

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

Oklahoma State University-Stillwater, Oklahoma

## A Legacy of Space by Bob Bush. Written 2001.

A Legacy of Space  
By Bob Bush

I shall never forget hearing my first Spacemobile Presentation in 1962. It brought back all my childhood dreams and stories told to me by my adult mentor and close friend. More about that later. They all came rushing back into my head and the decision was simple and clear. I had to become a spokesperson for NASA and tell thousands of kids the NASA story; not unlike my mentor did for a little Missouri farm boy some twenty-three years before.

There are two parts to my Spacemobile story, one that started when I was a child and the other when I served on one of the most unique teams in my entire professional career. It is interesting how many things in ones life can be fore told in advance. Such is my story.

It all began long before the Spacemobile Program or even before NASA was ever conceived or needed. It started when I was about four or five in the late thirties. My parents had a close friend who periodically lectured at the University of Kansas in the Department of Astronomy. Besides his wealth of knowledge, he was a "gifted" storyteller. In my opinion, he would rank right along side John Nesbith, Arthur C. Clark and Willie Ley. His name was Jack Mee, one of my boyhood idols. He would visit our home about twice a year. He always managed to be there for one of Mom's home cooked meals. Supper was always followed by conversation with my parents. About nine o'clock my parents, being farm folks, and who awaken around four AM, would excuse themselves and retire to bed. That would be my clue to ask my hero and friend a question about the stars or the moon. Then the stories would start. I would set cross-legged in front of him on the floor until one or two in the morning. I would be transfixed by his stories. He would describe in detail the then known theories about the rings of Saturn, or the composition of the moon and finally how man someday would travel in space and land on the moon. Remember, it was only 1939 or 1940. If my parents knew Mr. Mee was filling my head with such notions they might well have never allowed me to stay up. For my tenth Christmas he gave me Chesley Bonestell, and Willie Ley's Book The Conquest of Space as a gift. I read the book a thousand times which only nurtured my dreams by recalling all of the facts and stories given to me by my great friend, mentor and story teller. My two-room country schoolteacher did not approve of my choice of "science fiction" in The Conquest of Space. In her opinion, it was waste of time and paper.

All of this brings me to an event that occurred in 1964 in East Orange, New Jersey while we were loading the Spacemobile following a presentation at an inner-city elementary school. As usual, there were always a kids who clambered to assist Hank Hudson and me in carrying out all the equipment and help in the loading process. As Hank and I were about to close the door on the truck I felt a tug at my jacket. As I gave a quick glance downward, my eyes met a wide-eyed African American child. He was about eight years old. He pulled me down closer to his face and said, "Mister do you know how lucky you are to work for NASA?" Once again, all my childhood memories of Mr. Mee and his wonderful stories of space travel and the book, The Conquest of Space raced through my mind. I was there living and breathing in the age of space travel. My answer to this young man was straight from the heart, "Yes, I do realize how lucky I am for having the

opportunity to work for NASA and some day you can too."

Unfortunately, Jack Mee passed away in the mid-fifties and did not live to see his dreams and predictions come to reality. The Spacemobile experience had provided me an opportunity to live Jack Mee's legacy and to spread the word of man's greatest adventure that was yet to come, space travel.

Something far greater happened to me as a Spacemobiler, which reached far beyond anything, I had ever planned for or anticipated. It was the great team of folks I got to work and play with at the Goddard Space Flight Center in the Office of Education. Specifically, Elva Bailey, Jack Callow, Dick Crone, Jack Bannister, Loyd Arason, Ernie Gibson, Bob Perry, Hank Hudson, Ann Amselno, Joyce Jarrett, Jim Kubouski, and Dr. Vacarro. (I hope I got everyone's name spelled correctly) Betty, my wife and I were nothing more than a couple of green, country, goggled eyed kids overwhelmed to be living in Washington D.C. and working for the most exciting government agency anywhere in the world. The Goddard Team taught me so many things about education, marketing, presenting, learning, team building, innovation, creativity and the concept of an ever present array of possibilities that existed for anyone willing to work hard and not be afraid to dream the impossible dream.

Consequently, our lives since have been rich in possibilities and good fortune. It is our hope that all we learned from the Goddard Team we have conveyed to our children, grandchildren and to our university students and finally our professional colleagues. We will always be indebted to all of you for sharing and teaching us to continually grow and dream the impossible dream.

In closing, I apologize for my emotional response, It is probably my 65 years coming to bear on reality of what a great life it has been and continues to be, and the fact that I am preparing this story on a laptop computer. The realization that my laptop is far more powerful than the computer used by Neal Armstrong and his colleagues to walk on the Moon in 1969, stills leaves me with goose bumps. Technology would not be where it is today if it were not for the Space Program. Always remember; the Spacemobile legacy had a tiny part in that great adventure that started in the 1960's.

Betty and I, wish for each of you and your families the very best in the years to come.