



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

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

MAY 2024 ISSUE



### ***QUARTERLY MRA LUNCHEON***

*Tuesday, June 11, 2024 The Ledges  
Social & Registration 11 - 11:45; Lunch. 11:45 - 12:15;  
Business & Speaker 12:15 - 1:00 p.m.*

*Chicken Piccata, Loaded Mashed Potatoes, Seasonal  
Vegetable Medley. Dinner Rolls, Coffee & Tea. Dessert: New  
York Cheesecake with Fresh Strawberries*

*Cost: \$35.00 per person*

Please RSVP to Bennie Jacks no later than **Thursday, June 6**, at [benniejacks@att.net](mailto:benniejacks@att.net), or cell phone: 256.603.0895. A 71-hour cancellation notice is required by The Ledges. No shows will be expected to pay for meals.

## **PROGRAM SPEAKER**



### **Joseph Pelfrey, Director, Marshall Space Flight Center Topic: Marshall's Future**

Joseph Pelfrey previously served as deputy center director and was appointed center director in April 2022. Throughout his NASA career, Pelfrey has served in multiple technical leadership positions at Marshall. He began his career as an industry partner, supporting development of space station payload hardware, and joined Marshall full-time in 2004 as an aerospace engineer in the Science and Mission Systems Office. He went on to serve in various leadership roles within NASA's International Space Station Program. In 2008, Pelfrey joined Marshall's Engineering Directorate as the design integration lead for the Ares I Upper Stage. In 2011, he was named engineering task manager for SLS' Spacecraft/Payload Integration and Evolution Office and, subsequently, manager of the Commercial Orbital Transportation Services Project. In 2012, Pelfrey was named deputy manager and then manager of the Exploration and Space Transportation Development Office. In 2016, he was appointed associate director for operations in Marshall's Engineering Directorate. Pelfrey served as deputy manager and manager of Human Exploration Development and Operations Office from 2020 to 2022, overseeing the management and implementation of Marshall's work in the areas of human exploration and transportation projects, habitation systems, payload and mission operations and integration; and International Space Station payload, facility, environmental control and life support systems project development and integration.

A native of Cheraw, South Carolina, Pelfrey received a bachelor's degree in aerospace engineering from Auburn University in 2000. He resides in Huntsville with his family.

## *Message from the President:*

It is hard to believe, but summer is here. School is out and the grandkids are out playing. I hope and pray you and your family are doing well.

The Boeing Starliner launch is scheduled for May 17<sup>th</sup> and will have 2 NASA astronauts, Barry Wilmore and Suni Williams. We are wishing them God Speed as they help usher in a new era in space flight.

Our summer speaker will be Joseph Pelfrey the 15th Center Director of MSFC. Joseph always does a great job, so come out and find out where MSFC is going in the future. The Space Exploration Memorial wall at the USSRC is moving forward, but the grand opening has been delayed until later in the summer. I can't wait to see it finished. It will be a tribute to you and all the hard work that you accomplished in your career.

Just a reminder that the Board voted to raise the MRA dues to 50 dollars a year to help with our scholarships and to hire help to keep up the MRA's website. You will have an opportunity to pay your dues at the luncheon on June 11<sup>th</sup>, if you have not already paid.

I look forward to seeing everyone on June 11 at the Ledges. The doors open at 11 lunch at 11:45. Thanks for all you had done and all you do. *Steve Cash*

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## **MARK FOR CALENDARS**

Mark for calendars for the remaining quarterly luncheon meetings in 2024:

September 10, 2024

December 10, 2024

### **MRA WEBSITE:**

[www.marshallretirees.org](http://www.marshallretirees.org)

## INCREASE IN 2024 MEMBERSHIP DUES

Membership dues for 2024 were 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](mailto:md_spaulding@comcast.net), or calling 256-682-0441 so we can keep our records up to date.

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS (Since Last Newsletter)

Jim McDougle  
Frank Swalley  
John Watts

## Space Exploration Memorial Update



Work is continuing at the Rocket Park at the USSRC. Many of the artistic walls have been poured and the newly refurbished rockets are being mounted on pedestals throughout the park in chronological order.

Construction of the Space Exploration Wall of Honor is scheduled to begin the week of May 13<sup>th</sup> with a construction time of two to three weeks. The detailed design of the 20 engraved panels which will go on the wall has been completed. The Kiosk, which will be located in front of the wall, has been purchased and has a touchscreen with the names and their location on the wall. The bio's of these employees will be available online at the kiosk so that the family can transfer the story to their cell phone as they enjoy locating the name. We continue to ask that you go on line and input your career information. ([www.marshallretirees.org](http://www.marshallretirees.org).)

The dedication is anticipated to be later in the summer or early fall. MRA has raised almost \$1M to create the memorial. Donations may be made online on the MRA website to complete funding. After almost five years, it is very exciting to reach this point in the project.

Rick Chappell

## SPACELAB SEMI-ANNUAL REUNION



Retirees of the Spacelab Program met recently at the Valley Hill Country Club for their semi-annual reunion luncheon. **Seated L-R:** Rick Chappell, Uwe Hueter, Tom Lynch, Bill Johnson, Spike Field, Larry Breazeale, Bill Lokken. **Standing L-R:** Randy Bounds, Lynn Boyer, Robert McBrayer, Mickey White, Gray Settle, Don Geurkink, Gary Hitt, Fred Applegate, Harry Craft, Maureen Lokken.

## 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](mailto:jackstokes1962@gmail.com).

## MRA MOURNS THE LOSS OF BROOKS MOORE



MRA loss a special member with the passing of Brooks Moore. He served as President of the Association, as well as a long-standing Board Member. He played an important role in achieving the goal of establishing a Space Exploration Memorial at USSRC.

Colleagues and friends share their thoughts and memories of Brooks:

*The space exploration community lost an incredible leader on April 9, 2024 when Brooks Moore passed on to the heavens that he had been so fundamentally involved in exploring. To know Brooks was to know and experience the full history of America's space exploration, beginning with the Wernher von Braun team in the early 1950's. Brooks was an officer in the US Navy during the war and then followed his dreams, graduating from Auburn University in engineering and later joining the von Braun team at Redstone Arsenal in 1952 to work on the challenges of guiding and controlling the flight of the new rockets. He became the Director of Astronics Laboratory (the first American-born laboratory director), during the period in which our nation built the machines to achieve President Kennedy's challenge of putting men on the moon. To be around Brooks was to be around knowledge, both historical and technical and in the company of a friendly, engaging, determined, committed colleague and role model. Brooks was a long-time participant in the NASA Emeritus docent program at USSRC. His, intense knowledge, engaging demeanor captured the attention of visitors as he shared his hands-on knowledge. Recently, Brooks was a trusted advisor to the USSRC in the renovation of the Rocket Park. I was privileged to know him for the past half century.*

**Rick Chappell**

*Brooks was a perfect gentleman. When you went to his office, he would meet you at the door and offer you a seat around his conference table. His office was organized and immaculate. His tone was very pleasant and friendly—until the meeting got under way. Even then, during the most frantic days of Saturn/Apollo, he was never loud, demanding or accusatory. He was very calm and deliberate. He asked probing questions and considered your answers very carefully—sometimes skeptically. He wanted the facts, all the facts and nothing but the facts. Brooks was a technical manager who had the respect of upper management and the many engineers and technicians who worked for him.*

**Placide Nicaise**

*He was personified by his calm and kind demeanor. Concern for his employees was always uppermost in his mind. People described Brooks as the kindest man they ever knew. He was an excellent listener. When it came to making technical decisions, his personal attributes led, more often than not, to successful conclusions. It was a pleasure to work for him.*

**Jim Lewis**

## MRA MOURNS THE LOSS OF JIM SPLAWN



MRA was shocked and saddened over the loss of Jim Splawn. He served as President and long-standing Board Member of MRA and played an important role in the design and capital campaign for the Space Exploration Memorial at the USSRC. He will be missed. Colleagues share memories of Jim:

*The career of Jim Splawn is an extraordinary example of the best of NASA, a competent, result-oriented engineer, a professional with a proper respect for nature as we find it yet with a willingness to accept the challenge of modifying whatever seems to constrain us from the future. He was blessed with a winsome personality that supported his sense of leadership and his demonstrated capability to work toward a common goal with people of widely differing personalities and capabilities. This was demonstrated particularly in the development of the neutral buoyancy concept and hardware, a system necessary for the design of Skylab, Space Station, Space Shuttle and space experiments that required human interface. This facility enabled the recovery of Skylab 1 that was badly damaged during launch. Following his highly successful career in the development and utilization of the neutral buoyancy facility, Jim demonstrated uncommon flexibility as the head of the MSFC Resident Management Office at Rocketdyne at a critical point in the design of the Space Shuttle Main engine. Jim Splawn was a true pioneer among other stalwarts of the nation's space program. A true history of MSFC cannot be written without a description of Jim's substantial contributions. In summary, he demonstrated in his every assignment an ability to "get things done".*

**William R. Lucas**

*From a chance NASA Space Shuttle assignment at Rocketdyne in Canoga Park, California, Jim Splawn has been a friend and colleague for the past 50 years. I learned so much about Jim during those three years of daily carpool drives from Camarillo to Canoga Park. Jim was the manager of the neutral buoyancy tanks used at Marshall to train the Skylab astronauts for the successful repair of the first space station. Jim was a man of integrity and would always be there in times of need, both for his family and friends. As a past president of the MRA, Jim spent many hours working to bring about the Space Exploration Memorial now under construction at the USSRC. Jim will always be remembered for his many accomplishments as a NASA manager, a Boeing manager, and his faithful support to his church family. Mission Accomplished Jim!*

**Parker Counts**





## **HAPPY BELATED BIRTHDAY TO DR. WILLIAM R. LUCAS!**

On March 1, 2024, Dr. Lucas celebrated his birthday and reached the age of 102.

He lives at home with the help of caregivers, continues to stay abreast of news and events through the use of his computer, live streams church services, zooms his Sunday School class, and is also a special contributor to this newsletter.

We wish him many more trips around the sun.



A group of women who provided administrative support to Dr. von Braun and his team gather in March of each year to celebrate his birthday (March 12, 1912). Seated L-R: Mary Spaulding, Carol Byler, Wanda Reed, Gail Ralls. Standing L-R: Jan Zielinski, Anne Marie & Steve Hall, Jean Lee, Nancy & Paul Guire.

# PHOTO GALLERY FROM MARCH MEETING



Board Member Jack Stokes, Lewis Wooten,

Roger Chassey, Board Member Lybrease Woodard



Larry Fine (NASA Pilot), Jay Foster



Board Member Bobby Watkins; Robert Champion, Speaker; Bennie Jacks, Outreach Chair; Liz Hurley, WAFF Channel 48 News Anchor



## OBITUARIES

- Bailey**, Darrell Glenn, 65, of Huntsville, died April 24, 2024.  
**Barnes**, Robert R., 90, of Huntsville, died March 20, 2024.  
**Berry**, Eugene H. (Hugo), 86 of Arab, died March 13, 2024.  
**Cantrell**, Roy Oliver, 87, of Hazel Green, died April 10, 2024.  
**Carden**, Ernest, 89, of Hollytree, died March 14, 2024.  
**Cataldo**, Charles Eugene, 97 of Huntsville, died March 20, 2024.  
**Clark**, David Clayton, 92, of Huntsville, died April 2, 2024.  
**Emsberger**, Gale “Ike” Richard, 87, of Huntsville, died April 22, 2024.  
**Golden**, Betty K., 75, of Harvest, died on April 20, 2024.  
**Gresham**, John William, 89, of Huntsville, died February 22, 2024  
**Hay**, Dr. Frank Edwin, 91 of Louisa, Kentucky, died May 13, 2024.  
**Hill**, Sandra Ashburn, 84, of Huntsville, died April 16, 2024.  
**Moore**, Billie Marie Rogers, 79, of Harvest, died April 13, 2024  
**Moore**, Fletcher Brooks, 97, of Huntsville, died April 9, 2024.  
**Simpson**, Robert Moody, 98, of Huntsville, died April 17, 2024.  
**Splawn**, James Lee, 90, of Huntsville, died March 5, 2024.  
**Stafford**, Thomas P, 93, of Satellite Beach, FL, died March 18, 2024.  
**Stanley**, JB, 85 of Wedowee, died April 19, 2024.  
**Stiles**, Joe, Jr., 81, of New Market, died March 6, 2024.  
**Vidaurri**, Rene Abundio, 94, of Huntsville, died April 22, 2024.