

## Onsite Insights



JSC Photo by Steve Candler

Bob Neil sits among the myriad of network servers and connections in JSC's Bldg. 46 that allow workers around the center to communicate with each other and the outside world.

## Networks never rest

Network guru keeps JSC computers talking to each other

By Kelly Humphries

When Bob Neil is navigating the network of roads around the Clear Lake area on his bicycle, he's winding down from his busy job of maintaining JSC's computer networks.

Neil, assistant manager of the Information Technology Office, part of the center's Information Systems Directorate, covers 50 to 100 miles a week with the local Space City Cycling Club, working off work stress with each push of a pedal.

Still, the Kansas City, Mo., native enjoys his job and takes great satisfaction from the improvements JSC has made in its 12,000-node network that he's been helping to steer since 1986. In particular, he likes the technical challenges.

"If you consider where we were five, eight years ago, we had many different organizations building their own networks across the center. It was very hard for people to talk to each other or talk to the outside world. Reliability could be a real problem," Neil says.

"Now, we've combined a lot of those networks into one network that is very reliable, that is very easy to talk to people in other buildings or talk to people at other centers. In

fact sometimes I think people lose track of how far we've come. The network is very intrinsic to people doing their jobs nowadays."

Neil got rid of his training wheels in 1974, a coop from Purdue University with a bachelor's in aeronautical engineering. He became a flight controller, working in the Apollo-Soyuz experiments back room and in the environmental and consumables back room for early shuttle missions. He left JSC for a while to work for contractors in payload integration and spent a year in Europe as simulation supervisor for the D-1 Space-lab mission. The work he's doing now has greatly changed the way work in his old field is done.

"With all the international partners now, we basically have to work with the world," he says. "Doing mission planning, years ago it was primarily an activity that happened here. But now, they're working on methods for (International Space Station) to do planning around the world. The network is a key part of making that happen."

But providing reliable workstations, network sharing, electronic mail, video conferencing and tools for collaborative engineering and planning is tough when budgets keep tightening.

Outdoor recreation provides relief from such stresses. Neil enjoys riding,

skiing and hiking mountain trails. The riding and skiing are social activities (he oversees all of the ski trips for the local Clear Lake Area Ski Club) with physical benefits (a typical ride will take him to Alvin and back or over the Kemah bridge to Morgans Point and back), but hiking gets him away from everything.

"You go out and ride for two or three hours and it will wash a lot of that out of you. Hiking, you can really forget this place. You can go into Yellowstone or Grand Canyon and go hike and this place can seem a million miles away," he says.

Fitness, the kind that keeps legs pumping for 50 miles or more, takes dedication and perseverance, the same stuff that it has taken JSC to build a computer network that remains accessible 99.9 percent of the time.

"Just knowing that day in and day out, the system works well—that, to me, is a real accomplishment," he says. "I think we are providing the tools that people need to do the function of the center, which is put people in space. I can say that partially since I've done the Mission Control part of the job, too. I know a little bit about the different aspects. There are times when I miss that, but I like this, too." □

## Abbey receives Gilruth Award from North Galveston chamber

JSC Director George Abbey received this year's prestigious Robert R. Gilruth Award from the North Galveston County Chamber of Commerce on Thursday.

The award is presented annually to individuals who have distinguished themselves in the management of flight operations, engineering, science and dedication to the advancement of human space flight. Recipients are recognized for their long-term leadership, management and accomplishment within an area of space flight.

Abbey has been JSC director since January 1996, and was deputy director for two years preceding that appointment. He has served as senior

director for civil space policy at the National Space Council, special assistant to the NASA Administrator, deputy for operations for the Synthesis Group,



Abbey

and deputy associate administrator for space flight at NASA Headquarters.

A former Air Force pilot, Abbey joined the Manned Spacecraft Center in 1964, became technical assistant to the Apollo Spacecraft Program manager in 1967, technical assistant to the MSC director in 1969, director of flight operations in 1976 and director of the newly formed Flight Crew Operations Directorate in 1985.

He accepted the Gilruth Award during a luncheon at Landry's Seafood House in Kemah.

## People on the Move

Human Resources reports the following personnel changes as of June 6:

### Key Management Assignments

Cliff McCarra was selected as chief, Resources Control and Reimbursable Branch, Office of the Chief Financial Officer.

### Additions to the Workforce

Nigel Packham joins the Life Support and Thermal Systems Branch in the Engineering Directorate as a senior scientist.

Cheryl Bouillion joins the Cost Accounting, Reporting, and Property Branch in the Office of the Chief Financial Officer as a program analyst.

Damon Shaffer joins the Element Integration Office in the International Space Station Program Office as an aerospace engineer.

Patricia Segura joins the Administration Office at the White Sands Test Facility as a secretary.

Nicole Dickerson joins the Human Resources Development Branch in the Human Resources Office as an employee development specialist.

### Reassignments Between Directorates

Sean Keptra moves from the Safety, Reliability, and Quality Assurance Office to the Space and Life Sciences Directorate.

Ed Burns moves from the Mission Operations Directorate to the Space Operations Management Office.

Tom Costello moves from the Engineering Directorate to the Space Operations Management Office.

### Reassignments Between Centers

Keith Corsi of the Safety, Reliability, and Quality Assurance Office moves to Goddard Space Flight Center.

Mark Pestana of the International Space Station Program Office moves to Dryden Flight Research Center.

### Resignations

Ron Robinson of the Space and Life Sciences Directorate.

Dorothy Henson of the Center Operations Directorate.

### Retirements

Bob Holkan of the Mission Operations Directorate.

## Dates & Data

### June 23

**Grand rounds:** June Space Medicine Grand Rounds will feature Dr. Michael Stanford, chief of Research and Technology Development for the Center for Aerospace Medicine and Physiology at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. Stanford will discuss "Space Environmental Challenges for a Manned Mission to Mars" at 8:30 a.m. June 23 at the Open Gates Telecommunications Center, 2419 Sealy in Galveston. Call x30452 to reserve a space in the van leaving Bldg. 37 at 7 a.m. Call 244-2019 for more information.

### June 24

**Astronomy seminar:** The JSC Astronomy Seminar will meet at noon June 24 in Bldg. 31, Rm. 129. An open discussion meeting is planned. For more information, call Al Jackson at x35037.

**Spaceland Toastmasters meet:** The Spaceland Toastmasters will meet at 7 a.m. June 24 at the House of Prayer Lutheran Church. For more information, call Jeannette Darcy at x45752.

**Communicators meet:** The Clear Lake Communicators will meet at 11:30 a.m. June 24. For information and location, contact Henry Duke at 281-280-4403 or Melissa Sommers at 281-332-0698.

**Spaceteam Toastmasters meet:** The Spaceteam Toastmasters will meet at 11:30 a.m. June 24 at United Space Alliance, 600 Gemini. For details, call Patricia Blackwell at 281-282-4302 or Brian Collins at x35190.

### June 25

**Radio Club meets:** The JSC Amateur Radio Club will meet at 6 p.m. June 25 at the Piccadilly Cafeteria, 2465 Bay Area Blvd. For more information, call Larry Dietrich at x39198.

### July 3

**Independence Day:** Most JSC offices will be closed July 3 in observance of the July 4 Independence Day Holiday.

### July 8

**PSI meets:** The Clear Lake/NASA Chapter of Professional Secretaries

International will meet at 5:30 p.m. July 8. For more information, call Elaine Kemp at x30556.

### July 9

**NCMA meets:** The National Contract Management Association will meet at 11:30 a.m. July 9 at the Clear Lake Golf Club. For more information, call David Moles at 280-4159.

**Warning system test:** The site-wide Employee Warning System will perform its monthly audio test at noon July 9. For more information, call Bob Gaffney at x34249.

**MAES meets:** The Society of Mexican American Engineers and Scientists will meet at 5 p.m. July 9 at Mario's Pizza in Webster. For more information, call George Salazar at x30162.

**SSQ meets:** The Society for Software Quality will meet at 6:45 p.m. July 9 at the Holiday Inn. Registration and social begin at 5:30 p.m. with dinner at 6 p.m. To make a reservation, call Earl Lee at 335-2322 or Herb Babineaux at x34263.

**TSU alumni meet:** The Texas Southern University, Clear Lake/

Galveston Alumni Chapter will meet at 6:30 p.m. July 9 on the TSU campus in Hannah Hall Room 217. For more information call 281-481-0950 or Janell Ellison at 713-731-0949.

**Airplane club meets:** The MSC Radio Control Airplane Club meets at 7 p.m. July 9 at the Clear Lake Park building. For more information, call Bill Langdoc at x35970.

### July 10

**Space Society meets:** The Clear Lake Area chapter of the National Space Society will meet at 6:30 p.m. July 10 at the Radisson Hotel, 9100 Gulf Fwy. In the Deer Park room. For more information, call Murray Clark at 281-367-2227.

**Astronomers meet:** The JSC Astronomical Society will meet at 7:30 p.m. July 10 at the Center for Advanced Space Studies, 3600 Bay Area Blvd. For more information, call Chuck Shaw at x35416.

### July 14

**NPMA meets:** The National Property Management Association will meet at 5 p.m. July 14 at Robinette and Doyle Caterers, 216 Kirby in

Seabrook. Dinner costs \$14. For details call Sina Hawsey at x36582.

**Aero club meets:** The Bay Area Aero Club will meet at 7 p.m. July 14 at the Houston Gulf Airport clubhouse at 2750 FM 1266 in League City. For more information call Larry Hendrickson at x32050.

### July 15

**Scuba club meets:** The Lunarflin scuba club will meet at 7:30 p.m. July 15 at Pot Pie Pizzeria at Westgate Marina. For more information, call Mike Manering at x32618.

### July 16

**Directors meet:** The Space Family Education board of directors will meet at 11:30 a.m. July 16 in Bldg. 45, Rm. 712D. For more information on this open meeting, call Gretchen Thomas at x37664.

### July 30

**Radio Club meets:** The JSC Amateur Radio Club will meet at 6:30 p.m. July 30 at the Piccadilly, 2465 Bay Area Blvd. For additional information, call Larry Dietrich at x39198.