

# OSU/NASA Education Projects: Aerospace Education Services Program (AESP) Archive

Oklahoma State University-Stillwater, Oklahoma

## **The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly by Donovan Fandre. Written 2001.**

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly  
by Donovan Fandre

I joined the Spacemobile program in April, 1963. I was working at the Army Guided Missile School in Huntsville, AL and saw an ad in an audio-visual magazine for lecturer-demonstrators. Huntsville, at that time, was a little too redneck for me so I applied for the job. It was a blind ad so I had no idea to whom I was applying but after a couple of weeks I received a letter directing me to come to Washington for an interview. I was hired but nobody had ever heard of the ad that I answered and it's still a mystery as to who placed it.

To paraphrase a popular Clint Eastwood movie, my experiences with the Spacemobile program could be called the good, the bad, and the ugly.

The Good:

The opportunities to lecture at schools across the nation and such prestigious institutions such as; the Hayden Planetarium, Seattle Science Center, Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, and the University of Nevada's Atmospherium.

In 1966 I was sent to India to conduct a training program for Indian lecturers to bring the Spacemobile to India's schools. My wife and I were treated like royalty and I never met so many rich people in my life. Damn near set an auditorium, filled with 2000 students, on fire when I sent a rocket into the wood beams in the balcony. I never reported the incident to headquarters.

None of the California crew will ever forget the workshops conducted jointly by NASA, FAA, and CAP. I think we did as much work as play but I have trouble remembering especially after those after hours conferences.

And, being part of all the manned flights culminating with Apollo 11 and the landing on the moon, perhaps the most monumental occurrence of the century.

And, of course, all the wonderful friendships that were established that remain close to this day.

The Bad:

Trying to motivate students regarding space science during the aftermath of the assassinations of the Kennedy's and Martin Luther King.

The Apollo 1 disaster still remains one of my saddest memories.

It was always frustrating trying to convince people that the money spent on space research would reap the benefits we enjoy today. NASA's budget was miniscule compared to the money spent on Viet Nam but that expenditure was seldom questioned during the '60's.

The Ugly:

It had to be the Jack Ruby conference at Langley. We were all convened there and fired when the contract was awarded to a new company. Any complaints about Herman Weinstein were soon forgotten after we were reluctantly hired back at half pay.

All things considered, my time with the program was one of the best of my life. In a small way it was like being an astronaut where so few were talented and lucky enough to be part of the greatest endeavor of mankind.