

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

Oklahoma State University-Stillwater, Oklahoma

Spacemobile Memories by Larry Costanzo. Written 2001.

Spacemobile Memories
By Larry Costanzo

Joining the Spacemobile group of educators at Goddard Space Flight Center, THE NUMBER ONE CENTER, was a no-brainer. I had been introduced to the spacemobilers while taking a course at Temple University in which the guys, Dick Crone, Lloyd Aronson, Jack Bannister, and Lynn Bondurant were presenters. Because of my interest in learning and teaching about space related areas I was inspired to become one of them. The opportunity came in 1970.

There was an opening and I immediately applied. I went down to Washington to the interview in awe and intimidation. Ev Collins, Elva Bailey and Ken Wiggins were the masters of the "dangling carrot" and I bit the bait. Going to work the first day was eventful... Chris Romero and I were given the task of ferrying trucks down to the AESP office in SW Washington. One of the trucks broke down and we got lost, something that Elva and Dick thought was ridiculous. What a start! Doing summer workshops was part of our initial development and the first Spacemobile presentation I remember was Lloyd's at a school in Prince George's County. Somewhere around mid September we joined forces with George Pope and Ransom Ritter at Morgan State in Baltimore. We listen intently as George demonstrated the spacesuit portion of the lecture.... banging vigorously on the quote, "unbreakable lexan" helmet which broke into three pieces. Jack Bannister warned me not to do the same to his equipment as I took the stage. I don't know nor do I remember how I did in my first partial lecture... but Jack had a list of mispronunciations and other little mistakes, like holding up the wrong model or misquoting facts or future events. But they were patient and finally I got the hang of it. In PA, while working with Lloyd I did an acceptable program even though I had picked up some of Jack's jokes and humor which later proved to be the reason I was chastised later by Ev Collins, Elva Bailey and Bill Rich.

I do remember, forgetting in which lot I parked the truck at the Pittsburgh airport; accidentally allowing the LOX bottle to empty because it was frozen open...while trying to tell students not to light up near the truck; backing up the truck and banging out a headlight of a wonderful teacher's car....cash payment.... never collected on the expense account; dropping a model and repairing it two minutes before and lecture began; of meeting a music teacher in PA named, Larry Costanzo... his principal was delighted... especially when I lead the band in the pit, while the music teacher walked out on the stage in the spacesuit; or the time at Seton Hall that I convinced an Army Helicopter pilot to drop egg packages down on second base of a ball field, they drifted a little toward left field and beyond where a group of students were picnicking. Headline in the College paper the next day read: "NASA & ARMY BOMB BLIND STUDENTS!". And boy do I remember those cheap hotels and the time HQ and Goddard guys were snowed in for three days in Easton Pa. Oh, the card games....suds and.... KFC. Did you know that Minot's favorite restaurant, "John's" in NY.... not only made him a perfect Manhattan without him even asking but then brought a compliment of samples of Italian antipasto...any wonder why he always wanted to go to the city?

Beautiful moments, like when a 70 year old Sister of St. Joseph in PA took her first flight ever in a plane with me in the

backseat and she wouldn't let go of my hand while saying the rosary in the other hand...she loved it so much she then sat in the rear of a Piper Cub, without the door and tossed out "egg packages" at 1000 feet. The owner of the plane also owned the airport. What a thrill !.... and the time that Dr. Paul Garber of the Smithsonian lectured students who had attended a NASA/NSTA conference at the Univ. of Maryland in the Marriot at Washington National Airport. His slide show was of the "Dozen Best Airplanes". His first slide was of the Wright Flyer.... and he and his father were in the picture... I ran his antiquated 4x4 slide machine....or of meeting Astronauts Al Worden & David Scott at Stewart Air Force Base because they had flown in to be honored at West Point and while Lloyd and I were having "nickel beers" at the Officers' Club we were thought to be their advance team. We found out when they were speaking and I parked the Spacemobile by the fence, so that they saw it when they helicopter back from West Point. We chatted for quite a while then they got clearance a did a high performance takeoff for us.

I will never forget how proud I was to be one of the 25 spacemobilers NASA and Oklahoma State had as educators. What a beautiful experience it was.