

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

Oklahoma State University-Stillwater, Oklahoma

## Interview with Everett E. Collin, Session 4

Session 4  
August 7th, 1992

R Today is the final session of our discussion about the history of the Spacemobile Program with NASA, specifically your involvement with it. One question that has come to mind concerning the project is that it was a new project. You were really paving new ground in 1961. How much reorganization did you have to do? How much fine tuning did you have to do and what had evolved by the time you left in 1974?

E Well, the program really began when Bernardo was brought aboard in 1960, about August, I think, to organize the Educational Programs Division, which was directed under the Office of Public Affairs by Shelby Thompson. And then Bernardo brought John Sims aboard, who had been involved with the Southeast Region of the Air Force Civil Air Patrol's Aerospace Education Program in the first part of 1961. Then, in turn, I was brought aboard as assistant to Sims in March 1961. We fell back on the experience of our Air Force Civil Air Patrol education programs, which I'd been involved with, both in the Midwest region and as Deputy Director for the national program. And it grew from there. Sims and I organized and developed the Spacemobile Program, how it should be run, etc. We recruited lecturers and specialists, who had to be teachers and primarily we concentrated on the science and math areas. All of them had to have a minimum of a bachelor's degree.

R What was their average age?

E Well, they'd run all the way from 25 to 35 years of age. Sims assumed responsibility for the Spacemobile Program at first. And I was assigned the Teacher Services Program, which were both meshed together. Then when Sims departed, which was probably about 1964 or '65, I was given the sole responsibility for the Spacemobile Program and the Teacher Services Program. They actually ran together anyway, so in terms of reorganization, it was just taking on additional duties. Bernardo was still the Director of the Educational Programs Division and he brought aboard as his deputy a gentleman by the name of Aaron Seamster, who was a university Dean of Education.

R What university?

E I don't remember the university that he came from. I remember the university that he resigned later to go to, Corpus Christi, Texas. Dr. Seamster only stayed a couple of years. Then Dr. Tuttle, with the State University of New York at Plattsburgh, was brought aboard as Deputy Director for Bernardo. When Bernardo retired, Tuttle became the Director of the Educational Programs Division and I was made Deputy Director. But I continued to be Director of the Spacemobile Program and the Teacher Services Program as Deputy Director. And that was my assignment right up to the time I retired. We made the Spacemobile and Teachers Services Programs actually one unit because the Spacemobile specialists were the ones that conducted the teacher education programs after we organized them.

R What was the Teacher Services Program? Workshops?

E It was teacher education workshops and seminars and the conduct of the Spacemobile Program in the schools. The Spacemobilers would have special programs for teachers in the schools, in addition to the classroom activities. We had our Center Education Program Officers, that was a major part of, if you want to call it, reorganization, because we set that up around '64 or '65. I guess you call them CEPOs, for short.

R Right. You worked on developing the CEPO position.

E Creating the CEPO positions out of each of the NASA Centers. And we used experienced, outstanding Spacemobile specialists and teacher education specialists to assign to those positions.

R So a requirement to be a CEPO was that they had some Spacemobile experience? Or not necessarily?

E Not necessarily, but it actually turned out that way because they knew what they had to do and how to make assignments and so on. And at that time, the CEPOs were then brought into civil service. So they were civil service personnel.

R They weren't part of the contract?

E They were no longer contract personnel. And that's the way the program exists today, as I understand.

R That's right, the Spacemobilers are still on contract, but the CEPOs are NASA civil servants.

E At Headquarters, we were responsible for the first two or three years to make specialist assignments throughout the United States. But, once we had made the CEPO assignments at the NASA Centers by 1965, then they were given the responsibility to make assignments and take care of the teacher education programs, constantly monitored by Headquarters.

R Where was NASA Headquarters at that time?

E Well, we moved several times. We were in the Universal Building up on upper Connecticut Avenue at one time.

R Was that your first location?

E No, the first building was the Dolley Madison House off LaFayette Square, kitty-corner from the White House. That was the NASA Headquarters, with Jim Webb and his whole organization.

R How long were you there?

E We were there about six months after I started in March '61. And then we moved from there to what was called the Universal Building up on upper Connecticut. We were there for about two years. In the meantime, the NASA Headquarters building was being built. And when that was built, we were moved into the NASA Headquarters building, Building Number 10, I think it's called.

R That's right, also known as the Federal Building.

E It's right across the street from the FAA, and between the FAA and the U.S. Department of Education building. And we were there, I'm talking about the Educational Programs Division now, until we were crowded out by the program offices, the Gemini Program, the Apollo Program personnel and so on. The actual directors of the overall NASA projects, and the Educational Programs Office of Public Affairs and the Director moved with us. And the Administrator and all his administrative departments were moved over into the top three floors of the U.S. Department of Education, where they are now (Ed. note: All Headquarters staff moved to the new NASA building on E Street SW in the summer, fall and winter of 1992-93). But the individual program offices, like the Apollo Project, the Gemini Project, the Skylab Project and so on, they were all kept in Building 10, which was the NASA building.

R Just a couple of thoughts as we wrap up the loose ends here. Was your branch always under the Public Affairs Office while you were with the program?

E Yes.

R That's since changed. NASA now has an Education Division, separate from Public Affairs.

E I realize that.

R I'd like to finish these discussions we've been having the past few days with a basic question that's been asked since the beginning of the Spacemobile Project and even before. Why should we explore space? A lot of people say it's a waste of time; we don't need to do it. We've heard this going all the way back to the Apollo days and before. And what do we really get out of exploring space? What's the point?

E NASA was originally chartered during the Eisenhower years, in 1958, to explore space, under civilian control, separate from the military. That was its original charter. And it is still the charter, although it has become more and more involved with military experiments and exploration. And the first act, which was the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Act of 1958, stated four general objectives. Number one, to study the space environment with scientific instruments of many types launched into space by sounding

rockets, space probes, Earth satellites and artificial planets. Two, to begin the exploration of space and the solar system by Man himself. Manned space exploration. Three, to apply space science and technology to the development of Earth satellites for peaceful purposes to promote human welfare. And four, to apply the knowledge gained in this study of space science and technology for strengthening the nation as a whole. Now, the first of the studies was to concentrate on the Earth, as well as how Man could live in space. And that continues to be a big part of the program. And so much of the technology that was developed as we were on the cutting edge of technology actually was used for Earth and space purposes. So we have a lot of things here on Earth resulting from the space program. One example is the development of the computer. That came about primarily because of the space program. They had to constantly develop superior computers. And the ability to detect the various geological aspects of the Earth to help agriculture and to help business. I could go on and on. So when they ask about why should we explore space, we're exploring space for these purposes that I already mentioned, and the results of our space exploration program are felt here on Earth in many, many ways. You could name medicine, technology, engineering, and aerospace developments; these are reasons that we definitely need a space program. Mr. Goldin, who is your present Administrator, has made several statements about the purpose of the program. I can quote a couple of them here. While he was making his presentation to Congress during his confirmation this year as the Administrator for NASA, he said:

"NASA has taken this nation where no other nation has been able to go. We have explored every planet in the solar system, save one, Pluto; we have left our footprints on the face of the Moon; we have pushed the edge of technology to maintain U.S. leadership in space and aeronautics; we have made powerful contributions to American competitiveness; and we must continue its leadership. NASA must continue its leadership in the mastery of air and space. NASA must push the edge of technology to enable the successful execution of our mission. It must continue to transfer the technology in the private sector to ensure America's competitive process and posture. We look forward to our own planet and the workings of our fragile Earth. At the same time, NASA looks outward to the heavens, preparing for the decades ahead, as we explore our own solar system and beyond. NASA takes this nation to the leading edge of technology. It challenges our young people to master math and science. It forces better relationships with people who inhabit this small planet."

I think that statement pretty much covers it. I think a verse from the Bible gives as good a reason as any why it's important to explore space and move ahead. The passage is from Proverbs, Chapter 29, Verse 18: "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

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Everett E. Collin passed away on November 19th, 1998 in Windom, Minnesota at the age of 80.

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