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Spaceport News

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http://www-pao.ksc.nasa.gov/kscpao/snews/snewstoc.htm John F. Kennedy Space Center

NASA's Aura satellite will study Earth's air quality

By Linda Herridge
Staff Writer

NASA's Aura satellite, part of the Earth Observing System (EOS), is being readied for flight aboard a Delta II Expendable Launch Vehicle at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif. The launch is scheduled for June 19 at approximately 6:01 a.m. EDT.

Several workers from Kennedy Space Center are at Vandenberg to help manage and support the processing activities and launch, including John Demko, the launch site integration manager for the Aura mission. He is also the KSC Resident Office manager at Vandenberg.

"A well-coordinated team of government, contract and international partners are working hard toward the successful launch of a next-generation Earth observation satellite," said Demko.

The EOS is a program dedicated to monitoring the complex interactions that affect the globe by using NASA satellites and data systems. Aura's space-based view of the atmosphere and its chemistry will complete the first series of NASA's Earth Observing System satellites, which also includes Terra (land) and Aqua (water). The Aura spacecraft is designed to answer three basic questions about Earth's atmosphere: Is earth's ozone layer recovering? Is air quality getting worse? How is the Earth's climate changing?

NASA'S AURA satellite, part of the Earth Observing System (EOS), is being readied for flight aboard a Delta II Expendable Launch Vehicle at Vandenberg Air Force Base. The launch is scheduled for June 19 at approximately 6:01 a.m. EDT. Several workers from Kennedy Space Center are at Vandenberg to help manage and support the processing activities and launch. Aura's space-based view of the atmosphere and its chemistry will complete the first series of NASA's Earth Observing System satellites, which also includes Terra (land) and Aqua (water).

Aura is the most technologically advanced spacecraft to study the composition, chemistry and dynamics of the Earth's upper and lower atmospheres, according to Dave Breedlove,

(See AURA, Page 6)

Daughter is SHARP enough to follow in mom's footsteps

By Jennifer Wolfinger
Staff Writer

As the Agency looks forward to landmarks in discovery, NASA can view its history of progression in workplace equality as a success. Women certainly weren't flooding the Space Program workforce in its infancy, but the Agency has evolved into a place where women not only work, but lead the way in many respects.

A unique mother-daughter duo exemplifies this evolution and shows how programs like the Summer High School Apprentice Research Program (SHARP) produce NASA's future explorers.

Sue Hutchinson, a KSC quality assurance specialist, has worked at NASA for 21 years. That's nearly the amount of time her oldest daughter, Melissa Jones, has been alive. Jones, a former SHARP participant, is a new member of United Space Alliance's Communications and Tracking Engineering Group.

In 1998, Jones and her younger sister, Leslie

(See SHARP, Page 2)

MELISSA JONES (left), a United Space Alliance employee and former SHARP participant, and her mom, Sue Hutchinson, a KSC quality assurance specialist, recently worked in the mid-body of Endeavour at the same time.

The Kennedy Update

Jim Kennedy
Center Director

Greetings, friends! The countdown is on for the launch of NASA's Aura satellite from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California on June 19.

For those who don't know, KSC is not only responsible for NASA launches from the Cape, but those from California and Alaska as well. Some of our Launch Services Program team have already traveled west for the big event and I know many will be hitting the road in the upcoming days to support this important launch.

Aura is the latest edition to the Earth Observing System and its mission is to study the Earth's ozone, air quality and climate. It's a vitally important satellite that will help scientists study our planet in order to understand how to better protect our fragile Earth.

I couldn't be prouder of the team's work to this point, and I'm excited to head out to California to participate in the launch and see the "A-team" in action. Good luck to the entire team as it writes another chapter of success in the storied history of this great Agency.

Back here at the Cape, I was honored to participate in the Cape Canaveral Spaceport Management Office's "Outstanding Star" ceremony earlier this week. The ceremony was recently instituted by CCSMO and is a joint effort between KSC and the 45th Space Wing.

The purpose of the event is to recognize the exceptional efforts of those individuals and teams that have made significant contributions to the Cape Canaveral Spaceport.

Without teamwork between those at CCSMO and our contractors working under J-BOSC, the Cape's hundreds of daily missions would grind to a halt. All the basic functions the "Cape team" needs to operate are provided by this team.

This includes providing security, keeping the electricity and water running, fixing roads, maintaining processing facilities and even provides critical propellants for launch operations.

As you see, it takes a total Spaceport team effort to keep our "city," known as the Cape, functioning on a daily basis. No one organization or agency does this by itself; it's a combined NASA, Air Force and contractor effort that makes this happen.

While there are too many winners to mention here, I just wanted to reinforce what I told them during their ceremony Tuesday. NASA and the Air Force can't do our vital and important missions for our nation without you and your superb work. Super job, everyone!

Speaking of our mission, I had the chance to brief more than 300 of our local elected officials, community and business leaders, and NASA alumni about our activities during the last year and what is ahead for KSC at our annual Community Leaders Breakfast May 24.

> "Their feedback to me about the work being accomplished at KSC was tremendous."

Their feedback to me about the work being accomplished at KSC was tremendous.

There is no doubt about it, our community members are behind us 100 percent and they definitely feel a part of our Center, no matter what the mission or program. They are also very appreciative of our workforce's contributions to the community. This ranges from large items, such as donating over $600,000 to the Combined Federal Campaign, to small things, such as coaching youth sports or participating in church groups.

I want to echo their comments and also thank everyone here for all you do. I know you work hard to carry out our mission for NASA, but it is gratifying to know we have such generous people that take the time to make our community a better place to live, as well. I Remain. . .KSC and Proud to Be!

Finally, now that it's June, the hurricane season has officially kicked off. And while it might be all quiet on the eastern shoreline now, Mother Nature can turn the tables in a hurry, so don't be caught unprepared. If you don't have a hurricane kit or evacuation plan, I recommend you get one immediately.

You'll be glad you did if we ever have the misfortune of experiencing a hurricane up close and personal. Emergency Preparedness Officer Wayne Kee also tells us 2004 is forecasted to be one with greater than average storm intensity.

Have a great week everyone, and GO AURA!

KSC, Wildlife Service to reduce wildfire risk

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and NASA KSC have partnered to remove some of the dense foliage and trees in the Industrial Area as a safety precaution. The work will begin early this month.

The project will require removal of 70 percent of the pine trees, also referred to as thinning.

Several decades of fire suppression in the Industrial Area have created a very dense population of pines, according to Boyd Blihovde, a fire management specialist with the USFWS.

Questions should be directed to the National Wildlife Refuge at 861-0667.

SHARP . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

Hutchinson, participated in SHARP as New Smyrna Beach High School students.

Later, they both graduated from the University of Central Florida.

While Leslie pursued microbiology, Jones received a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering. Leslie is now working toward a veterinary career.

"SHARP introduced me to technology in a way that changed my perspective on engineering," said Jones. "[Without] SHARP, I would have never considered engineering, so I'm an engineer because of SHARP, my mentors and my parents."

For her FIRST project, Jones created a Web page highlighting the first piece of U.S. hardware sent to the International Space Station.

Her mentors also provided hands-on experiences with station hardware, and in-depth explanations about the Shuttle and station systems.

"I think the neatest thing of all was that recently, Melissa and I were in the mid-body of Endeavour at the same time working on unrelated jobs, which was totally unexpected," said Sue, who works in the Orbiter Processing Facilities.

"While we were in Endeavour, I wondered if this was the first mother and daughter working in the mid-body at the same time."

So what brought the two generations to the same spot? Jones was examining cables and Sue was performing wire inspections.

As the next class of SHARP students arrives June 7, even more opportunities will arise to provide quality leaders to the NASA workforce.

Through SHARP, high school students spend eight summer weeks performing research with a Center mentor to develop oral and written communications.

Visit **http://education.ksc.nasa.gov/programs/sharp.htm** for information.

Simpkins' leadership skills fit Human Resources

By Jennifer Wolfinger
Staff Writer

Patrick Simpkins, Kennedy Space Center's new Human Resources director, loves sharing his excitement about NASA's achievements.

"I enjoy speaking to school children about the wonders of space and space travel and look forward to continuing to share the exciting NASA vision and mission with others," Simpkins said.

"NASA and the work we do at KSC is a source of inspiration, not only for the next generation of explorers, but (for) ourselves."

In his new role, Simpkins leads 39 civil servants. The HR office guides the staffing of KSC directorates, manages employee classifications and compensations, and builds training programs and leadership development.

"Pat is an excellent and welcome addition to the senior staff at KSC," said Center Director Jim Kennedy. "He has a strong KSC background in Shuttle and has earned the respect of everyone during his tenure in HR."

Simpkins is credited with creating the Competency Management System used throughout the Agency. He has served at NASA Headquarters in Washington, D.C., where he worked in Code F.

He began his NASA career in 1983 as a Shuttle engineer, and served in various roles of increasing responsibility for 15 years. After realizing his strength in helping others to maximize their abilities, he pursued an education in HR management.

He also created a development program at KSC called the Leadership Excellence Achievement Program, and served as the Center's personnel officer.

Simpkins helped a team of associate administrators and Center directors in the development and implementation of NASA's Strategic Human Capital Plan. He helped modernize NASA's Human Resources information systems and led in the design and implementation of the Agency's Competency Management System.

"I feel overwhelmed, honored and exhilarated, all at the same time," he said, describing his feelings about his selection. "This is a great opportunity for me to really bring to the table all the excellent training and development opportunities I've been given, and apply them in the near- and long-term environment of the Center."

Through this new role, Simpkins intends to build on positive qualities of the organization.

"I look forward to upgrading a really strong HR office so that we can help the Center become truly great. I hope to enhance our expertise, both in the functional operation of HR, and in the development and application of cutting-edge HR tools and methods," he said.

"I also hope to enhance the ability to share knowledge, integrate change into our Center operations, among others."

Not only is Simpkins tackling typical department goals, but he's balancing Center-wide reorganization duties too. Because of the restructuring, the directorate has been renamed the Human Resources Office from the previous Workforce and Diversity Management Office.

PATRICK SIMPKINS, Kennedy Space Center's new Human Resources director.

Simpkins said his wife of 12 years, Beth, had no hesitations about returning to Florida. "After arriving in Virginia, we experienced the first hurricane in 50 years, the first earthquake in 30 years, the most precipitation over a month's time in over 100 years, and only the third major snowfall to cause a government shutdown," he shared.

Now that the couple has returned to the Space Coast, he is closer to his parents and relatives. He enjoys relaxing with his family by the pool or in a boat, learning more about history with his son, Dainius, and jogging.

Zysko earns multiple awards for invention

JONATHAN ROOT, NASA representative at the Federal Laboratory Consortium for Technology Transfer (FLC); Jan Zysko, award recipient; Jim Aliberti, KSC FLC delegate; and Ed Linsenmeyer, FLC chairman, at the FLC award ceremony.

By Linda Herridge
Staff Writer

An invention that began as a crude prototype in Kennedy Space Center Engineer Jan Zysko's garage has won two of NASA's highest development awards.

The Personal Cabin Pressure Altitude Monitor and Warning System (CPM), a hand-held instrument with life-saving applications, was awarded the Agency's 2003 Commercial Invention and Government Invention of the Year Awards.

Zysko also received the Federal Laboratories Consortium's 2003 Award for

(See ZYSKO, Page 7)

Special heat-shield blankets fo

Cutting, quilting, baking, installing... How do KSC workers turn pieces of ceramic fabric into Space-Age blankets for the Space Shuttle?

By Anna Heiney
Staff Writer

When we think about blankets, we see them as protection from cold temperatures. But for the Space Shuttle orbiter, blankets mean protection from intense heat.

Reinforced Carbon-Carbon (RCC), insulative tiles and special blankets make up the Thermal Protection System (TPS) that protects the orbiter from the extreme temperatures encountered during space flight. Made of a woven ceramic fabric with insulative batting between the fabric layers, they can be as large as 30 inches square and vary in thickness from 1/4 inch to 2 inches. Each set of blankets has a very specific purpose.

For example, the nose cap endures some of the highest temperatures the orbiter encounters, which occur during re-entry through Earth's atmosphere. Made of RCC, the cap can withstand temperatures up to 3,000 degrees Fahrenheit, but RCC isn't much of an insulator. So, the heat that radiates into the cap's hollow inner cavity has to be absorbed somehow. That's the blankets' job.

Protecting several payloads and a spacecraft is a tall order, and making and installing the nose cap blankets is an intricate and demanding job. For Shuttle Discovery, currently being prepared for Return to Flight mission STS-114, the entire process took place at Kennedy Space Center.

"This is only the second time we've manufactured them here at Kennedy Space Center," said Pearl Richardson, who works in quality control for United Space Alliance, NASA's prime Shuttle contractor. "But this is the first time we've done it all from scratch, manufacturing the blankets and installing them."

Formerly manufactured in California, now the blankets are made by USA's Soft Goods Team in KSC's Thermal Protection System Facility, where the Shuttle's heat-resistant tiles are manufactured.

"Inside the nose cap, there are four quadrants of blankets that form a conical shape," explained TPS mechanic Janet Mills. "Each quadrant carries seven blankets, and then in-between each quadrant is an additional blanket. So there are 32 blankets total."

Patterns or templates help the team know where to cut the blanket material to the proper measurements. Once the pieces are cut, layers of fabric are sandwiched together with a high temperature batting to create a blanket piece.

From a designated starting point, the blankets are stitched into a roughly 3-by-4-inch grid, trimmed to the exact measurements of the nose cap's inner support structure, sewn closed around the edges and then sent for heat-cleaning and waterproofing.

When you clean a blanket at home, it's usually as easy as tossing it into the washing machine. But the fabric in TPS blankets is coated with sizing, a substance that acts as a lubricant, to keep the fibers from coming apart when the fabric is woven. Using heat is the most effective way to remove the sizing without damaging the fibers in the fabric. The blankets are baked on racks in large ovens similar to pizza ovens.

"Baking is a two-step process," said Lee Zook, softgoods production manager. "The blankets are heated to 600 degrees Fahrenheit for several hours, then to 850 degrees to complete the cycle."

DAMON PETTY, with United Space Alliance, prepares the cover of another insulation blanket in the "oven" prior to heat cleaning. The blankets fit inside the nose cap of an orbiter.

During the next step of the process, every inch of the blankets becomes waterproof. Next, an identification number is written onto each piece using a special gold pen. They are then packed and delivered to the nearby Orbiter Processing Facility, where the Shuttle orbiter and its nose cap await.

Blankets are not packed in against the nose cap's interior. Instead, they almost take the shape of a bowl, with a 19-inch open space between blankets and the widest point of the RCC. Smaller blankets, nicknamed "puzzle blankets," fill the remaining space and further protect the bulkhead. When the nose cap is completed and inspected for quality control, it's ready to be installed on the orbiter.

It takes two painstaking months for the team to transform individual pieces of ceramic fabric into Space-Age insulating blankets. But when Discovery thunders skyward on STS-114, each team member will have the satisfaction of knowing the blankets will help to protect the Shuttle from the intense heat and harsh cold it will face in orbit.

r Shuttles now made at KSC

IN THE THERMAL PROTECTION System Facility, Pilar Ryan (above), with United Space Alliance, stitches a piece of insulation blanket for Atlantis. Below, United Space Alliance workers Ginger Morrison and Michael Williams stitch together pieces of insulation blankets inside the ring that fits in the nose cap of Discovery.

MEMBERS OF THE STS-114 crew spend time becoming familiar with Shuttle and mission equipment. From left (in their blue suits) are Mission Specialists Soichi Noguchi, Stephen Robinson, Charles Camarda, Andrew Thomas and Wendy Lawrence, Commander Eileen Collins and Pilot James Kelly. Noguchi represents the Japanese Aerospace and Exploration Agency. They are looking at the Thermal Protection System insulation blankets being installed on an insert for Discovery's nose cap assembly.

Kennedy enjoys super relationship with nearby communities

By Jeff Stuckey
Editor

Kennedy Space Center Director Jim Kennedy talked about the beneficial mutual relationship the Center and surrounding communities enjoy at the annual Community Leaders Breakfast held May 24 at the Debus Center. That relationship is like an extended family.

"One of the things I enjoy most about being part of the KSC family is the fact that we have this extended family we get to do our jobs with," Kennedy said. "Thank you for being a part of the NASA family."

The director also addressed the recent Center-wide reorganization, the economic impact KSC has on Florida and how recent successful missions will lead to a promising future at the Spaceport.

Last year NASA spent $1.41 billion in Florida, with $1.32 billion of that amount spent in Brevard.

CENTER DIRECTOR Jim Kennedy talks about NASA's future at the annual Community Leaders Breakfast.

"Clearly, the transition to exploration is going to be a major transition for us at the Kennedy Space Center and for everyone in this audience," Kennedy said.

"I'm proud to tell you how the state government asked the Center what they could do to help us. The state of Florida built a $30 million facility, the Space Life Sciences Laboratory, which will posture the Kennedy Space Center to be a leader in space and life sciences, an integral part of the exploration vision the president has for us."

NASA has also had a successful year with its unmanned mission.

"We could not be more proud of the successes the Launch Services Program has enjoyed at the Kennedy Space Center."

Kennedy cited the Mars Exploration Rovers, the Spitzer Telescope and Gravity Probe B, among others, which will help rewrite history.

The number one priority at KSC is that we are actively engaged in ground operations, launch, and landing of the Space Shuttle, according to Kennedy. He said we have to get back to flying to accomplish our second priority, which is work on the International Space Station.

All of these activities require an investment in Spaceport and range technologies so that we can be the Spaceport for the future.

"While most other NASA Centers are reposturing for what they will be doing to support the exploration vision, our role is clearly defined," said Kennedy.

"Admiral (Craig) Steidle, the head of the exploration office in the Agency, and Sean O'Keefe (NASA administrator) have gone on record as saying that they want KSC to continue what we do for this Agency."

Columbia debris on loan for research

The first pieces of Space Shuttle Columbia debris are on loan to a non-governmental agency for testing and research.

The Aerospace Corporation in El Segundo, Calif., will receive graphite/epoxy honeycomb skins from an Orbital Maneuvering System pod, Main Propulsion System Helium tanks, a Reaction Control System Helium tank and a Power Reactant Storage Distribution system tank.

The company will use the parts to study re-entry effects on composite materials.

Earlier this year, Dr. Gary Steckel, senior scientist in the Materials Science Department in the Space Materials Laboratory at The Aerospace Corporation, viewed the items.

"We believe these items are representative of the structural composite materials flown on Columbia," Steckel said. "They will enable us to successfully meet our objective of calibrating analytical models for predicting reentry behavior of composite structures."

SHUTTLE PROGRAM employees Amy Mangiacapra, James "JC" Harrison (left) and Scott Thurston, NASA vehicle manager, prepare Columbia debris for shipment to The Aerospace Corporation.

NASA notified the Columbia crew's families about the loan before releasing the items for study.

Researchers believe the testing will show how materials are expected to respond to various environments. The findings will help calibrate tools and models used to predict hazards to people and property from reentering hardware. The Aerospace Corporation will have the debris for one year to perform analyses to estimate maximum temperatures during reentry based upon the mass of the recovered composite.

AURA . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

KSC mission integration manager for the spacecraft.

Aura's four instruments - the High Resolution Dynamics Limb Sounder (HIRDLS), the Microwave Limb Sounder (MLS), the Ozone Monitoring Instrument (OMI) and the Tropospheric Emission Spectrometer (TES) - will work together to provide measurements in Earth's upper and lower atmospheres.

HIRDLS was built by the U.S. and the United Kingdom. OMI was built by the Netherlands in collaboration with NASA. TES and MLS were constructed by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

The EOS Aura satellite and science investigations are managed by the Goddard Space Flight Center. KSC's Launch Services Program is responsible for launch services management, including mission analysis, integration and insight; payload processing, launch preparations and launch countdown management.

Shuttle manager proudly serves NASA

By Jeff Stuckey
Editor

Shuttle Program Manager Bill Parsons was the director of the Stennis Space Center for 10 months before being asked to serve in his current position. As months passed and Shuttle Columbia was lost, Parsons did not hesitate to change jobs.

Former Shuttle Program Manager Ron Dittemore had already informed NASA Administrator Sean O'Keefe in November 2002 of his intention to step down from the position before the loss of STS-107.

As a Center director, Parsons had to travel to NASA Headquarters in Washington, D.C., to discuss business with Bill Readdy, NASA associate administrator for Space Flight.

During those trips, Readdy and Parson would also discuss who should fill Dittemore's job. Eventually, Readdy asked Parsons if he would "throw his name into the hat?"

"I, being a former Marine, could only give one response, which was: 'Sir, I'll do whatever you ask me to do. I'm here to serve NASA and my country,' " Parsons said.

Parsons shared this story at the May 25 meeting of the National Space Club Florida Committee held at the DoubleTree Hotel in Cocoa Beach.

Being new to the Center director's position at Stennis in his home state of Mississippi, Parsons felt he would not be making a move anytime soon.

But in April while in Lufkin, Texas, to honor the community for its help in recovering Columbia, Parsons learned otherwise. When NASA's senior leadership gathered afterward, O'Keefe asked Parsons, "Bill, are you ready to step up?"

Parsons was quick to reply: "Sir, I'm ready to do whatever you ask me to do." The following day, he was informed by Readdy that he was the new Shuttle program manager.

SHUTTLE PROGRAM MANAGER Bill Parsons (right) spoke at the May meeting of the National Space Club Florida Committee. In this photograph, he is talking to employees at a recent KSC All Hands meeting, along with Michael Kostelnik, deputy associate administrator for Space Station and Shuttle Programs.

"In a time like this, with this Agency going through what they were going through, I did not feel like I could say no," Parsons said.

"It turns out, as we look across this Agency and the team I've put together in the Shuttle program, there were a lot of other people that felt the same way. I've assembled a fantastic team of people who are doing everything to make sure we Return to Flight safely."

Parsons also conducted a question-and-answer session.

Don't miss the BEST barbecue

THE SUMMER students and faculty will be welcomed to the Spaceport at a barbecue hosted by the Black Employee Strategy Team June 18 at KARS Park II. Tickets cost $8.

The Black Employee Strategy Team (BEST) cooks are firing up the grills and all KSC/CCAFS employees are invited. BEST is hosting a barbecue from 3 - 6 p.m. June 18 at KARS Park II to welcome the summer students and faculty.

The fun includes karaoke, a live DJ, volleyball and prizes. Employees can help in a variety of ways.

• KSC Idol Talent Contest - contact Maxine Daniels (867-5976)

• Sign up to bring your favorite desserts or general information - contact Stacie Smith (867-5298)

• Sponsor a summer student or faculty member - contact Roslyn McKinney (867-9171)

• Sign up to donate a door prize at the BBQ - contact Debbie Houston (867-6923)

Tickets cost $8. Ticket distributors include: Sammie Martin (HQ/1610A, 867-1655); Maxine Daniels (SSPF/3228X, 7-5976); Hortense Burt (O&C/3147E3, 7-8768); Mary Davis (Logistics/3540-J2, 861-1351); Pat Johnson (Hanger R/138, 476-3591); and Tamiko Fletcher (Hangar I Annex/214, 476-4049).

ZYSKO . . .

(Continued from Page 3)

Excellence in Technology Transfer.

Zysko and a KSC team developed the technology from concept to a fully-operational unit within six months for less than $100,000.

The monitor provides audio, vibratory and visual alarms of the impending danger of lack of oxygen (hypoxia), when cabin pressure falls below preprogrammed levels.

The pager-sized monitor's lighted digital screen displays a warning text message and also annotates the pressurization condition causing the alarm. It was originally designed to offer Space Shuttle and International Space Station crew members added independent notification of any depressurization.

According to Zysko, the CPM concept was spurred by two major incidents: the Mir/Progress collision in June 1997 and the loss of golfer Payne Stewart's aircraft in October 1999. Loss of cabin pressurization and crew hypoxia are among the probable causes of these events.

Multiple government agencies, including the National Transportation Safety Board, the Federal Aviation Administration and the U.S. Air Force, contributed to the CPM project. Dynacs, Inc., KSC's engineering development contractor at the time, played an important role in the circuit design and fabrication of the prototype.

Although KSC's patent licensing program is only four years old, KSC produced the most licenses during fiscal year 2000, which is high for an operational center.

Jim Aliberti, chief of KSC's Technology Transfer Office, said, "I am convinced that the quality of research being performed at KSC is on the same level with that being performed at the NASA research centers."

KSC visitors journey back to 19th century

By Layla Higgins
NASA Public Affairs Intern

GAIL NOLEN, great granddaughter of Merritt Island homesteader Henry Benecke, and her husband, Joe, enjoyed an extended tour of the Spaceport. At right, the original Benecke family at their Happy Creek home.

In 1887, Henry Benecke sailed into the dense shrubbery of undeveloped north Merritt Island. He lived on his sailboat until he hacked a clearing and built a sturdy home of driftwood and palm branches that was suitable for a family.

More than a century later, his great-granddaughter, Gail Nolen, stood in the very same spot that now offers a picturesque view of the Vehicle Assembly Building. She and her husband, Joe, were escorted throughout Kennedy Space Center on May 17 by NASA Public Affairs Officer George Diller and Cape Canaveral Air Force Station volunteer historian Rose Wooley.

The group ventured to the sites in which Nolen's ancestors inhabited more than 100 years ago. Nolen's visit centered on acquiring insight into her past and collecting additional research for a book she is writing called "Memories of Merritt Island."

The book will depict what Merritt Island was like before space flight was imaginable, with an emphasis on Nolen's family. The pioneering Beneckes faced bears, panthers, alligators and thick clouds of mosquitoes to develop their 160-acre homestead at Happy Creek. The family hunted and fished for their income and substance.

They also built boats, as this was the only means of transportation before bridges connected the homesteaders to the mainland.

Today, Happy Creek Road juts off from State Road 3 and leads down to Banana Creek. The group scoured the area for pieces that would link them to the past. They first sighted an aging boat dock that would have served as the only link between the Beneckes and the outside world.

"To many members of my family, their sense of place is the northern part of Merritt Island, where their parents and grandparents grew up," said Gail Nolen.

Emotions swelled within Nolen as concrete foundation and large, dated bricks were discovered along the bank where her ancestors' home once stood. "This is a wonderful opportunity to see where they actually homesteaded," she remarked.

Nolen's grandmother married into the Briggs family, who also homesteaded on the undeveloped land. The Briggs' home site was located at the area where Launch Pad 39B stands. Briggs Landing, the family's fishing port, was located where the VIP grandstands now overlook the river and Launch Pads 39A and 39B.

Nolen's relatives inhabited their homesteads until their land was acquired by KSC in the 1960s. "To many members of my family, their sense of place is the northern part of Merritt Island, where their parents and grandparents homesteaded and where they grew up," she noted.

Eighth Spaceport Symposium to discuss partnerships, future needs

Patricia Grace Smith, associate administrator for commercial space transportation with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), will be the keynote speaker at the Eighth Annual Cape Canaveral Spaceport Symposium.

The June 15-16 symposium, sponsored by the Air Force 45th Space Wing, NASA Kennedy Space Center, and the Florida Space Authority (FSA), will be held at the Radisson Resort in Cape Canaveral. Smith will address the continuing role of the FAA in all facets of future airspace and spacelift operations.

The event will feature presentations from KSC Director Jim Kennedy; Brig. Gen. J. Gregory Pavlovich, commander of the 45th Space Wing and director of the Eastern Range; and Winston Scott, executive director of the FSA. Other speakers include key government and industry executives serving on the following panels: Global Aerospace Operations, Future Military Space Operations, Future Space Transportation, Exploration Frontiers, and Space Recreation and Tourism.

Topics of the symposium will include emerging space markets, spaceport and range technologies, utilization of military space assets and space policy initiatives.

To register for the event and for information, call (386) 423-0560 or visit **www.capecanaveralspaceport.org**

John F. Kennedy Space Center
Spaceport News

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