

ISS: Learning for the future

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The Apollo yesteryears are gone, and the “Yuri” generation of space enthusiasts (those born post 1961) seems a bit restless and dismayed. Yet, as people working on the International Space Station know, these are revolutionary times. We are learning so much. The challenges, accomplishments and sense of internal achievement is every bit as exciting as “the good ol’ days.”

There is a real story besides what’s in the news. It’s about men and women reaching for technical achievement, struggling through management challenges and learning from each other while working through these issues each day.

The future is now and it is exciting! We’ve flown 23 missions in the last 22 months – from the July 2000 Service Module launch to Soyuz 4 in April 2002. The Station is in control and flying marvelously in orbit. The success is unprecedented. While the ISS has its daily problems, each one of them is being resolved.

As the world gets a growing glimpse of the new object darting across the night skies, the ISS Station Team wakes up in Houston, Huntsville, Cape Canaveral, California, Moscow, Montreal, Paris, Noordwijk, Tskuba, Tokoyo, Baikonur, etc., ready to face another day filled with new opportunities and challenges.

On top of that, some new requirements usually are levied on their workday. Perhaps those requirements are due to the expected or unexpected technical, operational and safety issues that arise from a one-of-a-kind engineering and integration program operating 240 miles above the Earth. Or, they might be due to any number of international, management and, increasingly, business and financial issues that pour out of the ISS “job jars” on a regular basis.

I am often asked, “Why do we have a Space Station? In fact, why are we still spending billions of dollars on NASA and its programs?”

For me the answer is simple: It is because few other enterprises funded by the American taxpayer have delivered such extraordinary benefits, while enabling leadership among nations and peoples of the world.

We also have a quintessential urge to explore – to penetrate the unknown, to find out what’s on the other side of the mountain. Our motives are as diverse as our backgrounds, but we are bound by this common desire.

No single purpose, person or nation created the architecture and partnership for the ISS. It represents an evolutionary step for the human spaceflight experience in four areas:

- ❖ Scientific potential enhancement
- ❖ Engineering integration
- ❖ Business and cultural management
- ❖ Operational philosophy

We’ve now set our sights to become as excellent in the management, business and finance of human spaceflight as we are in its technical and operational execution. We have a “no-kidding” credibility gap that needs to be restored concerning ISS budget and management. This restoration will be accomplished by achieving the U.S. Core Complete phase through the flight of Node 2 in February 2004 – on budget and on time. We will succeed in building multiple pathways for future human space exploration with each step we make “up the mountain.”

The ISS program does the following for leadership in spaceflight:

We provide the spacecraft

We have an unprecedented operating international research lab – fully staffed – that is growing in science, exploration and engineering capabilities.

We provide people

Our people are the most important resource of all. They, by virtue of their involvement in building the ISS, have had to face, learn and move through issues each day on every end of the human spaceflight spectrum!

We have a strong tradition and core values

Our work is founded on the tears, sweat and soul of many who came before us, and many that will yet come. Our commitment to safety, technical excellence, integrity and trust, which goes hand-in-hand with respect for one another, is the engine and glue that gives us power, keeps us together and moves us forward.

We have developed a respect that emerges from diverse motivations but is united in common purpose. It’s a respect that at times has been forced but mostly flows from a spirit of cooperation. The best attribute of our tough and fragile partnership is our ability to endure as we continue to learn. We recognize our diversity as our strength and our commitment to core values as the propulsive force. These ingredients are the basis of our learning organization and our ability to thrive in the future.

So what can we all do to support this?

- ❖ Maintain safety first and foremost.
- ❖ Continue to execute the program in the same outstanding manner.
- ❖ Maintain schedules! We are anchoring on the milestone of Node 2 in February 2004.
- ❖ Support the management and cost reduction initiatives with the same vigor and excellence that we have demonstrated in executing the technical aspects of the program.
- ❖ Recognize and support the evolution of the ISS Program to a high performance organization.

NASA offers a future for the explorers of the 21st Century. Our mission is a journey of hope, promise and discovery. I believe this spirit of exploration lives on in a new generation of Americans and youth worldwide. Their generation has enormous reservoirs of knowledge and power at their fingertips.

We owe them more opportunities to discover their talents, to expand and nourish their dreams, and to find their destiny. We can step up and deliver. We have the great privilege to play a part in discovering new worlds, as well as to experience the joy and fulfillment of helping make our own world a better place. That climb is well worthwhile! ❖



Two months and running!

FROM THE DESK OF LT. GEN. JEFFERSON D. HOWELL, JR.

I’ve been here two months now, and I’m still drinking from a fire hose! Every day I learn a lot more, and every day I realize how little I know about this wonderful place. However, one theme consistently comes through in every briefing or meeting I attend and every place I visit: Johnson Space Center is staffed at all levels with exceptionally talented and dedicated people. If we work as a team and everyone gives his or her very best, we will continue to experience the same success that this Center has enjoyed in the past.

Things ARE changing! Our Administrator is bringing in a new team at Headquarters and taking a new approach to our vision and mission. We are changing here, too. Our relationship with the major human spaceflight programs will be more as a partner and supporter than as their “boss.” I am altering some portions of our Center organization to gear it better for our new role and for future activities.

Change in any organization can induce uneasiness and even fear in many of its members. This can lead to wild rumors and forecasts of all sorts of awful outcomes that are distracting and counterproductive. We can’t let this happen at JSC!

Our mission is too important. The lives of our astronauts are too precious for us to allow ourselves to lose our focus on our duties. Keep in mind that we will continue to assemble the International Space Station, as well as conduct scientific research on it. The shuttle will continue to fly in support of it.

We are a vital part of both of these missions and will continue to be so for many years to come. We will also be a vital part of the future human space programs that follow. JSC will remain the “go to” center for these types of endeavors.

You are on a great team that will only get better in the days ahead. Keep the faith! Stay focused!

IT’S GREAT TO BE ALIVE AND IN HOUSTON!!!

Celebrate American Heritage Day!

All JSC civil servants and contractors are invited to celebrate American Heritage Day on June 26. Sponsored by the Equal Opportunity Programs Office, this year’s event will honor the men and women of our military, law enforcement and fire departments.

An exhibit for these heroes will be displayed in the Teague Auditorium lobby June 24-26, with festivities taking place on June 26 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. In addition to the exhibit, the event will include guest speakers and free food.

Come celebrate our shared American Heritage!