

NASA JOHNSON SPACE CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA SHEET

NAME: Robert F. "Bob" Thompson

ORAL HISTORY: 29 August 2000
11 September 2000
3 October 2000

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND:

B.S. in Aeronautical Engineering, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University,
Blacksburg, Virginia, 1944

MILITARY EXPERIENCE: Line Officer, United States Navy (retired)

PRE-NASA CAREER:

NACA Langley Aeronautical Laboratory/Langley Research Center, Hampton, Virginia
Aeronautical Engineer, Stability Research Division (1947-1948)
Aeronautical Research Engineer, Stability Research Division (1948-1950)
Project Engineer, Stability Research Division (1950-1951)
Aerodynamicist, Stability Research Division (1951-1956)
Stability and Control Research Engineer, Stability Research Division (1956-1959)

NASA CAREER:

Head, Recovery Operations Branch, Operations Division, NASA Space Task Group,
Hampton, Virginia (1959-1962)
Manned Spacecraft Center/Johnson Space Center, Houston, Texas
Assistant Chief, Operational Support, Flight Operations Division (1962-1964)
Chief, Landing and Recovery Division, Flight Operations Directorate (1964-1965/
1965-1966)
Assistant Manager, Apollo Applications Program Office (1966-1967)
Manager, Apollo Applications Program Office / Skylab Program Office (1967-1970)
Manager, Space Shuttle Program Office (1970-1981)
Mission Director, Mission Operations Program, Office of Manned Space Flight, NASA
Headquarters, Washington, DC (1965-1965)

POST-NASA CAREER:

Manager, McDonnell Douglass Space Operations, Houston, Texas

PROFESSIONAL & HONORARY SOCIETIES:

- Fellow, American Astronautical Society (AAS)
- Fellow, American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA)

AWARDS & CITATIONS:

- NASA Medal for Outstanding Leadership, 1966
- NASA Exceptional Service Medal, 1969
- NASA Distinguished Service Medal, 1974
- JSC Special Achievement Award, 1976
- JSC Special Achievement Award, 1979

SELECT PUBLICATIONS:

Clevenson, S. A. and Robert F. Thompson. "Aerodynamics of Oscillating Control Surfaces at Transonic Speeds." Virginia: Langley Aeronautical Laboratory, 1957.

Covington, C., Robert F. Thompson, and S. Z. Rubenstein. "Assembling the Basic Structure: Outlining Space Station Design." Aerospace America 23 (September 1985): 50-52.

Thompson, Robert F. "Lateral-Control Investigation of Flap-Type Controls on a Wing with Quarter-Chord Line Swept Back 35°, Aspect Ratio 4, Taper Ratio 0.6, and NACA 65a006 Airfoil Section - Transonic-Bump Method." NACA RM L9L12a. Virginia: Langley Aeronautical Laboratory, 1950.

Thompson, Robert F. "Investigation of a 42.7° Sweptback Wing Model to Determine the Effects of Trailing-Edge Thickness on the Aileron Hinge-Moment and Flutter Characteristics at Transonic Speeds." NACA RM L50J06. Virginia: Langley Aeronautical Laboratory, 1950.

Thompson, Robert F. "Hinge-Moment, Lift and Pitching-Moment Characteristics of a Flap-Type Control Surface Having Various Hinge-Line Locations on 4-Percent Thick 60° Delta Wing - Transonic Bump Method." NACA RM L54B08. Virginia: Langley Aeronautical Laboratory, 1954.

Thompson, Robert F., Raymond D. Volger, and William C. Mosely, Jr. "Wind-Tunnel Investigation of Subsonic Longitudinal Aerodynamic Characteristics of a Tilttable-Wing Vertical-Take-Off-and-Landing Supersonic Bomber Configuration Including Turbojet Power Effects." NACA CC-L-114. Virginia: Langley Research Center, 1959.

Thompson, Robert F., William C. Hays, Jr., and Donald C. Cheatham. "Mercury Recovery Operations." In NASA-Industry Apollo Technical Conference in Washington, DC, July 18-20, 1961, by NASA Space Task Group. Virginia: NASA Space Task Group, 1961.

Thompson, Robert F. and Donald C. Cheatham. "Considerations for Spacecraft Recovery from Lunar Missions." Aerospace Engineering (January 1962).

- Thompson, Robert F. and Enoch M. Jones. "Recovery Operations." Results of the First US Manned Orbital Space Flight. Houston: NASA Manned Spacecraft Center, 1962.
- Thompson, Robert F., Donald E. Stullken, and Peter J. Armitage. "Gemini Postlanding System Tests and Recovery Operations." In Gemini Mid-Program Conference Including Experiment Results. Houston: NASA Manned Spacecraft Center, 1963.
- Thompson, Robert F. "Landing and Recovery Operations." In Manned Spacecraft: Engineering, Design and Operations, ed. Paul E. Purser, Maxime A. Faget, and Norman F. Smith, ch. 45. New York: Fairchild Publications, Inc., 1964.
- Thompson, Robert F. "The Space Shuttle Program and its Technology." In International Congress of Space Benefits: Proceedings of the 19th Annual Meeting in Dallas, Texas, June 19-20, 1973, by NASA Johnson Space Center. Houston: NASA Johnson Space Center, 1973.
- Thompson, Robert F. "The Space Shuttle - A Future Space Transportation System." In American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics: Life Sciences and Systems Conference in Arlington, Texas, November 6-8, 1974, by NASA Johnson Space Center. Houston: NASA Johnson Space Center, 1974.
- Thompson, Robert F. "Space Shuttle System Progress Report." In International Astronautical Federation: 26th International Astronautical Congress in Lisbon, Portugal, September 21-27, 1975, by NASA Johnson Space Center. Houston: NASA Johnson Space Center, 1975.
- Thompson, Robert F. "Space Shuttle Program Progress Report." In American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics: 13th Annual Meeting and Technical Display Incorporating the Forum on the Future of Air Transportation in Washington, DC, January 10-13, 1977, by NASA Johnson Space Center. Houston: NASA Johnson Space Center, 1977.
- Thompson, Robert F. "Space Shuttle Program Progress Report." In 14th Space Congress: Proceedings in Cocoa Beach, Florida, April 27-29, 1977, by NASA Johnson Space Center. Houston: NASA Johnson Space Center, 1977.
- Thompson, Robert F. "Space Shuttle System Capability." In American Astronautical Society 26th Annual Conference: Proceedings, Space Shuttle: Dawn of and Era in Los Angeles, California, October 28-November 1, 1979, by NASA Johnson Space Center. Houston: NASA Johnson Space Center, 1979.
- Thompson, Robert F. "Space Shuttle Progress Report." In 18th Space Congress: Proceedings, The Year of the Shuttle in Cocoa Beach, Florida, April 29-May 1, 1981, by NASA Johnson Space Center. Houston: NASA Johnson Space Center, 1981.

Thompson, Robert F. "The Space Shuttle – Some Key Program Decisions." In American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics: 22nd Aerospace Sciences Meeting, 1984 Von Karman Lecture in Reno, Nevada, January 9-12, 1984, by McDonnell Douglas Technical Services Co. Houston: McDonnell Douglas Technical Services Co., 1984.

BIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

AIAA 1976 Fellow Nomination Form (13 April 1976), Robert F. Thompson Key Personnel File, Awards Office, Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX.

Biographical Sketch (1970), Robert F. Thompson Key Personnel File, Awards Office, Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX.

Elmer A. Sperry Award Nomination (21 April 1982), Key Personnel File, Awards Office, Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX.

Historical Profile Project Nomination (6 June 1984), Robert F. Thompson Key Personnel File, Awards Office, Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX.

"Johnson Space Center" Experience and Outstanding Qualities (11 January 1974), Robert F. Thompson Key Personnel File, Awards Office, Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX.

Manned Spacecraft Center Announcement No. 65-104 (27 July 1965), History Collection, Scientific and Technical Information Center, Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX.

Manned Spacecraft Center Announcement No. 66-92 (6 July 1966), Office of the Director File, Skylab Series, History Collection, Scientific and Technical Information Center, Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX.

NASA Biographical Data Sheet (January 1972), Robert F. Thompson Key Personnel File, Awards Office, Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX.

NASA Biographical Data Sheet (post-1978), Robert F. Thompson Biographical File, History Collection, Scientific and Technical Information Center, Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX.

NASA Biographical Data Sheet for Robert F. Thompson (post-1978), Public Affairs Office, Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX.

NASA Senior Executive Service Performance Appraisal Form (1 April 1980), Robert F. Thompson Key Personnel File, Awards Office, Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX.

NASA Senior Executive Service Performance Appraisal System (15 April 1980), Robert F. Thompson Key Personnel File, Awards Office, Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX.

NASA Senior Executive Service Position (1 January 1980), Robert F. Thompson Key Personnel File, Awards Office, Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX.

Nomination for Distinguished Executive (1981), Robert F. Thompson Key Personnel File, Awards Office, Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX.

Nomination Justification Statement for the Rank of Distinguished Executive (24 March 1981), Robert F. Thompson Key Personnel File, Awards Office, Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX.

“Robert F. Thompson: Manager, Apollo Applications Program Office” (post-1969), Robert F. Thompson Key Personnel File, Awards Office, Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX.

“Robert F. Thompson: Space Shuttle Program Manager Leaves JSC,” Space News Roundup 20, no. 11 (5 June 1981): 1. [History Collection, Scientific and Technical Information Center, Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX].

Special Achievement Award Nomination Form (1 May 1981), Robert F. Thompson Key Personnel File, Awards Office, Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX.

“Thompson Chief of Space Shuttle Program Office,” Space News Roundup 9, no. 9 (27 February 1970): 1. [History Collection, Scientific and Technical Information Center, Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX].

“Thompson Moves Up to Head AAP Office,” Space News Roundup 7, no. 5 (22 December 1967): 1. [History Collection, Scientific and Technical Information Center, Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, Houston, TX].

Who's Who in Space: 1966-67, 1st ed. (Washington, DC: Space Publications Inc., 1965), 280.

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