

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

Oklahoma State University-Stillwater, Oklahoma

Personal History of Spacemobile by Charles Anderson. Written 2001.

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By Charles Anderson

I started with Spacemobile with a launch conference (STS 51A) in Winter Haven, FL in November 1984 followed by a AESP conference in New Orleans. I learned about the job while attending Nelson's summer workshop, but had never seen a school assembly program. The launch conference was fantastic seeing a launch and meeting astronauts. At the AESP conference we had break-out sessions to discuss the different topics covered during the school program. In the break-out sessions, I was included with Jim McMurty, Nelson Elhrich, John Hartsfield and two others who's names escape me. When John and Jim finished talking about how they did things I was not sure if I wanted to be a Spacemobiler. The only story I remember now is that Jim said he always picked a young female teacher to put into the spacesuit.

When Gordon and I started we had two days of training with Nelson and two days with Phil Murphy. Then we hit the road in the same van traveling Kansas for two weeks. Gordon and I stumbled through the schedule minus one school that was cancelled because the Principal was shot the day before.

When Gordon and I started the office was in the old poultry science building and the staff consisted of Dr. Wiggins, Nelson, Mary and Jane. Sometime during the first year I was on the stage going through program, when someone from the school walked out and handed me a note. The note read "Call Mary at OSU". Mary never called unless you were in trouble, I spent the next 30 minutes thinking more about what I did wrong than what I was saying. During the first year during one of first NASA video conferences, I heard Larry Bilbrough tell everyone that Specialists received 6 weeks of training before they went on road trips. Geard is the only specialist that I know of that started at JSC and got 6 weeks for training before they went on the road. In fact we were not sure he was ever going on the road. James Pratt had a rough start, he stayed 2 days with Gordon, 2 days with me in North Dakota and then did his first program on the 5th day. After we spent the weekend in Bismark, ND. James then went to South Dakota on his own.

Working for Jim Poindexter was a real experience. There wasn't much that he couldn't get or do for us to keep us updated as to the various programs at NASA. Some of the things he did was get us 16mm film and video of STS - 26 in our hands in Nebraska three days after the crew landed. We flew back seat in the shuttle simulator in bldg. 5 (Jim did crash the shuttle on the landing). Since I work for the Challenger Learning Center of the Rio Grande Valley, the accident in 86 is part of our daily lives. One good memory of that time was when Jim brought all ten of the finalists to meet with the teachers in the workshop we were conducting. I remember how Christa stood out from the rest and that it was no surprise to me that she was selected.

Some of the most memorable things were:

- o Mount Rushmore at night

- o Night shuttle launch.
- o Standing by the launch pad at night when they turned on the lights.
- o Watching Jim McMurty walk in front of the bleachers at KSC with his belt hanging out of the back of his pants like a tail, with a sign reading "Rats Rights".
- o 20th anniversary of Apollo 11 at JSC.
- o Being afraid of driving my van through Dodge City, KS after Angelo had been there first.
- o Flying on the KC-135 with Steve, Will, Gloria and Greg and having Nelson take our follow-up activity up. I still can't stand peppermint candy to this day.

I didn't really care much for the CIP's we had to do, but the ones that Jim McMurty planned in Mississippi were really great and we had good times and food. It wasn't just the opportunities we had, but also the people we had a chance to work with and learn from. I feel very lucky to have had the chance to part of the Aerospace Education Program. Those of you that worked me know I was luckier than most since my wife was able to share most of those experiences with me.