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about NASA Public Affairs
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Biographical - [date/place of birth; family background] _____

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Education - _____

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Career Path - Newspaper work; 1962- Consultant to NASA Asst. Admin for Public Affairs; 1963- Deputy Asst Admin for Public Affairs then Dep Asst Admin for Technology Utilization & Policy Planning (1964 split - Public Affairs separate again).

Topics - New course for NASA Public Affairs: scientific & technical information, ~~active~~ global educational programs, Special events, public info; field centers were tail wagging Hqs dog; 1963 critical year - strengthened Public Affairs at MSC; differences of opinion w/ Shorty Powers; controversy over releasing MA-9 flight plan; Public Affairs Activities Plan (PAAP); MSC-generated programs sent to Hqs for approval; education program ~~&~~ Houston + nation; exhibits; astronaut speaking engagements; documentary films; Kassah Bay complex for news media; exclusion of pers from Mission Control; making Mission information available; Astronaut Contract w/ Time, Inc; (Life) question of astronaut exploitation by NASA; astronaut availability management; Apollo tragedy + Public Affairs

7-20-67

INTERVIEW WITH JULIAN SCHEER

SCHEER: Late in 1962, as the Mercury Program was coming to an end, the only flight left was Gordon Cooper's. My involvement with Mercury prior to that time had been as a newspaper man. I had a fairly good feel for the way NASA operated its Public Information operations, but not in any great depth. My first involvement in the space program started in 1956. I was primarily Air Force oriented, as the program was at that time. During the course of my newspaper career and association with space programs, like most reporters, the primary focus of my attention shifted from the Air Force to NASA with the creation of the Space Act in 1958. In 1960, we began to witness some indepth NASA participation, and of course, I followed the Mercury program from the Shepard flight on. The Cooper flight was the first one in which I had an active participation.

My original role in NASA was that of a consultant to Dr. George Simpson, who had come to NASA in August 1962 as Assistant Administrator for Public Affairs. He had no deputy. Public Affairs at NASA up to this time had had a series of Directors of Public Information and Assistant Administrators for Public Affairs, some of whom were effective and some who were not. Walt Bonney was the first Director of Information; then there was Shelby Thompson who had had good experience at AEC in the same area; O. B. Lloyd; and Dr. Hodden T. Cox, who was basically a biologist and was with NASA only a short while. We also had Walter L. Lingle, who had been a business executive at Proctor-Gamble with no background in the field and George Simpson who was basically a sociologist and had no real background in Public Affairs, although, he was a good writer and had an

instinctive feel for Public Affairs, particularly in education.

In a very short time, we set a new course for Public Affairs. In the process, the program expanded to include scientific and technical information, active education programs in elementary and secondary schools, and what we now call special events, in addition to the usual public information activities. We did not have the strong functional supervision in Washington over public affairs that we now have and therefore NASA Headquarters had an almost incidental relationship to the program in the field. There was little coordination, little cooperation and I suspect, as much frustration on the part of the Public Affairs people in the field as in Headquarters. The field people didn't get proper direction or supervision from Headquarters. The field centers were the tail that was wagging the Headquarters dog. The field centers, particularly the Cape and the Manned Spacecraft Center, had been doing an adequate job in running the manned flight programs and launches as they went along. We felt that all the various public affairs activities should be coordinated to insure balance, to make certain all types of news media were well taken care of, and to be sure that NASA policy was well enunciated. After the Cooper flight, very close examination of Public Affairs involvement seemed to indicate that we needed to strengthen the total function. Although we had not demonstrated any real Headquarters competence in this respect, we received good cooperation from Dr. Gilruth, Dr. Debus, Dr. von Braun, and Dr. George Mueller who succeeded Brainerd Holmes as Director of Manned Space Flight. We made several important changes. I became the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Public Affairs about March 1963.

Shortly after that, Mr. Webb created the technology utilization program and I became the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Technology Utilization and Policy Planning which included Public Affairs. We now had an expanded operation with two new functions, policy planning and technology utilization. Simpson and I sort of split the duties. I took the traditional Public Affairs activities and he concentrated most of his efforts on technology utilization and policy planning. A year later, we split the office. He took technology utilization and policy planning and I took Public Affairs. Public Affairs from that time on has been an entity unto itself. The year 1963 was a critical one. The Mercury Program had ended and we were moving into the Gemini Program. We needed to establish a stronger relationship between the Associate Administrator for Manned Space Flight in Washington and the Field Centers in the area of Public Affairs. In 1962, we had co-located our specialists in manned flight, space science, and in advanced research and technology. For example we moved Paul Haney, who had been in our newsroom here in Washington into the Manned Flight Office right next to Brainerd Holmes. Paul then developed a very direct relationship with the people in the field centers, like Bob Slattery at Marshall and Shorty Powers at Houston. In 1963, after I completed a careful survey of our needs, and it was agreed that we needed to strengthen our operation in Houston, I asked Paul Haney to succeed Shorty Powers.

Perhaps I should go a little bit into detail into the Powers relationship. I considered Powers a highly competent professional, a very good technician. On the Cooper flight, we had a considerable disagreement over the release of the MA-9 flight plan. On each of the

previous flights the plan had been made available subrosa to the television networks, but had not been made available to the print media. Shorty and I discussed this. He was unalterably opposed to the release of the flight plan while I was in favor of it. We had quite a bit of discussion over this point. I talked to Holmes and Walt Williams about it, and it was concluded that it should be released. We therefore reproduced it and made it available to the entire press corps. We had had a situation in which a man (Shorty Powers) and his program had operated rather independently and so had received little direction and varying degrees of guidance from Headquarters from a half a dozen different people. A new man, like myself coming in and posing changes and constraints and guidelines was difficult to accept, and I think rather logically, because this too could have been a passing thing. You never know how long these people are going to last and so there is no reason to rock the boat. Shorty had seen a half a dozen people in my own role come and go. His own operation had been a rather successful one in which NASA's basic Public Affairs policies had evolved. We wanted to improve on them, we felt the need for more balance and understanding in the program, more aggressive ways to assist the media, and also, to have Houston more deeply involved in the total Public Affairs Program, particularly the secondary and elementary school programs, the production of motion pictures and educational aids, and so on. The agency was primarily oriented at that time toward a public information program, other than a broad public affairs program. We could not resolve our disagreement, and we were both unhappy over the flight plan issue. While we had mutual respect for one another, we were not working well together, and

it was decided that we could not resolve these differences. Here were two people set in their ways with two conflicting philosophies. And so Shorty was asked to resign. He was given an opportunity to come to Washington, if he did not want to leave the Agency. He elected to do that because he had another year to go before he was ready to retire from the Air Force. When he came to Washington, I asked him to train the Worlds Fair guides. He did an extremely competent job. Once he had decided that his tenure was concluded in manned flight, there was never a complaint, there was never gossip, or talk, and I never had any feedback of any type. He moved into a new area, did an extremely competent job and when his time was up, he resigned from NASA and the Air Force and went into private business. Paul Haney moved to Houston and we re-hired Alfred Alibrando (he had formerly been with us and had gone to Aviation Week) as the Public Affairs Officer for Manned Space Flight. He became the immediate public affairs contact and supervisor over Slattery, Gordon Harris, and Paul Haney. We continued to strengthen our functional areas. Paul Haney was known to the people in Houston and respected by them. He had a fine career in NASA and had a solid newspaper background outside of NASA. Bob Gilruth and George Low worked well with Paul, and Paul strengthened the Public Affairs activities at Houston. He played a major role in planning and procedures for the Gemini phase of manned flights, but with careful supervision, direction and guidance from Alibrando in NASA Headquarters. These moves, while not entirely the answers to all of our problems did create a framework and a climate in which we could work well.

In this evolutionary process, a number of things happened. We started to budget jointly and to have what we call a PAAP System, the Public Affairs Activities Plan in which field Centers planned with us public affairs programs across the board for their Centers and these are integrated into a manned flight program, and the manned flight program is integrated with the other major program offices to give us a total NASA plan. In every one of these steps, we got strong cooperation from Wes Hjornevik, who was a tremendous help to us, being a very knowlegeable man in the area of organization and management, and of course, from Bob Gilruth and George Low, who were the key people. So now we have an integrated public affairs program and an extremely close relationship with Houston which is vital, since our greatest amount of activity (80%) is at the Manned Spacecraft Center. Now the right hand knows what the left hand is doing and the initiative, guidance, and philosophy generated at the Center is fed up through the line for our consideration here. Public Affairs personnel assignments for manned flight missions are drawn in Houston and sent here for approval. The basic press kit for all manned flights are written in Houston and sent up here for approval and production. The commentary on all manned flights is basically a Houston responsibility when we are actually engaged in manned flight operations. With Howard Gibbons in the Public Information area, and Matt Storey in the educational area we have two very strong individuals. They have established programs which are not only managerially avalagous to our own, but are also two of the strongest basic programs that we have in NASA. So we at NASA Headquarters serve in the strictest sense of the word, as functional supervisors, and

appreciate and are pleased with the fact that our primary resources are in the Manned Spacecraft Center. We feel that we have developed a management system which is strong, but we've also developed good personal relationships. It takes people to make these operations strong and we have developed a man to man personal relationship with the top management and the Public Affairs people in Houston which enables us to get jobs done in the best interests of all of NASA.

MERRIFIELD: Would you care to comment on changes that have occurred, for example, in education programs and in releasing information to news media?

SCHEER: The education program in Houston, grew like topsy and it has only been during the past year that it has had the real strong direction that it needed. It is a very valuable ingredient in the total NASA program for a number of reasons. It has been useful in developing strong community and regional relationships. It has been of great value to the Houston Independent School District. It has also made major contributions to the total NASA educational program because of the very obvious national interest in manned flight, astronauts living in space, and physiology of space. Its input into such things as a spacemobile program, into educational publications, and into educational motion pictures has really been important. Houston has the ability to make good motion pictures, and while the motion pictures have been primarily documentaries, and in what we call informational educational, (rather than strictly educational where film is devoted to the development of the single educational concept that is being taught), Houston has digently recorded the major activities of the

Agency and has produced a record on film that has been excellent.

The Public Affairs program in Houston has also been excellent in exhibits development and management. The Center has, of course, some very valuable artifacts such as spacecraft, and many other valuable hardware items. They have cooperated in sharing them with Headquarters and other elements of NASA. We've had a nationwide tour of the Cooper spacecraft which visited all 48 states. This tour was managed by NASA Headquarters and the Manned Spacecraft Center. It has developed other manned flight exhibits which have been key elements in our total exhibit program. It was the first Center to really make an effort to show visitors in its own community what it is doing by taking the lobby of the auditorium and making a very fine exhibit area of it. In the field of Protocol, Houston has had the leadership of people like Frank Hickey, Ed Barker, and others. They have done an excellent job. The public affairs operations, of course, has been deeply involved in astronaut activities and we feel very fortunate in having been able to create an arrangement with Dr. Gilruth and Deke Slayton wherein the astronauts are made available to us on a limited basis to fulfill important speaking engagements. This program is now going into its third year. It has enabled a lot of people around the United States and overseas to get to see the astronauts, to hear them, and even more important to learn about NASA's manned space flight program. Houston also has been strong in its support of our overseas activities with astronauts. Cooper and Conrad have been to Europe and Africa, Gordon and Armstrong to South America, and Schirra and Borman in the Far East.

At the beginning of the Gemini Program there were no facilities at Houston for the Press. MSC established in the Nassau Bay complex, a 336 very fine facility -- Building 6 -- to house the news media. Wes Hjornevik and Paul Haney took the lead in creating a viable press operation, that although not as good as having the press on Site -- which was impossible physically -- was the second best thing and became really a first-class operation.

Let's take a look at the complaints of the news media about being excluded from the Mission Control Center during a mission. This has 346 been a running battle that was provoked by very minor group of the writing media, but has been most actively sought by the television media. Our position on Building 30 has been simply that this is the decision-making center. These men and this Center, we feel, should be as completely free as possible from distractions and from any sense of artificiality. To have an outside group gawking at them through glass windows during the critical parts of the mission creates a sense of artificiality that the Mission Directors, particularly Dr. Mueller, felt was not in the best interests of the total program. Since the lives of the astronauts are at stake, if there is one iota of chance that this artificiality may in some way interfere with the flight, it's not worth the risk. So we have withheld this one area from the close scrutiny of the press. We feel very strongly that the American people have a right to know what is going on in the Control Center and so we have done several things. The actual voices of the astronauts from flight are often heard in real-time with no delay whatsoever; at other times, the actual voices are heard with a 5 second delay. Critical

maneuvers like the extravehicular activity of Ed White, the first rendezvous and so on were heard by the American people in real time with no delay. A Public Affairs commentator in the Mission Control Center reports on a regular basis to the news media, and subsequently to the American people, on exactly what is going on and every major decision. As soon as a decision is made, or a crisis arises, this information is immediately made available. We have not always operated as smoothly as we would like, but our intentions have always been good and there has never been an effort consciously or unconsciously to withhold any vital data. In addition, we have vidicon cameras mounted in back of the Mission Control which prepares a videotape of the controllers at work. These are given to the networks. We have our own photographers who take both still and motion picture footage from time to time in the Control Center as unobtrusively as possible. This also is released to the three television networks. The exclusion from the Control Center has become a major issue to the networks. They have nothing visual to show because we have no television on the spacecraft, and the next best visual picture is the Control Center, the nerve center where everything is going on. As far as the print media is concerned, there have been one or two reporters who have made this a cause celebre, but really it's not a major issue and scores of reporters have said that it might be interesting from time to time to be at the Control Center but would not want to sit over there or make it their base for coverage.

The astronauts had a contract with Time, Inc., when I came into the Agency. Therefore, I was not in on the original negotiations and

the fact that John Glenn allegedly got President Kennedy to agree to this thing while water-skiing and so on, is as much hearsay to me as it is to everyone else. My participation became very active at the time the astronauts were allowed to sell, what I consider secondary rights, (that's the newspaper rights). Field Enterprises bought those rights. There have been remarkably few conflicts as far as the contract is concerned. When we had a smaller group of astronauts, during the Mercury days, and the national interest in the program was at its very highest, the astronauts suffered from not getting a clear picture from Washington of what was expected of them and how they should or should not conduct themselves. Quite frankly when I came into the Agency, the astronauts and people in Washington had reached a standoff on the matter of the contract. The contract allowed the astronauts to sell personal stories of themselves and their families and personal stories only. However, there was the feeling on the part of some of the original Mercury astronauts that almost any request that NASA might have for some sort of public appearance must be political in nature. There was a suspicion that we were exploiting them because they were in demand and they were famous and anyone could draw a crowd with an astronaut. I think part of this was the fact that they still thought as military people and were used to military discipline and did not feel like they were a completely integrated part of the NASA organization. There were also tremendous demands on their time and they were mobbed everywhere they went. It was an uncomfortable thing. They were men who were engineers and test pilots who were not used to the celebrity treatment and did not seek it. So any small engagement that you would suggest that