

Saturday January 6, 2018

By Jeff Anderson

HOUSTON, we've had a problem!

The Apollo Space Program is one of the United States Government's greatest achievements. First conceived during the Eisenhower Presidency, Apollo was later dedicated to President John F. Kennedy's national goal of "landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to the Earth" by the end of the 1960s, which he proposed to Congress in 1961.

Dynamic Learning is privileged to host a presentation Friday, January 19th led by three significant contributors to this great American Human Spaceflight Story. Astronaut Jack Lousma, a member of the "Original 19" Apollo astronauts, a space walker and Skylab pilot. Gerry Griffin who served as Mission Control Flight Director for all the Apollo manned missions and later served as Director of the Johnson Space Center in Houston. Tom Moser who served as Chief Engineer at the Johnson Space Center, and Director of the Space Station and Space Shuttle Program "from Sketch Pad to Launch a Pad".

All three were together at the Johnson Space Center as the Apollo 13 mission unfolded. Their story was dramatized in the box office hit "Apollo 13" starring Tom Hanks, when the lunar landing was canceled as a result of the oxygen tank explosion and played key roles in the safe return of the astronauts.



The drama of Apollo 13 began with a radio message. "Houston, we've had a problem here" announced by Astronaut Jim Lovell 240,000 miles away in a US spacecraft circling the moon. NASA, believing that astronauts were best able to understand situations in

the spacecraft and pass information in the clearest way, had positioned fellow Astronaut and Dynamic Learning Instructor Jack Lousma

as the capsule communicator back at Mission Control Center in Houston.

Apollo 13 was planned to be the third lunar landing. Yet two days into a space flight which actually traveled the farthest distance ever traveled by man from the earth, the astronauts were forced to abort their lunar landing and begin a harrowing journey home. All because an oxygen tank exploded crippling the Service Module upon which the Command Module depended.

"Failure was not an option!" is NASA folklore jargon popularized by "Apollo 13" the movie describing how the spacecraft crew worked tirelessly with the crew on the ground including our three presenting space pioneers. Despite



Gerry Griffin and Mission Control Celebrating safe return of Apollo 13

great hardships they worked together through the challenges of primitive technology, limited power, loss of cabin heat, shortage of potable water, and the critical needs of makeshift repairs to the carbon dioxide

removal system and ultimately returned the crew safely to Earth six days after launch.

Now, 47 years after Apollo 13, we have the opportunity to share real life insights with these three pioneers in America's journey into Human Spaceflight. Sharing experiences gained from their unique perspectives as an Astronaut, Mission Flight Director and Engineer, each played important roles in the early success of America's manned space program. These men, all residents of Kerr County, will share decades of experiences from their involvement in the Mercury, Gemini, Apollo, Skylab, Space Shuttle and Space Station missions.

If you were old enough to watch the news and stay up late, you remember exactly where you were and probably who you watched tv with when Apollo 11 piloted by Neil Armstrong landed on the moon. In perhaps the greatest live televised national achievement of the twentieth century, nearly every home in the United States was awake to witness the first manned Spaceflight landing on the moon. In less than a decade, the US successfully responded to President Kennedy's pledge to win the cold war in space and be the first Nation to land a man on the moon. In retrospect, the Manned Spaceflight Program was politically easy but a gargantuan technological challenge.

Actually it looked easy when viewed from our TV's, yet it created breathless tension 240,000 miles back home at Mission Control in Houston. One cause of this pressure was what Neil Armstrong saw as he peered out his tiny window from inside the spidery lunar lander, a fragile cocoon with walls about as thick as construction paper. "The Apollo 11 commander finally had a clear view of where the on-board computer had directed him to land. Armstrong did not like what he saw, a giant crater with boulders strewn all around. A *death trap*. To make matters worse, *Eagle* had limited fuel reserves. If Armstrong couldn't find a safe landing site soon, he would have to ditch the bottom half of the lander and burn for lunar orbit in a dangerous and risky abort procedure. Otherwise, he and Buzz Aldrin would not only become the first humans to land on the Moon, they'd become the first humans to die there, too."

No one watched this drama unfolding 240,000 miles away more avidly than a group of flight controllers in Mission Control. "What I remember most is the tension," said astronaut Charlie Duke designated to talk to the spacecraft from Houston. "We were literally holding our breath." Tom Moser was breathing deeply as well. Moser was concerned about a top secret project he was tasked to make feasible. His mission given by Congress to NASA was to make possible the placement of an American Flag on the lunar surface. Even though no nation was permitted by U.N. policies to plant their flag on the moon. Tom had designed and positioned a specially made American Flag on the stairwell of the landing module to be readily available to the Apollo

Commander. Congressional leadership had requested the flag to create a photo-op display to the world of American Space superiority. Tom held his breath anxiously as he watched this aspect of the mission unfold on live TV.

NASA pioneers Chief Engineer Tom Moser, Flight Director Gerry Griffin and Astronaut Jack Lousma are reuniting January 19th in Kerrville to share their insightful stories of how our nation overcame many technical hurdles to send men to the moon and returned them safely to earth in the 60's and early 70's. "Not because it was easy (technically) but because it was hard," says Moser. Together these NASA pioneers will share insights of how Human Spaceflight missions were accomplished and look into the future to where America might go.



Kerr County Commissioner Moser summarizes it this way "Today, we can send humans to the moon because it is easy (technically) but it is now difficult politically. Yet there is a desire for humans to explore space and we now have many more capabilities with which to do it. Shall

the journey be continued is the question that our NASA pioneers will address?"



Tom Moser's secret US Flag Mission

DYNAMIC LEARNING UPCOMING COURSE
QUESTION OF THE WEEK:

What was the name of the first human spacecraft to land on the moon?

- 1 Orion**
- 2 Eagle**
- 3 Snoopy**
- 4 Freedom**

Call (830) 792-4044 or e-mail clubed@dietertcenter.org if you know the correct answer by Tuesday January 16th. All correct answers will be included in a drawing for two free passes for a January or February DLI course offering of your choice to be drawn at the DLI Kickoff Program Friday January 19th.

To Register for Human Spaceflight (seating is limited and reservations are rapidly filling-up) call 830-792-4044. Discover fun, interactive and stimulating new learning experiences all presented by experts with a lifetime of skills to share with you.

We hope you will register for Dynamic Learning and request that you please introduce yourself to one of our founding board members (we will wear name tags) so we can get to know you. One of the DLI goals is to develop a learning environment where we can share life experiences with one another and each come away richer as a result.

Look for next weeks column which will feature two upcoming programs “*Thriving through Seasons of Grief or Change*” taught by columnist Kathleen Maxwell-Rambie. Plus “*Cyber Security - Be Safe and Secure Online*” taught by Colonel Tom Dean a retired Director of Air Force Cyber Command.

May we never stop learning and growing!

DLI Chairman Jeff Anderson is the servant pastor of SERV Kerrville, a nonprofit collaborating with community partners to empower lifelong learning.

INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHIES:

Jack Lousma: NASA Astronaut that “flew” onboard the Skylab (Space Station) for 59 days in 1973. Space Shuttle Commander of the third flight in 1982. U.S. Marine pilot that has flown and logged 7,000 hours of flight time.

Gerry Griffin: NASA Mission Control Flight Director on all nine Apollo missions to the moon. Director of the NASA Johnson Space Center. U.S. Air Force Captain and pilot with over 800 hours of military flight time. President and CEO of the Houston Chamber of Commerce.

Tom Moser: Chief Engineer at the NASA Johnson Space Center. Program Director of the Space Station. Senior Manager in the Space Shuttle Program from “Sketch Pad to Launch Pad.