

GRAA NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 1184, Greenbelt, MD 20768-1184

July 2025 <https://GoddardRetirees.org> 41st Year of Publication

UPCOMING LUNCHEONS: We meet at 11:15 AM on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at the American Legion Post #136 at 6900 Greenbelt Road. **Reservations are required;** please contact graalunch@gmail.com (preferred) or call (410)-709-8889 **before Thursday, July 3rd**.

July 8	Summer Student Interns, NASA Goddard “Short Descriptions of their Summer Projects”
August 12	 Dr. Makenzie Lystrup, GSFC Center Director “Update for Goddard”

COMMENTS FROM TONY COMBERIATE AND CARL STAHLE

Our May speaker was **Dr. John Degnan**, a distinguished physicist, Goddard retiree, and former Chief Scientist at Sigma Space Corporation, renowned for his expertise in laser theory and instrument design. His presentation entitled **“Evolution of Single Photon Lidar: From Satellite Laser Ranging to Airborne Lidars to ICESat-2”** described his experience, both at Goddard and at Sigma Space Corporation, in advancing the applications of Single Photon Lidars. Dr. Degnan's doctoral research led to the development of the first successful mode locked laser oscillator/regenerative amplifier, which generated ultrashort laser pulses to transfer time between ground-based and airborne atomic clocks. LIDAR, or Light Detection and Ranging, is a remote sensing technology that uses laser light to measure distances between surfaces. It creates precise, three-dimensional information about the surface, including vegetation, land, ice, and structures, by analyzing the time it takes for laser pulses to travel to the surface and back. Dr. Degnan described the first successful satellite Laser Ranging Experiment at the Goddard Research Facility in October 1964, led by Henry Plotkin. By 1994, the demand for Satellite Laser Ranging applications grew to areas such as global tectonic plate motion, gravity field, precise positioning of satellites, topographic, ice, and sea level measurements, and multinational navigation satellite constellations. In 2002, NASA's new totally autonomous operation SLR2000 system was introduced. It was designed to track, with millimeter precision and using single photon returns, a constellation of roughly 24 retroreflector-equipped satellites, which range in altitude from about 300 km to 20,000 km. This increased the fraction of the

transmitted photons incident on the satellite and the peak intensity in the near field by a factor of over 10,000.

Dr. Degnan's Single Photo Lidar technique was adopted by NASA for their ATLAS lidar instrument on the 2018 ICESat-2 mission and achieved 60,000 measurements per second compared to only 40 measurements per second on the GLAS lidar predecessor ICESat-1 mission. The ATLAS lidar has recorded over 2 trillion surface elevation measurements since its launch in September 2018 with no known degradation in its operation due primarily to the low power operation of its laser system. The ATLAS lidar supports a wide range of Earth science applications which include land, ice, and sea surface topography; tree canopy heights; shallow water bathymetry; man-made structures and vehicles; and cloud heights and thickness.

The ATLAS multibeam technique and corresponding high data rates can be extended to the mapping of other planets and moons in our solar system although the most distant planets and moons may require use of modest power interplanetary laser communications systems to achieve megabit per second or higher data rates. To obtain accurate and contiguous maps of the entire planetary surface, the planetary spacecraft must be placed in a polar orbital plane.

Summer Interns at GRAA Luncheon

We'll have a few of Goddard's Summer Student Interns with their mentors join us for our GRAA Luncheon on July 10. They will briefly introduce themselves and describe their summer projects. It is always fun and inspiring to hear the excitement and passion that these students bring to our Goddard community.

Advocacy

GRAA wants to be a strong advocate for Goddard and the NASA community. The proposed Fiscal Year 2026 budget from the administration cuts the NASA's Science Mission Directorate's (SMD) budget by nearly 50% and NASA's overall budget by 25%. Such a drastic reduction would inflict immediate and irreparable damage upon the nation's space science enterprise. If enacted, these cuts would necessitate the premature termination of dozens of currently operating, highly productive scientific spacecraft and would halt the development of nearly all future NASA science missions. There is a proposed 50% reduction in the Goddard civil servant workforce. NASA has provided an offer to civil service employees to leave the Agency through the options of a Deferred Resignation Program (DFP), Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA), and/or the Voluntary Separation Incentive Program (VSIP). Employees have until July 25 to decide to accept. You can review the FY 2026 Budget Request for NASA at <https://www.nasa.gov/fy-2026-budget-request/>.

Members are encouraged to contact (meet/call/letters) their elected representatives to urge them to restore the NASA Science budget as well as the overall NASA budget. GRAA has members in 45 states so we can be effective advocates. You can visit the Planetary Society link for guidance: <https://lnkd.in/enGXX8kb>



GRAA is also active on social media on its LinkedIn group and encourages members to use their social media platforms to communicate greater awareness of the importance of NASA Science to the country. Adopting to the language and themes of the current administration, we can show: NASA Science Makes America Great; NASA Science Makes America Safe; NASA Science Makes America Rich; NASA Science Makes America Healthy.

Feel welcome to contact Carl Stahle (carl.m.stahle@gmail.com) and Tony Comberiate (abcomberiate@verizon.net) for your comments and ideas. We welcome your help.

Premier of Film “Cosmic Dawn” on James Webb Space Telescope

A few GRAA members enjoyed the premier of the film “Cosmic Dawn” by James Tralie premiering near Goddard Space Flight Center at the Greenbelt Theater on June 11.

Cosmic Dawn is the incredible true story of the James Webb Space Telescope – humanity’s largest and most powerful space telescope – on a mission to unveil the early universe, against all odds. The 90-minute documentary brings viewers on an unprecedented journey through Webb’s delicate assembly, rigorous testing, and triumphant launch, showcasing the sheer complexity and breathtaking risks involved in creating a telescope capable of peering billions of years into the past. Follow the telescope from an idea developed at NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center all the way to the launchpad in French Guiana, with never-before-seen footage captured by the Webb film crew offering intimate access to the challenges and triumphs along the way.

You can watch Cosmic Dawn via NASA+ or [YouTube](#).

GRAA at Food Truck Event at Goddard

Jan Kalshoven and Carl Stahle represented GRAA at the “Food Trucks on the Green” event at Goddard on June 26. We told folks about GRAA and encouraged them to join us in the future.



WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS:

We are delighted to welcome the following new members:

Dennis Andrucyk
Tracy Avant
Kimberly Brown
Steven Cooley
Terry Doiron
William Glenn
Peter Hughes
Michael Kelly
Ken LaBel
Mark Matsumura
John McCloskey
Betsy Park
Linda Pattison
Christa Peters-Lidard
Fernando Pellerano
Michael Powers
Caleb Principe
Chris Shreves
Eleanor Silverman
Linda Wiles

Note: In the past year, GRAA has added 95 new members. We have sadly lost 26 members due to death or loss of contact information. Our total membership is 2320 spread across 45 states, DC, Puerto Rico, and 3 countries.

ACTIVITIES FOR MEMBERS:

Jan Kalshoven, one of GRAA's board members, became the president of what is now called the Goddard Tennis and Pickleball Club (GTPC) this past year. There are no fees to play at the Goddard Tennis complex which now has lines and a rollable net for pickleball (Access to the center is by showing your Goddard retiree badge as you drive in). Courts are open to all, but if you want to join GTPC and get on WhatsApp and TeamReach to find other Goddard players, send an email to Kalshoven@gmail.com.

Pawan Bhartia volunteers as a docent at Smithsonian National Museum of Asian Art, aka Freer/Sackler Galleries. It is located within a short walking distance from Smithsonian metro station. He invites GRAA members to the museum for a special tour of the exhibits. He can design the tour based on your interests. Visit Asia.si.edu for an overview of the galleries.

Weekends are best for him. Other days after 2 pm are also okay. Feel welcome to email him at paunb1@icloud.com to schedule a visit.

GRAA is on Social Media

GRAA has extended its reach to social media. We are now on LinkedIn which is the world's largest professional network. Members can visit [linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com) and search for NASA Goddard Retirees and Alumni Association. You are welcome to be a follower of this group.

WHAT'S UP WITH OUR MEMBERS:

Your colleagues and friends would enjoy hearing about your life experiences after Goddard before they see your name in our "Remembering Our Former Colleagues" section. News of interest to our members could be professional, volunteer activities, awards and recognition, a personal achievement, or an unusual adventure or hobby. Please feel welcome to send a concise message (<100 words) to Tony Comberiate (abcomberiate@verizon.net) and Carl Stahle (carl.m.stahle@gmail.com) who reserve the right to edit for content and length.

John Baniszewski published his book. It is a 5-volume anthology of 15 short stories titled "Stories from the Devil's Den". He is a Licensed Battlefield Guide at Gettysburg. The stories are all tied to the most haunted place in America. These works of supernatural historical fiction can be found at <https://books-by-john.com/>

DIRECTORIES AND NEWSLETTERS: Send your email address to goddardretirees@gmail.com to get our monthly Newsletters, which include synopses of the talks, special community announcements, and obituaries. Past Newsletters and links to videos of the talks are on our website <https://goddardretirees.org>. Multi-month abstracts of Newsletters are mailed to the retirees with only residential addresses in our files. We depend on retirees to furnish their home addresses to be listed in the biennial GRAA Membership Directories, only available as a mailed hardcopies to members. These mailings are supported by donations to GRAA, P. O. Box 1184, Greenbelt, MD 20768-1184.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Jackie Gasch received donations from: Archie Fitzkee and Billie Blackwell gave in honor of all co-workers and friends from Wallops and Goddard.

FROM THE GODDARD ARCHIVES: 60 years ago on July 1, 1965, Delta launched TIROS X. This was the first U.S. Weather Bureau funded TIROS and began a long-term collaboration between NASA and NOAA to develop and operate satellites to provide real time weather data.

REMEMBERING OUR FORMER COLLEAGUES:

Mark Goans, 65, died on May 12, 2024. Mark served NASA for more than 28 years, directly contributing to the success of some of NASA's highest profile missions. Mark was an integral

member of the Explorers and Heliophysics Projects Division (EHPD) and the Deputy Program Manager of NASA's Explorers Program. Under Mark's leadership, the Explorers Program oversaw more than 20 astrophysics and heliophysics missions. Prior to joining EHPD, Mark served as the Office Chief of Goddard's Systems Review Office.

Joan Green Gosser, 83, died on November 2, 2024. Joan was born in Baltimore on September 25, 1941. She received her Bachelor of Arts from the College of Notre Dame and her Master of Library Science from the University of Pittsburgh. She worked as a librarian at Goddard and at the CIA Library.

Francis "Frank" Joseph West, 70, died at home peacefully, on May 3, 2025. Frank graduated from Control Data Institute in Pittsburgh, PA, and was an IT Specialist. His career spanned 35 years at various IT companies, Goddard and Hewlett Packard until his retirement.

Richard Ding Ho, 74, of College Park, Maryland, died on May 15th, 2025 after a courageous battle with cancer. Richard was born in Hong Kong and, as a preteen, immigrated with his family to New York City, New York. Richard earned his Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from Princeton University and a Masters of Aeronautical Engineering from the University of Maryland, College Park. At Goddard, Richard worked in the Earth Science Operations Project Office, where he played a large part in many major projects such as the Earth Observing System's Terra mission and the Hubble Space Telescope. He later worked in the Office of Systems Safety and Mission Assurance System Review Office. In keeping with Richard's wishes, his body has been donated to science to Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. A service and celebration of life will be held on Thursday, July 3rd, 1-4 pm at the Westchester Apartments Party Room, 6100 Westchester Park Dr, College Park. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to John Hopkins Suburban Hospital Foundation.

Ronald Walter Bierwagen, 94, died on May, 17th, 2025. Ron was born in South Bend, Indiana on November 14, 1932. Ron was offered contracts by the Brooklyn Dodgers and the Washington Senators but chose to join the Air Force for a 4-year stint during the Korean war. After his honorable discharge from the military, Ron eventually worked at NASA for 28 years during the most exciting period in mankind's pursuit of space travel and exploration. His entire career at the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center was spent in providing logistical support to the Manned Space Program, retiring as Head of the Network Logistics Branch. Ron was responsible for the worldwide NASA Tracking and Data Network for manned and unmanned missions.

Maria Olvido Parsons, 85, died peacefully on June 12, 2025. Maria was born in Spain on November 28, 1939. Maria retired from a dedicated career at Goddard as a spacecraft scheduler.

Raul Garza-Robles, 89, died peacefully on June 3, 2025. Born in Weslaco, Texas, Raul attended Southern Texas Pan American College and later transferred to Florida State where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in mathematics and science. He spent his NASA career at Stennis

Space Center, then Kennedy Space Center and finally at Goddard, working as a mathematician and computer scientist on many of the nation's earth science and space programs.

Royal Tysdal, 95, died peacefully on June 14, 2025. Royal was born on October 5, 1929, in Lincoln, Nebraska, and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Engineering from the University of California, Berkeley. He served in active duty as an officer with the United States Navy from 1952 to 1955. Royal worked as an Aeronautical Engineer from 1960 to 1997 at Goddard, where he coordinated environmental tests on several payloads and satellites

Melvin (Skip) Louis Warner, 81, of Tobyhanna, Pennsylvania died on June 17, 2025. He was born in Norwalk, Ohio. After serving in the United States Navy, he worked at Goddard where he supported the Apollo Program.