

GRAA NEWSLETTER

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

February 2026 <https://GoddardRetirees.org> 42nd Year of Publication

UPCOMING LUNCHEONS: We will meet at 11:15 AM on February 10th 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, **February 5th**.

February 10	 	<p>Dr. Brad Cenko, Principal Investigator for Swift Mission Dr. Russell Carpenter, Deputy Project Manager/Technical, Space Science Mission Operations NASA Goddard <i>"The Swiftly Mission: SWIFT Lift in a Year"</i></p>
March 10		<p>Dr. Keith Gendreau, Principal Investigator for NICER Mission NASA Goddard <i>"The Neutron Star Interior Composition Explorer (NICER)"</i></p>
April 14		<p>Dr. Antti Pulkkinen, Director, NASA Office of JPL Management and Oversight NASA HQ/JPL <i>"Space Weather: The New "Weather" of a Technological Society"</i></p>

TREASURER'S REPORT: Jackie Gasch received donations from: James Metzger, L. Henry Anderson, James Costrel, Dick Costa, Paul Racete, Carol Boquest, Charles Fuechsel, Mollie Mooring, David Cleveland, Michael Mahoney and Colleen Quinn-House.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS:

We are delighted to welcome the following new members:

Lynn Baker
Janet Barth

Eric Bentley
Ellen Berkeley
Thomas Birmingham
Richard Burley
Phil Calhoun
Dennis Campbell
Alicia Carter
Deane Charlson
Bob Connerton
Barry Coyle
Jeff Dawson
Fred Duca
Carlos Dutan
Renee Falden
Lee Feinberg
Steven Feng
Rhea Frazier
Cindy Fryer
Kelvin Garcia
Ron Gelaro
John Gygax
Nanette Harris
Dave Israel
Glenn Jackson
Tawanda Jacobs
Brad Jewitt
Joe Jones
Michelle Jones
Kevin Kranacs
Joe Kroener
Dave Larsen
Stephen Leete
Bo Lewis
Steven Li
Yan Lui
Johnny Medina
Dave McCormick
Alex Montoya
Jennifer Oconnell
June O'Connor
Rita Owens
Ann Parsons
Lori Perkins

Jeff Piepmeier
Nita Pszcolka
Terri Randall
Richard Ryan
Ann Parsons
Tony Sanders
Bob Schweiss
Lillian Seifter
David Sheldon
Dion Smallwood
Michelle Smith
Bryan Song
Bob Spector
Mike Stark
Patti Still
Tod Strohmayer
Janet Thomas
Priti Vasudeva
Michael Viens
Robert Vik
Steve Waterbury
Ronnice Wedge
Miriam Wennersten
Roland Wescott
Yolanda Williams
Tony Yu

GRAA has added 302 new members in the past year and now has 2400 total members.

RETIREMENT BADGES:

For those members who left Goddard through the Deferred Resignation Program (DRP) and are now officially retired from Federal service, you can get a retirement badge from the Goddard Badging Office. A recent retiree visiting the Greenbelt Badging Office in Building 17 (Hours of Operation, Mon – Fri, 7 am to 3 pm, 301-286-1347) was able to get her retirement badge printed immediately with no paperwork or appointment needed. The retirement badge will allow you access to the public areas of the campus (auditoriums, cafeterias, recreational areas) where you show your badge to the security guard at the gate. If you are visiting offices of employees, you should arrange for a visitor's badge.

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) and a photo to Tony Comberiate (abcomberiate@verizon.net) and Carl Stahle (carl.m.stahle@gmail.com) who reserve the right to edit for content and length.

Sharon Purser: “Good day to my fellow retirees. I do miss NASA, but I’m also very happy in my “retired” life. My husband Bill and I opened a *Love and Honey Fried Chicken* franchise in Bryn Mawr (PA's Main Line near Villanova) in December 2025, and we are super excited for the adventure. The plan is to get it going strong and then pass the baton to our son Troy Purser. The article is in the link - and below....pic attached. Hope you all are well! To all my Goddard family: Please come visit us if you are ever in the Philly area!”

<https://savvymainline.com/2025/12/12/philly-fave-love-honey-fried-chicken-debuts-in-bryn-mawr-its-first-franchise-on-the-main-line/>



Bill Hocking: “Life is a joy. I am in my 96th year and hope to be at the Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) for the 68th anniversary of the Vanguard I launch. My ancestors are from Cornwall, England, but they let me in anyway. Memory of my space adventures, jogging through airports to remote tracking sites to support the early launches, sustains my joy. What a wonderful time to be alive! I arrived at NRL in 1955, three months after President Eisenhower signed into law the International Geophysical Year (IGY). Jack Mengle hired me, and I started working on the Minitrack Tracking System trailer to be installed at the prototype Blossom Point Tracking Station. As part of the Data Handling Section, I was stationed at the Grand Turk Satellite Tracking station for the first American launch, Explorer 1, on January 31, 1958. The

Grand Turk station collected the first American satellite tracking data sent back to the Vanguard Computing Center at NRL for processing.”

History Note from Carl:

Explorer 1 was the first spacecraft to detect the Earth’s radiation belts, now known as the Van Allen belts, returning data until its batteries were exhausted after nearly four months. It remained in orbit until 1970.

GRAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION:

GRAA will hold an election at its May 12th Luncheon meeting to elect its Board of Directors. GRAA is administered by a Board of Directors (BOD) of seven GRAA members elected by the membership. The BOD shall elect the Director of the Board, a Vice President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. The Director of the Board serves as the President of GRAA. If you are interested to serve on the BOD, please contact Tony Comberiate (abcomberiate@verizon.net) for further information and encouragement. Submissions of candidates for the GRAA BOD are due by April 15th.

We could also use your volunteer help with other GRAA activities where you don’t have to serve on the BOD. Examples include to serve as our lunch coordinator, editor of our newsletter, and assistance with our website and membership. You would work with one of our BOD members. We have a growing and dynamic community.

FROM THE GODDARD ARCHIVES: On February 24, 1996, Delta-2 launched POLAR to obtain data from both high and low altitude perspective. At low altitudes, it imaged the Aurora. It was a two-year mission but provided useful data for twelve years.

COMMENTS FROM TONY COMBERIATE AND CARL STAHL

Dr. Daniel Glavin, Project Scientist for the OSIRIS-REx mission, spoke at our January luncheon. His presentation, entitled “NASA’s OSIRIS-REx Mission: Laboratory Results from Pristine Samples of Asteroid Bennu”, highlighted the results from the Bennu asteroid sample returned to Earth in September 2023. The goal of the mission was to search for organics and the chemical building blocks of life. 121.6 grams of the asteroid were returned with different rock types and preserved samples were sent to over 200 scientists around the world, who used more than 65 different analysis techniques. The Bennu samples were found to be organic-rich relative to all other known astromaterials. He emphasized the importance of sample return missions to take advantage of the large variety and sensitivity of analysis techniques on earth and the ability to preserve the samples for later analysis with more advanced measurement techniques. He noted that his lab at Goddard recently analyzed lunar samples from the Apollo missions over 50 years ago.

Goddard scientists received their first sample and found abundant ammonia and nitrogen-rich soluble organic matter. The ¹⁵Nitrogen-rich ammonia in water extracts indicates a low temperature origin and is also a key chemical precursor for the formation of amino acids and nucleobases, organic molecules important for life. Bennu samples contains all 5 nucleobases found in life's genetic code and 15 of the 20 amino acids used to build proteins, including the first detection of tryptophan in any extraterrestrial material. Tryptophan is the most complex amino acid used in terrestrial biology. Its presence in Bennu samples tells us that carbon-rich asteroids could create more complex organic molecules than previously thought. Sugars essential for life were also found. Earth rocks have been destroyed and contaminated in its 3.8-billion-year history, but the Bennu samples, which were uncontaminated for the last 4.5 billion years, showed that chemical ingredients for life were formed in a wet and salty environment. Isotopic anomalies, high abundances of volatiles and stardust indicate that Bennu came from our outer solar system and may be a remnant of an Icy Ocean World.

Dr. Glavin's summary of the samples' resulting analysis regarding their implications for the origin and search for life was: "Volatile-rich asteroids like Bennu contain biologically important organic molecules that were widespread throughout the early Solar System. Bennu's parent body could qualify as a habitable world, like Ceres or Enceladus, having cool or mild temperatures ($T < 55^{\circ}\text{C}$), containing salty evaporite minerals, and with an Alkaline pH of around 8.2. The parent body likely had wet clay, high soluble carbon, nitrogen, phosphorous, and sulfur, and organic molecules essential for life as we know it. However, no evidence has yet been found of more complex molecules in Bennu such as DNA/RNA nucleic or peptides/proteins used by life on Earth. He ended with the question:

What conditions did the early Earth have to form life that Bennu's parent body didn't?

Here is an excellent film to watch from The PBS NOVA film Asteroids: Spark of Life?
<https://youtu.be/nMmumloSMpM>

Advocacy

We are pleased to report that Congress introduced, passed, and sent to the President a budget bill that rejected almost all the cuts proposed by the Office of Management & Budget (OMB) for NASA's 2026 fiscal year. The President has signed the bill. The bill provides NASA with a budget of \$24.44 billion, around 1.7% below the currently enacted funding levels. For NASA Science, the budget only trims 1% off the topline, bringing it to \$7.25 billion. Accounting for the additional \$10 billion allocated to NASA over the next six years by the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," the resulting NASA budget for FY 2026 is the largest in nearly three decades.

For Goddard, there is good funding for DAVINCI (\$99M), Dragonfly (\$500M), Hubble (\$98M), JWST (\$208M), LISA (\$80M), Roman (\$300M), Habitable Worlds Observatory (\$150M), Landsat

Next (\$110M), and Geospace Dynamics Constellation (\$100M). STEM was also put back in the budget at \$143M. We are not aware of any projects or programs that were cancelled except for Mars Sample Return.

A big thanks to all the GRAA members who stood up to be an advocate. Please call or send a note to your Congressional representatives to thank them for supporting NASA.

<https://www.planetary.org/articles/advocacy-success-fy2026-nasa-budget>

ACTIVITIES FOR MEMBERS:

Volunteering Opportunities:

The Goddard Visitors Center has a need for someone to cover the Front Desk of the Visitor Center on Friday mornings from 10am to 1pm. They would greet visitors as they arrive, answer the phone, and hand out and then check scavenger hunts. Please contact Amanda Harvey at 301-286-9041 or amanda.c.harvey@nasa.gov.

Help Wanted

Todd King recently retired from Goddard and is now working at Quantum Space as a Senior Project Manager for their Ranger Prime program. He is a member of GRAA. Todd contacted GRAA to ask if we know of experienced machinists and spacecraft systems engineers in our community who may have interest to work part-time or full-time at Quantum. If you have interest or know of someone who may have an interest, contact Todd at 443-690-9137.

Marin Cogan, an independent journalist, is working on a story about how the generation of people who grew up watching the Apollo Missions, and were inspired to work for NASA, feel about the significance of this moment, as NASA prepares to send human's back to the moon's orbit for the first time in more than 50 years. If you would like to share your thoughts with her, she can be reached at marin@marincogan.com.

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.

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.

REMEMBERING OUR FORMER COLLEAGUES:

Jordan B. Camp, 69, of Washington, DC died on December 29, 2025. He was born on June 11, 1956. He was a Ph.D. nuclear physicist at the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) in New Mexico. He left LANL for the California Institute of Technology as an astrophysicist where he became involved in the Laser Interferometric Gravitational-Wave Observatory, AKA LIGO, which detected the theoretically predicted existence of gravity waves (confirming Albert Einstein's 1916 General Theory of Relativity). Following Cal Tech, he joined Goddard in 2003 working in the Gravitational Astrophysics Laboratory..

Kevin K. Carmack, 65, died on January 1, 2026. He was born on January 12, 1960, Kevin began his professional career at RCA in West Windsor, NJ, and Orbital Sciences Corporation before spending his final 21 years at NASA as a Project Manager. Throughout his career, he contributed to numerous significant programs, including the Hubble repair missions, the ISS Express Logistics Carrier (ELC), the JPSS Free Flyer program, and the Laser Communication Relay Demonstration (LCRD) Project.

Anthony “Tony” Francis Dulieu Durham, 92, died on September 17, 2025. Tony was born August 17, 1932, in Ealing, England. Tony is survived by his wife of seventy years, Cynthia. Tony had a long career at NASA and later at NOAA. At NASA, he received several honors and awards. He was responsible for overseeing the construction of the radio telescope in Santiago, Chile. He was eventually joined by his wife, and they both managed to escape the country just before the coup of Salvador Allende. In addition to Santiago, Chile, Tony spent time in Puerto Rico working on the Arecibo Observatory. Tony earned his M.B.A. at George Washington University while working for NASA and taught himself to speak Russian during the Space Race.

Ronald R. Felice, 85, died on December 28, 2025. Ron was born June 30, 1940, in Philadelphia, PA. Ron came to work at Goddard as an electrical engineer from Villanova in 1963. He was a licensed amateur radio operator who was able to hit the ground running in the Tracking and Data Directorate. He had assignments at ground network stations in Alaska, Rosman, and Quito, and served as Assistant Station Director in Madagascar. He later transferred to the Flight Projects Directorate where he served as Mission Operations Manager for AEM, GRO, and briefly for HST. Ron retired from NASA in 1995 and accepted a position with Northrup-Gruman as the leader of the flight operations team for the AXAF observatory. He retired fully in 2003, and moved to Fort Myers, Florida where he met his current wife, Lynn Felice and they continued to reside there until his passing. Ron is remembered by his many NASA colleagues as always being a cheerful and enthusiastic person to work with.

James R. Greaves, 87, died on January 17, 2026. Jim was born in Pittsburgh, on November 16, 1938. He worked at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute in Massachusetts and for Allied Research in Concord, MA on research projects dealing with oceanography and meteorology, before coming to Goddard in 1971. He served as Program Manager of the weather satellites and as Associate Director of Flight Systems at Goddard. In 1988, he traveled to Antarctica as a team member to work on a project sponsored by the National Science Foundation. Jim retired in 2012 having loved every aspect of his career at NASA.

John G. Lesko died on January 11th, 2026, in High Point, NC. After graduating high school, he enlisted in the United States Navy in 1955. After his service in the Navy, he attended the University of Pittsburgh, PA, where he earned an Electrical Engineering degree in 1962. Following graduation, John married his wife of 63 years, Mary Ann, and moved to Maryland where he began his career at Goddard where he worked until 2004. His engineering work involved planning, designing, and building satellite systems for projects such as Nimbus, Earth Resources Technology, the Hubble Space Telescope, and Earth Observation Satellites. He also worked in the Aeronomy and Meteorology Divisions and the Engineering Division. His contributions to these programs helped save lives through weather warnings and search-and-rescue, protected public health by supporting the ozone layer treaty, and contributed to food security through agricultural monitoring. In 1994, John received one of NASA's most prestigious honors, the Silver Snoopy Award, for his role in the historic Hubble repair mission. The Silver Snoopy is unique among NASA awards because it is personally presented by astronauts to recognize individuals who have made exceptional contributions to human spaceflight safety or mission success.

Thomas V. Lee, 97, died on December 29, 2025. Thomas was born August 20, 1928, in Nashville, TN. After serving in the Tennessee National Guard, he served in the Korean War. He enjoyed a long career with NASA, first at headquarters and later at Goddard. He was the Property and Supply Management Branch Head in the 1970's and 1980's. He later worked for Unisys supporting Code 300.

Harvey Needleman, 83, died on January 16, 2026, in Boynton Beach, Florida. Harvey was born June 19, 1942, in New York City, and began working at NASA Wallops in June 1963 as an Aerospace Engineer in June 1963, where his primary position was Head of the NASA Balloon Program Office, Code 820, and retired after 37 years of service in 2010.

Gideon Pete Serbu, 100, passed away on December 27, 2025. He was born in Lorain, Ohio, on August 24, 1925. Pete was a scientist, an inventor, a handyman of all sorts, a Potomac River boatman, and a lover of flight. In World War II, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps and was trained as a bomber navigator. Afterwards, with GI Bill benefits, he earned a degree in physics at Ohio State University. He was recruited by the Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) into Roger Easton's Space Applications Branch, which developed the first satellite tracking system (MINITRACK) and precise time clocks, leading to today's GPS. In 1959, Pete was in the first group of scientists and engineers transferred to form NASA, created in response to the Soviet

Union's launch of Sputnik. He spent 30 years at Goddard, heading the Plasma Physics Section of Robert Bourdeau's Planetary Ionospheres Branch (Code 615), measuring thermal plasma densities in the magnetosphere, using a Langmuir probe on rockets launched from the Wallops Flight Facility. After Science and Applications were split, Pete was absorbed in Art Aikin's Chemosphere Branch.

Richard W. Sewart, 87, died on November 18, 2024, at his home in Columbia, Maryland. He began his professional career as a research scientist in 1967 at the Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York. He transferred to the Upper Atmosphere Branch, Goddard Laboratory for Atmospheric Sciences in 1978. He retired in 2009, after a 42-year career researching and teaching atmospheric physics.