

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

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Spacemobiler by Fred Bell. Written 2001.

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by Fred Bell

History of the Spacemobile, for me, began in September of '63. Bob Perry suggested that I apply. Our orientation took place in the Washington Inn. The entire group was involved for two weeks before being sent into the field with an older Lecturer. Bob Hudson went to Ypsilanti, Michigan with an older Spacemobiler whose name escapes me. We then returned to Washington for another week. New units had not arrived, so two of us were sent out in the field with a senior member. Jim McGrath and I started out with Bill Curry in Frankfort, Kentucky for the remainder of 1963.

Assignment to Space Centers began in January, 1964. I was sent to Marshall Space Center along with John Nesbit, Bill Curry, Wendall Spreadberry, Dick Krone, and one or two more whose names I can't remember. Our territory was Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Tennessee. John Nesbit was our head honcho.

At Marshall, we began our real introduction into the American Space Program. Our orientation included visits to every phase of the construction of the Apollo rockets. We were exposed to the design of rocket engines and test firings, space environment simulation, astronaut training, and about anything that had to do with space flight.

The highlight of this orientation was the session with the Baron, Weirner Von Braun. He emphasized the need for the American public to be told what was being done to get Man to the moon. He said that the school children should be informed as to what was happening because it was their world they were growing into. Our job was to let them know what was going on and that they were a part of it. He left us with the feeling that if we did our job properly, the whole program would be a success.

Our orientation at Marshall lasted about a month. New units arrived! Dick Krone and I worked together in Mississippi.

In June of '65 Weinstein's Educational Services lost the Spacemobile contract to an electronic outfit, Unitec of Timonium, Maryland. This turned out to be an organization interested primarily in money (They came to be called a "one-ball outfit"). The contracts were let to local Educational organizations. I negotiated a transfer from Marshall to Langley in July of '65. We traveled in Virginia, Kentucky, North, and South Carolina.

I was in Murray, Kentucky on January 27, 1967, a Friday. Following my presentation to the high school body, I held a Question and Answer session. One of the students asked: "How will the American public be notified if there is the loss of an Astronaut in orbit?" The best I could suggest was that it would be the President's responsibility. About nine o'clock that evening a radio broadcast reported the loss of Grissom, White, and Chaffee in a fire in an Apollo test capsule. My reaction: "My God," now the student knows.

