m.

Menu: Smoked Beef Brisket, Loaded Mashed Potatoes, Seasonal Vegetable Medley. Dinner Rolls, Coffee & Tea. Dessert: Apple Crisp with Vanilla Ice Cream
Cost: \$35.00 per person

Please RSVP to Bennie Jacks no later than noon on **Wednesday, Mar. 6** at benniejacks@att.net, or cell phone: 256.603.0894. A 72-hour cancellation notice is required by The Ledges. **No shows will be expected to pay for meal.**

PROGRAM SPEAKER



**Robert Champion
Director,
Center Operations,
Marshall Space Flight
Center**

**Topic:
Changes at Marshall**

Robert was assigned to the position of director of the Office of Center Operations at MSFC in July of 2021. With an annual budget of \$86M, the organization includes 120 engineers and specialized civil servants and 700 contractors.

Services include facility management, logistics and transportation, environmental engineering, occupational health, protective services, emergency management and subordinate site operations.

Robert has held numerous leadership roles at NASA and has 32 years of service with NASA.

Camption is a native of Woodstock, Alabama and holds a bachelor's in aerospace engineering from Auburn University. Green, Alabama.

He will discuss the history of 4200 and other changes that will be occurring.

Message from the MRA President.....

Welcome to the new year. I hope and pray you and your family had a great Christmas and a Happy New Year. 2024 has started out with a lot of snow, and I am looking for an early spring and some warmer days.

MSFC has its 15th Center Director, Joseph Pelfrey. He joined MSFC in 2004. As Center Director, he will be responsible for the oversight and execution of an approximately 5 billion dollars portfolio comprised of human spaceflight, science, and technology development efforts. He will lead a work force of nearly 7000 civil servants and contractors. Joseph graduated from Auburn University in 2000. Congratulations go out to Joseph for this great accomplishment.

On another note, the Space Explorers Memorial is nearly complete. The grand opening is set for late April/early May of this year. I believe it is something that you, your family and Huntsville will be proud of. Rick and his team continue to excel. They have raised nearly 1 million dollars for the Memorial. If you would like to contribute, you can go to the MRA website (www.marshallretirees.org) and follow the instructions.

The Board voted to raise the MRA dues to 50 dollars a year to help with our scholarships and to hire help to keep the MRA's website up. You can pay your dues at the spring luncheon if you have not already paid.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the spring luncheon on March 12 at the Ledges. The doors open at 11, lunch at 11:45. See you soon. *Steve Cash*

Having Difficulty Reaching OPM?

With tax season approaching, many will be collecting documentation needed for preparation of taxes. You may need to reach OPM. The best days to call OPM at 888-767-6738 are on Thursdays and Fridays, except the first couple of days of the month. It is highly recommended that retirees contact OPM via email at retire@opm.gov with specific questions. OPM employees rotate off of phone call duty to full time duty answering emails. The average wait time for an email response is two (2) days.

INCREASE IN 2024 MEMBERSHIP DUES

Membership dues for 2024 are due beginning January 1, 2024, 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 luncheon on March 12, 2024.

While membership dues have remained constant for many years, and with the increase in administrative costs of newsletter printing and mailings, guest speakers' meals and honorariums, and technical support to the MRA website and honor roll, the Board has reviewed the dues. In addition, while MRA is supporting a UAH Endowed Scholarship, the Scholarship Committee is exploring opportunities to expand scholarships to USSRC Space Camps, Alabama A&M, Drake State, and others. A portion of the additional dues will allow MRA to play a role in funding scholarships to promote space careers for young deserving students. **The Board voted to raise the dues to \$50 per year beginning January 1, 2024.**

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 or calling 256-682-0441 so we can keep our records up to date.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS (Since Last Newsletter)

Stephen W. Gaddis

Jeff Hamilton

George S. Hamilton

Martin L. Johnson

2024 MRA BUDGET

(Approved by the Board)

Income:

Dues from 200 Members @ \$50/member \$10,000

Expenditures:

Scholarships	\$5,000	
Website hosting/maintenance	2,000	
Printing (newsletters/brochures)	1,500	
Luncheons (speakers/guests)	400	
Insurance (board members)	600	
Post Office Box Rental	180	
Total Expenditures		\$ 9,680

MRA recently received this thank you note from the 2023 recipient, Tetiana Tymoshevska, of the MRA funded UAH scholarship. She was also the recipient of the MRA scholarship in 2022.

“I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for funding my college education. I would not be able to continue studying at the same pace without your help. I am currently a junior in aerospace engineering and am doing well in my classes despite their difficulty. My favorite this semester is Physics 3 which focuses on the properties of light and radiation.

I am also working as a research aide at the UAH Propulsion Research Center. The job pays well and most importantly teaches many skills which I will use in my career. The position is very flexible which would not be the case if I had to work many hours to support myself. However, this scholarship helps me to stay on top of my bills and instead focus on my studies.

Thank you again for your support. I will continue with my chosen major and work hard to graduate at the top of my class. I hope to get an internship this summer to prepare me for a career. Tetiana Tymoshevska”

SPACE EXPLORATION MEMORIAL & HONOR ROLL

(Update)

Construction is ongoing and will include the redesign of the overall Rocket Park, the return of the refurbished rockets showing the history of rocket development in Huntsville by the Army and NASA, and the creation of the Space Exploration Memorial. A new addition will be the engine portion of the Space Launch System which will be brought from MSFC.

We urge you to visit www.marshallretirees.com, and find your name and those of NASA colleagues that you recognize. Help preserve our history by entering your information. Gray Settle will be glad to assist you (gsettle@gmail.com).

The kiosk has been ordered and will be located in front of the wall. Visitors will be able to search by name, and find the location of that name on the wall giving location of panel and specific line where name is located. Visitors will also be able to use a cell phone to read a QR code on that kiosk which will put the story of that person on your phone so that as you walk through the rocket park, you can find their name. The database is called the Space Explorers Honor Roll, and that name is also mentioned on the memorial wall.

There will also be a panel that has John Kennedy's quote regarding "We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things not because they are easy, but because they are hard". The panels are being made by Alabama Metal Art in Florence. They have been laid out with titles across the top that remind the viewers of the different eras of space exploration that have been done by Huntsville's space explorers. There is also a panel that has the names of all of the Marshall Center Directors and a statement from them recognizing and honoring all of the space explorers who have made America's leadership in space possible.

The current schedule has the entire rocket park and the Space Exploration Memorial completed in April, but Mother Nature impacted the schedule with the recent freeze. Updates will come as we approach the grand opening.

Funds are still needed to cover the costs of the Memorial. Please make a contribution to the memorial and the database. Many of you have been so generous with your support, and it has made this project a reality! Thanks to everyone on the Marshall Retirees team who has helped make the memorial possible.

DECEMBER 2023 MRA LUNCHEON



MRA member and watercolor artist Caroline Wang gave a short presentation on her recently published art book showcasing space art and its connection to space exploration stories at the December luncheon. Caroline has been a tremendous supporter of the Space Exploration Memorial by donating a portion of the proceeds from the sale of her artwork. To date, she has donated over \$15,000 to the Memorial. Her prints are sold in the gift shop at the USSRC and her book is available on Amazon.



25 Years Ago: NASA & Partners Begin Space Station Assembly

On Dec. 6, 2023, NASA marked 25 years since the first two elements of the International Space Station were launched and joined in space. Today, the space station remains a global endeavor, with 273 people from 21 countries now having visited the microgravity laboratory, and has hosted more than 3,700 research and educational investigations from people in 108 countries and areas.

On Nov. 20 and Dec. 4, 1998, Zarya and Unity, respectively, launched into orbit as the first two modules of the International Space Station. On Dec. 6, 1998, the space shuttle Endeavour STS-88 crew, NASA astronauts Bob Cabana, Rick Sturckow, Nancy Currie, Jerry Ross, and James Newman, along with Russian Space Agency (now Roscosmos) cosmonaut Sergei Krikalev, captured the Zarya module with the space shuttle's robotic arm and mated it to Unity.



Expedition 69 Crew-6 astronauts smile and hold a banner for a photo with team members from the Human Exploration Development & Operations Office at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center. From left, the astronauts are Sultan Alneyadi, Steven Bowen, Warren "Woody" Hoburg, and Frank Rubio. (Photo courtesy NASA/Marshall Star)

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS RESUME AT UAH

As you may recall, Dr. Chuck Lundquist back in 2006, led a project of video recording Marshall employees as part of the Oral History data gathering at UAH. The effort between the MSFC Historian Office and the UAH Artifacts & Special Collections Division continued intermittently through 2016. These recordings have proven to be useful to the University and the public for information and research efforts. The UAH researchers have asked that recordings be resumed. Hence, please be prepared to join us in recording MSFC stories, with a focus on MRA members. If you are willing to participate in this effort, please contact Jack Stokes at 256-468-2743 or email: jackstokes1962@gmail.com. Recordings are available at: <https://libarchstor.uah.edu/oralhistory/items/browse?collection=6>.

DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

In honor of the members of the NASA family who lost their lives while furthering the cause of exploration and discovery for the benefit of all, the agency hosted its annual Day of Remembrance Thursday, Jan. 25, 2024. Traditionally held on the fourth Thursday in January each year, NASA Day of Remembrance commemorates the crews of Apollo 1 and space shuttles Challenger and Columbia.

“Our annual Day of Remembrance honors the sacrifice of the NASA family who lost their lives in the pursuit of discovery,” said NASA Administrator Bill Nelson. “While it is a solemn day, we are forever thankful that our fallen heroes shared their spirit of exploration with NASA, our country, and the world.

Today, and every day, we embrace NASA’s core value of safety as we expand our reach in the cosmos for the benefit of all humanity.”

2024 EDITION OF “NASA SPINOFFS”

The 2024 edition of NASA Spinoffs includes developments under the Artemis program, like a small rugged video camera used to improve aircraft safety and a new method of detecting defects or damage in composite materials. Another spinoff story details the latest benefits of fuel cell technology created more than 50 years ago for Apollo, which is now poised to support terrestrial power grids based on renewable energy. The publication is available at: <https://spinoff.nasa.gov>.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Mark your calendars for the MRA quarterly luncheons for the remainder of 2024:

June 11, September 10, and December 10

MRA WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

Please remember that the current MRA newsletter as well as previous newsletters are archived at www.marshallretirees.org and available for viewing.

If you have a group of colleagues that meet regularly, snap a photo and send to Bennie Jacks, administrator of the Facebook page (www.facebook.com/marshallretirees) and to Jean Lee, MRA newsletter editor for inclusion in the newsletter.

Updates on the Space Exploration Memorial are included in other parts of this newsletter. The Honor Roll (database) is a part of capturing the history of Marshall. Please visit to website and input your personal information and stories.

Fundraising for the Memorial continues and contributions may be submitted through the website or direct mail (a form to download for direct mail is located on the website).

Information is being added to these websites on a continuing basis. Visit it often for updates:

www.marshallretirees.org

www.facebook.com/marshallretirees

www.facebook.com.spaceexplorershsv



OBITUARIES

- Burton**, Von L., 82, of Huntsville, died December 21, 2023.
Crawford, Rondal, 91, of Fairfax Station, VA died February 10, 2024.
Dessler, Alexander J., 94, of Bryan, TX, died April 9, 2023.
Farrow, Hershhal Marvin, 97, of New Market, died January 12, 2024
Hubbard, James Benjamin, 90, of Montevallo, died December 13, 2023.
Hueter, Peggy S., 84, of Huntsville, died January 2, 2024.
Krivutza, Ivan John, 92, of Huntsville, died February 12, 2024.
Mitchell, Joseph Richard, 92, of Huntsville, died February 2, 2024.
Neal, Billy Paul, 91, of Huntsville, died December 31, 2024.
Nelson, Doris (Sue) Brantley, 94, of Huntsville, died October 21, 2023.
Nixon, Douglas Denley, 77, of Huntsville, died February 3, 2024.
Townsend, John Stanley, 71, of Arab, died November 23, 2023.
Richmond, Emma Jeanne, 95, of Huntsville, died November 16, 2023.
Vardaman, William Kilpatrick, 96, of Huntsville, died January 26, 2024.
Vickers, Bobby Wayne, 80, of Huntsville, died December 12, 2023.
Wilkins, Richard “Dick”, 88, of Section, died January 4, 2024.

Note: Most of the obituaries listed above are obtained from local sources. If you are aware of retiree obituaries from surrounding areas, please let the newsletter editor know so that it can be passed along to our members. Jean Lee, Bjeanlee@aol.com, or 256.508.4203.