

# NASA JOHNSON SPACE CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

## ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

PAUL P. HANEY  
INTERVIEWED BY SANDRA JOHNSON  
HIGH ROLLS, NEW MEXICO – 20 JANUARY 2003

JOHNSON: Today is January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2003. This oral history with Paul Haney is being conducted in High Rolls, New Mexico, for the NASA Johnson Space Center Oral History Project. The interviewer is Sandra Johnson, assisted by Rebecca Wright and Jennifer Ross-Nazzal.

I want to thank you again for agreeing to talk with us today, and I'd like to ask you first about when you first started working for NASA in 1958, how that came about.

HANEY: I worked for the *Washington Evening Star* [Washington, DC]. I'd been there about ... five years, and for some reason had gotten into a couple of space ... odysseys. In 1957, the Russians put up a satellite that absolutely startled the world, and it was one of the few times that I can recall in the five years I was at the *Star* that they went out and did a man-on-the-street kind of thing. The *Star*, they used to call it "the gray old lady of 11<sup>th</sup> Street," 11<sup>th</sup> and Pennsylvania. We were the only paper in the world that didn't have to leave the office to cover a ... presidential motorcade, because it came by us.

One of the major reporters there was a guy named Bill Hines, who covered the White House.... He wrote very well. And the people running NASA had approached Bill, and said they were about to start this here now space agency, and could he suggest somebody that might come over and help them out in the public information arena. He said he wasn't interested; all these little federal bureaus came and went. But he said he knew a guy named Haney who seemed to—I'd picked up on a couple of space things and put that one edition out, the man-on-the-street thing.

The *Star* had the first newspaper strike in 150 years in Washington on that Thanksgiving

weekend, and when I had gone over even before Thanksgiving, I began to wonder how long the strike might last. It only lasted one weekend. But I was afraid that I wouldn't find anybody to resign to at the *Star*.

I was definitely interested. I thought it was going to be a huge endeavor, and I got over there another couple of days in roughly that period, around Thanksgiving, because [Dr. T.] Keith Glennan, who was the first Administrator, made a speech on Wright [Brothers] Day [December 17], which used to be December 3, and it was in that speech that he, for the first time, pronounced the word *astronaut* and identified it, invented it. And I went over the speech a little bit. He'd already figured out the word *astronaut*. I wouldn't take any credit there, but put together a little background, little context that seemed to work out.

There again, he was following—the Russians had been [talking about] their cosmonauts. They were the first to come along with that. So NASA had to decide whether it was going to follow or come up with something different, and they decided to come up with something different. And I went to work during Christmas week of 1958....

JOHNSON: What were your duties there when you first started?

HANEY: Try to figure out what a public information officer should do. They had three or four people in the Information Office, and in situations like that, there wasn't a hell of a lot going on. So I sat around and tried to think of what a—really, Mercury was the only project we had. We had been assigned a couple of things. NASA, I like to point out to people, was sort of put together at a federal yard sale on a Saturday, much like Homeland Security. I just really can feel for those people, because they don't know what the hell they've got or how to account for it, where it is or how it functions, and that's exactly where NASA was.

The [President Dwight D.] Eisenhower administration knew they had to do something, but they weren't terribly sure of what, and General Eisenhower, the President, he was not a

hands-on kind of guy. He was a wonderful old man who won World War II for us, and even Democrats like me voted for him, the only time I ever did, in 1952.

But you could tell they were going to have one hell of a rough road, and they did, because they'd been assigned pieces of the Army, pieces of the Air Force, and all the individual services, particularly the Air Force and the Army, and to a lesser degree the Navy, which is very heavily involved there in Washington. It's a naval laboratory. They couldn't quite figure from just these jottings that took place at meetings when all this was supposed to happen.

And then there were some very sparkling personalities, like a kid from Germany named Wernher von Braun, who had a tremendous gift for self-expression, and he managed to thumb his nose at Adolph Hitler successfully for a few years, and he constantly had Hitler hoping that next month he'd be a good boy and end the war in Europe. He didn't. But he certainly impressed a lot of the U.S. Army that brought Wernher and 200 of his helpers over here to White Sands, and cornered them there, and they'd go back and forth along the same route that you came up today from El Paso [Texas]. They had sort of a private gate. They'd go in and get to spend their weekends in El Paso and live down there, then go over to Juarez and play and eat burritos.

But I remember the situations like Huntsville [Alabama], which was a major Army—it had been a Redstone Arsenal, what it was called, and it was set up in World War I: The Army wasn't eager to get rid of landscape like this, but all Keith Glennan knew was that that was on his assigned list, that that piece of property and three or four thousand people assigned there were supposed to go to work for NASA at some unspecified date. And he called up the guy running Redstone Arsenal one day and asked him when they were going to commit. [Glennan] said ... [he was suddenly caught up in a meat] grinder, he was going through the grinder. He said he resolved never to ask again when those people [(Huntsville)] were going to come aboard. They were going to have to come on bended knee to him, and they did. It took a year and a half.

But this was supposedly a marriage arranged in downtown Washington, but, boy, those

are tough marriages. There have been others. I don't think there'll ever be one as difficult as the one ongoing [(Homeland Security)], because that thing, hell, that's bigger than the whole government has ever been. And I pity poor Tom [Thomas J.] Ridge[Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security], who used to be the Mayor of Erie, Pennsylvania. He gets to put this thing together.

JOHNSON: If you would, describe the PAO [Public Affairs Office]office and how it was organized when you first started there.

HANEY: There was a fellow named Walt Bonney, who was a very dedicated aviation ... historian. Walt came from a little town in Massachusetts where he'd worked on a daily newspaper. I can't remember which. There aren't many towns in Massachusetts, and this was sort of halfway between Boston and the middle of Massachusetts. But he had that nice, quiet Massachusetts air. He'd gone to work for NACA [National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics], the predecessor, and I don't know how much you've gotten into that, but that's another kind of little story.

NACA was an offshoot of the Wright brothers' first flight in 1903, so NACA happened in 1915, which is really going. And it didn't have any employees then for four years. The first employee was a guy named John [F.] Victory [NACA executive secretary]. He or his daughter were loosely attached to this first [NASA] Public Information Office. ...One of my first chores was trying to find John Victory three or four places to speak in order to get him to Florida for his annual Florida visit. He liked to spend four or five months [in Florida every year].... The first ... NACA [experts] said that in 1919 when they finally got around—they bought a hangar at Langley Field, Virginia, ... about 160 miles south of [Washington, DC].... [In 1915], the agency [was] funded [at] \$5,000 and [was to] return to the [U.S.] Treasury any monies not spent....

Walt Bonney ran the [information office]. He'd been at NACA for about fourteen years, and he was a dedicated Republican, as was Keith Glennan, the first Administrator, who had served on the AEC [Atomic Energy Commission], which was a hot commission in those days in Washington. Before that, Glennan ran Western Reserve University ... in Cleveland [Ohio] [near my home in Akron]. I didn't go to Western Reserve. I went to the other school that nobody ever heard of called Kent State [University] [Kent, Ohio], which is just a little southeast of Western Reserve.

In addition to Bonney, there was a photographer named Joe Stein, who had worked for [a] Portland, Oregon daily....

The day I went to work, ... two other guys came to work—Harry Kolcum, who worked for a little paper down near Langley in southern Virginia, and he later became the editor of the *Av Week* [*Aviation Week*]....

[The] other [new] guy [was] Dick Mittauer, who had been working for [a] senator from Omaha. Nebraska always elects one senator from the rest of the state and one senator from Omaha, and he worked for the senator from Omaha....

You asked about what we were doing. I don't know. I kept looking around and looking at what was going to happen. That's all a newsperson does, anticipate. So naturally, they were supposed to start testifying, and the budget cycle normally starts about February or March, and nobody really seemed to give a damn much about NASA. They didn't have any flights planned. I don't know, we just kind of sat back, and then along in, I think it was, the first week in April, we introduced seven astronauts, the first seven....

Our offices were in the Dolley Madison House [served as NASA Headquarters from 1958 until October 1961], which is the oldest building on Lafayette Square.... The White House was started in 1800, and ... the Dolley Madison House started [about 1780].... There's an old church ... and then my favorite hotel.... That is a very historic piece of Washington. There's a park [(Lafayette)], and I always liked it.

And I was particularly in love with Dolley Madison—[Mrs. Dolley Payne Madison, wife of President James Madison]. Her downstairs front parlor was my first office, and it got my attention one day. I was sitting there, and a piece of plaster about eighteen inches square let go from eighteen feet above and hit me right on the head. I was talking on the phone to somebody. [Laughter] And had to clear my throat. But the Dolley Madison House went on back about half a block, and there was a theater sort of in the back.

We couldn't think of anywhere else better to introduce these new pilots than that. And that worked out pretty well. Got a lot of news and a lot of coverage. I guess probably the best question was the last, which was asked by [the late] May Craig of the Portland, Maine *Press Herald*, who has now gone on to greater things, to death, but she said, "What was the roughest part of the physical?"

John [H.] Glenn [Jr.] started very seriously to answer. He said, "Think of how many orifices there are in the human body and up which one might probe," and he got about that far into the explanation of the worse part of the physical, and everybody in the audience broke up, and that was the end. And May was a little embarrassed, but I don't even think she mentioned her question in her story. I remember looking it up.

JOHNSON: These astronauts were introduced to the public at that time. Did the PAO help them to deal with this fame that was thrust upon them all of a sudden?

HANEY: ... Glenn, [had] been a hotshot Navy Marine Corps pilot all through World War II. After the war, every time the Navy needed a new aviation appropriation, they would go strap John in whatever the newest fighter was, and he'd run across the country in record time and land somewhere around Washington....

Wally [Walter M.] Schirra [Jr.] was Navy. [His wife was top-drawer Navy]. And [Wally] went to Annapolis, which helps.

Alan [B.] Shepard [Jr.] was a direct descendant of a signer of the Declaration of Independence from New Hampshire. He lived three miles outside of Boston. [Plus Annapolis]. [He was] one of the hottest pilots in the Navy. They all loved to fly.

The day before they were introduced, I was told to ... meet them and try to make them feel at ease. They helped make me feel a lot easier, I know. I told them the kind of questions they'd probably get....

I said, "They're going to ask you about your religion. They'll go right down the line. And you can say 'none' or 'the Great Jehovah,' or whatever, but make sure you [answer]."...

They got through the press conference very well. The funniest part of ... the press conference, which lasted about two hours, [was Glenn] and Alan Shepard.... A question, if asked of one, wasn't totally answered until the other had thrown in his seventy-five cents' worth.... That volleyball game went on quite a while. One of them would kind of finish up, and the other one would say, "And then there's the fact that—." So some of the answers got tremendously long, just like this answer has....

[Harrison H. "Jack"] Schmitt, ... Neil [A.] Armstrong and, I guess, [Eugene A.] Cernan [were] involved ... [a party for the last Apollo in the new aerospace Smithsonian building and] told them about the time ... first Soviet cosmonaut [German [S.] Titov] ... came to Washington, shortly after John [Glenn]'s Mercury flight, in the spring of '62.... We'd been trying to get involved with [the Russians] in several technical meetings in Europe, and they either wouldn't send anybody, so we didn't send if they weren't represented.... [Glenn] and I were assigned to show [Titov] around Washington....

We took off in the car. Everything we showed [Titov], he would use a word that I was to hear often in East Texas, and the word is, "Shee-ut," [Laughter] It's a negative word.... Everything we'd show him—the Washington Monument, 555 feet and 5 inches tall, he'd say, "Shee-ut! We got obelisk in South Moscow 1,500 meters."

I don't give a damn what we showed him. The biggest rolling steel mill in the United

States over near Baltimore. “Shee-ut! We got one in Novorossiysk that makes three times that much steel.”...

I couldn’t resist. The second day we were going down Pennsylvania Avenue, and we had a little time before going up to Capitol Hill, and we stopped at the Archives, 7<sup>th</sup> and Pennsylvania. I took him in and showed him one of the original copies of the Declaration of Independence, and he didn’t say a word. He just looked at it, and he seemed to appreciate it. And we got back in the car, and went on on our [ways].

All through the two days, he kept quizzing ... us about “barbecue.” It was like a word he’d just discovered ... “Bar-bee-cue. Is that the way you say it? Bar-bee-cue.” He’d stand there and look out [a] window. “Bar-bee-cue. Bar-bee-cue.”

... [Glenn] explained it to him: a barbecue [is where] you burn steaks on a grill and usually have somebody over [for dinner]. Barbecue.

The second night we went ... to the Soviet Embassy, and according to ... diplomatic protocol, they were entertaining us. Shepard was in town for some reason. And we were going down the line, and I was about two people behind [Glenn]. Titov puts out his hand and introduces John to the ambassador, and he says to John, “I come your house tonight six o’clock for barbecue.” [Laughter] He knew John lived ... in Arlington across the river.

And John said, “Tonight?” It was then five o’clock.

JOHNSON: Oh, no.

HANEY: We had a quick little meeting. Shepard said he had another engagement and couldn’t stay around. I was the only one who knew where John lived, so I was detailed to stall and keep drinking as long as I could, which was a real challenge. And then we had about four or five Packards full of Russians lined up to go do this barbecue.

... John took off immediately and got all of his Marine Corps neighbors to donate, raid



their freezers and get steaks out and get braziers, and charcoal [going]. That's what they used in the '60s. [A splash of] gas here and there[to get things going].... I knew that I just had to delay as long as I could. So I took [the party] for a huge ride around the Pentagon. I thought they'd appreciate that. [Then I] took them around the second time, and they began to wonder....

As we pulled up in front of [Glenn's] house, one of the braziers, ... too much gas or something in it, ... had sparked off the paint on his carport under the garage.... The paint was on fire.... You didn't need any guides or any help in knowing what was going on. And these Russians piled out, and everybody was [manning] garden hoses and buckets and things like that. The fire was out in about three minutes. [It] really didn't burn much of anything except the steaks. But everybody was, "Wow!" There was even some photographers there from the *Evening Star*. They got a great bunch of pictures.

... [Later] Titov [walked] up to John, and ... says, "Tell me. Every time you have barbecue, you burn down house?" [Laughter] One of the great lines I think I've ever heard. So that's what I told them at the Smithsonian. They appreciated that....

JOHNSON: Yes. You were there. You became a news director of PAO in '60?

HANEY: In '60, a year later. There wasn't anybody else around. I got a promotion. I was the first Director of the News Division, and then anybody we hired was automatically in the News Division. By then, we were starting to get at least some developmental things on various rockets and launching systems. So I just assigned somebody to do the XY rocket, and I was kind of keeping track of Mercury because of the first involvement, and Mercury got a little complicated because the Atlas was going to be the boosting machine for the manned flights, but then they were going to have some more manned flights using a Mercury Redstone for shorter missions.

... There was a lot of other test work that went on down at Wallops Island, which was about 60 miles south of Washington. There was a tremendously difficult relationship to work

out. How are we going to dance with all these people at Langley? And it wasn't just Langley. NACA had about a dozen centers around the country, and I don't know who taught them about security and the importance of security, but they sure had a good teacher, because they didn't—well, as a practical fact of life, the NACA, as an agency, every other year would have an opening, a public opening for one of these centers, so that if you were head on to take care of the public one year, you might have to do one more before you retired. At Langley, that's where literally it all started, and that was a lot of military involvement at first, but that's where the first hangar was for NACA, and where John Victory, who was the first employee, used to go. He started hiring a few people in the twenties.

But essentially, NACA's job was to help the various services, and particularly the Army, and look at the twenties and thirties. [Charles] Lindbergh became a very prominent member of NACA. It was a bunch of good old boys. It was almost like the SEC [Securities and Exchange Commission], I would say, who had really made it in aviation somewhere, and a couple of times a year, they'd go back to Washington and have a big dinner somewhere and give each other a few awards and a lot of applause.

That was at a political and a Washington level, but there was really hard stuff going on with the development of the airplane, which did a lot of developing in the twenties and thirties, and a lot more developing in the forties during World War II. And they got into rockets, assisting JATO, jet-assisted take-off something, which were rockets they put under the wings of all kinds of bombers.

But they developed a tremendous two-tiered system where the people, as they called themselves in the field, liked to decide—they decided pretty much what to do in a technical way at the various centers. And once in a while, they would go back to Washington and maybe tell them what they were doing, and maybe not. But somehow the political force of the group in Washington was respected, and nobody in the field tried to overturn that.

But there were some strange combinations. There was a test pilot, and I cannot

remember his name, who ran Ames, out near San Francisco [California], near the bay, and he was testing a plane somewhere over the Midwest once, and the plane started to break up on him, and he told God, if God would let him land that damn thing or put him down, he would never fly in an airplane again. And God granted him his wish, and he landed in some farmer's field, and he never flew in an airplane again. Here's the director of one of these large centers on the West Coast. They'd have a meeting of all the directors in Washington, and it took him three days to ride the train to get to the meeting, which might last one day. I always found that incredible that he wouldn't assign somebody else. ... [I love] stories like that.

In Cleveland there, which was the nearest thing to home that I knew about, into the early '60s, on the roof of the hangars, it still said "NACA." NASA had been [in business] two to three years. I don't know when they changed that roof. But it was called the Lewis Research Center for many years. Mr. Lewis was some engineer who had done great things, I don't remember what, and he got the center named for him, just like the guy Ames on the West Coast. That center, by the way is now named the Glenn Research Center, and I haven't had a chance to tweet John about that. He's making out. He also has a huge undertaking ... at Ohio State, which he didn't go to either. But it's the Glenn Research Foundation or some such, where he gets a lot of his calls answered, and they do some of his travel.

JOHNSON: While you were at Headquarters, you had something to do with the formation of the Washington news pool? Is that correct?

HANEY: Yes. I thought that particularly in Mercury that some of that stuff, if not in the Mercury flights, later flights, would need a pool, which under Washington terms is a very well-defined thing.... And I wanted to make sure that it was very—and all the proper hands were laid on it and anointed. I went up and started, I guess, on the Senate side of the press gallery, because they had—I think they'd started a news pool for George Washington or somebody a couple of

hundred years earlier, and I knew from history that that's better, that's the place to start. And ran around and got a lot of—and everybody kept saying, “Why do we need a news pool? There are only six or eight hundred still photographers in the world. We could all fit on the deck of a carrier.” But they began to see it might have an advantage, and we could identify that this will be a pool operation where the numbers would be.

It went through, and it was easier getting it through all of the official Washington press stuff than it was through NASA, which as quickly as it started flying stuff, started developing a lot of other things that we'll probably get into if we talk fast.

Where have you got [Frank] Borman hung out?

WRIGHT: I'm sorry?

HANEY: You're going to Las Cruces?

JOHNSON: Yes.

HANEY: You're not going to talk to Frank Borman? He'll be very upset.

WRIGHT: Well, we came to talk to you.

HANEY: That's the way it goes, though. People come here and then they go—I always hear things about Borman. We don't talk much to each other.

JOHNSON: You just hear it from other people.

HANEY: But I hear it from other people or his wife. Did he leave something on—anyhoo.

JOHNSON: In 1963, you had the chance to come to Houston. How did that come about, and what was your position?

HANEY: There was a wonderful old guy named [John A.] “Shorty” Powers who was hired. He was an Air Force guy in the Ballistic Missile Division, BMD, in Los Angeles, and they’d had several launches out there, I think, and maybe at the Cape, particularly distant things, and this is part of that competition that was going on, And the Air Force had gotten into this very early, because nobody told them not to. So they just decided to launch three or four Pioneer shots, and aiming at the Moon. They never managed to hit it, but they went ahead and launched it.

Shorty wound up as one of these typical service assignments. He was a pilot who loved to fly. And he just had a wonderful, deep baritone voice. He was only about five-three. Another good Ohio boy from Toledo. He understood about countdowns and things like that. He’d flown in the Berlin Airlift during World War II, had just gotten into it after the war was over, I guess; had about twenty years in, and the Air Force had sort of wished him on NASA, particularly Walt Bonney, because he’d done something that General [Bernard Schriever] [who] ran BMD didn’t like, and he saw an opening where the Air Force could get some identification in this new thing called NASA....

So Shorty came in briefly in the summer of [1959 at] .... Langley. They lived down there except for John [Glenn], who ... lived in Washington. It was nice having a Washington astronaut. ... Shorty ... had very much of a military kind of approach. He’d never worked any news—he had no feeling for news whatsoever, but he was certainly a talented voice and a talented promoter of aviation. He loved to fly, and he liked people that flew, and that’s really where he wanted to be. I couldn’t have cared less. I liked airplanes because they got me from here to there in a hurry, but, god, don’t ask me to try to land or take one of the things off. That’s not for me.

And in that respect, Shorty and I got along fine. I was working for a newspaper in Charleston, South Carolina, when Shorty died, and I did this on the editorial page of the *Charleston Evening Post*, which turned 200 years old about two weeks ago. There's only one daily in the United States older than the *Charleston Post*, and that's the *New York Post*. It's a year and a half older than the *Charleston Post*. Maybe you knew that. I didn't know that.

But there is Shorty, and that's me at Shorty's going-away party in Houston out on Spanish Drive. What was the name of that street? I'm feeding him a piece of cake.

We reached a point where he had—Shorty had some real problems with alcohol later in his thing. As a matter of fact, he died in a motel in Phoenix with a bottle of scotch in each arm, and somebody—I called out there, and they said he was watching television, and I asked, “What was he watching?” And they didn't know. [Laughs]

But quite a guy and wonderful performer, and you hear his voice on a lot of those Mercury things. In fact, I think that's him doing the countdown on that launch—who was the senator from Arizona? Lyndon [B.] Johnson did a little girl throwing weeds away, and you hear this countdown in the 1964 election, and it's Shorty's voice doing the countdown, and this little girl is taking her flower and throwing it away one petal at a time. That was the commercial that cost [Barry Goldwater] ... the election. He was running pretty good there for a while, but Lyndon just—shoom!—because he said that this guy was going to go to war with half the world. And as soon as they elected Johnson, what the hell did he do but went to war with the other half of the world and kept going to war with them. We were just managing little tiny wars under ... [President Eisenhower] and ... [President John F. Kennedy] ....

The ... second head of NASA, was James E. Webb, who was the youngest director of the Bureau of the Budget ... in the history of the United States when he worked for [President Harry S.] Truman just after [World War II]. [Webb] was from Tallyho, North Carolina. By god, you hadn't lived and felt the enthusiasm and the hot breath of somebody from North Carolina till you met Mr. Webb. He could talk. He'd burn the wall. He could talk so fast and so furious, and

brighter than hell, and he was awfully proud of that fact. He was 36 or 35. He was director of the Office of the Budget. And then [he went] to work for one of the major oil companies. That's how he got the NASA job.

Lyndon just started polling the oil [companies], much like [Vice President Richard B.] Cheney got his job in Houston, ... "Oh, yeah, this fellow Webb, he's from Washington, got a law degree at George Washington University, and he'd be the one."

So he became the second NASA administrator. It was well into February before he got the job, which it sounds like he wasn't there after the election. A lot of those jobs are at least identified in November, or in typical early December. And he didn't get appointed—I think it was middle of February. But he sure as hell understood how Washington worked and where the money came from and how it got spent. And he really moved out and anybody could—I certainly appreciated his abilities, and he must have appreciated mine a little bit, because when I—I don't know, after Mercury, I began to wonder about this damn space stuff.

Kennedy ... decided we were going to go to the Moon.... That was a one-person kind of an announcement. Hell, he just seemed to get that idea, and nobody else had thought of it, and he goes up to a joint session, "I think this country should go to the Moon, and not because it's easy, because it's hard." ...People would say, "Wow!" I mean Democrats, Republicans, everybody. There was only one vote against that offering, and I think it was [Charles] Grassley from Iowa, who was in the House then. They asked him why he voted against it, and he said, well, he didn't think any vote ought to go through unanimously, and it didn't.

Now, in '62, after Mercury was all said and done for, I guess it ended in June of '63, I got, among other things, got one hell of a nice offer from IBM [International Business Machines] to go to work in Washington as the Vice President for Public Relations, and IBM was—boy, they were at the top of their game, and they still are doing pretty well. But they decided to reorganize. They were going to have a Washington kind of division or an electronics aviation, space. Jesus, this thing was made in heaven, and somebody put my name on it.

I was courted, and I went up to New York, and had a dinner with the people and passed the first test. I was all set to go. I didn't have much sympathy or there weren't any tears. We could do without this space stuff. But then it got down to the crunch, and I was supposed—I guess it was sometime in July, and I was to go back to New York that evening and give IBM my final answer. And I was just walking out of the office about five o'clock in Washington to go catch the shuttle to go to a restaurant on the east side of New York, and the phone rang, and it was Webb's secretary. She said, "Paul, Mr. Webb would like to see you the first thing in the morning."

I said, "About what?"

She said, "I'm not sure, but I think it's about that job in Houston." She thought it was, you know. Well, here I am put in the box of do I go ahead and cash in or what.

I decided not to, or I decided to delay it, and I called New York, said I couldn't make it. The next morning, he called me over, and in the typical James E. Webb style, he launched a 182-word sentence that got into the possibility that we might go to war with Vietnam. Hell, no, they hadn't any ideas. This was two years before Lyndon and Vietnam. But he said, "There may be some widespread wars involving the U.S. and Southeast Asia," and in light of that, and in light of—I didn't know what the hell he was talking about, but he was into one of these marathon Webb sentences that ran from here to the South Pole, and sort of at the end of all that, he said, "So for those and other reasons, would you mind going to Houston, take over as Public Affairs?"

And I said, "I thought you'd never ask." So I went to Houston.

JOHNSON: Did you reorganize the office when you got there?

HANEY: Yes, but it was a hell of a lot of fun then, particularly at the end of that period: I had to on a very special occasion. I was working for a wonderful guy named [Dyer] Brainerd Holmes, who was brought in and sort of organized ... Gemini and ... Apollo. He introduced everybody



to computers and showed them how this could—everybody could look at the computer every night and know where everything else was. Among other happenings, I was—he literally, Holmes, stuck his head in my office one day at noon and said, “Could you go to Paris tonight? We’ve got a big thing on in the morning there, and it would require someone of your stature.”

I said, “... I try to make it to Paris at least once a week.” [Laughter] I was kidding, you know

He said, “No, I’m serious.”

I said, “Hell, I don’t even have a passport.”

He says, “We’ll get you a passport.”

“I’ll take that as a yes.”

Caught a plane out of New York about seven o’clock, and literally, the first person that I shook hands with on French soil was [President] Charles de Gaulle, which wasn’t bad for openers, you know....

On the plane going over there, [I worked] all night on [my] French. I’d taken two years in high school and two years in college, and I’d ripped up more paper trying to think of something cavalier to say in French because I was sure he didn’t speak any English. And this was the first introduction of the Apollo Program in Europe, and particularly in France, and the guy who was supposed to do it had one of these huge medical breakdowns or something, had to go into the hospital, appendicitis, I don’t know what. So I don’t know why in the hell they asked me to do it.

But I get over there, and I got into this little run in French as I got out of the car, and literally De Gaulle walked up and stuck his hand out. He was about six [foot]-five, and I’m only six feet. He just towered over. And I started rambling on in this high school French. He put his arm around me, and he said, “Would you be more comfortable in English?” [Laughter] I couldn’t do anything but laugh, and I said, “Thank you, sir. Thank you.” And we got along famously then for the rest of the day. But that was a nice greeting.

JOHNSON: I imagine so.

HANEY: And we were able to run around, and I came back through Ireland, where my father had grown up, western Ireland, and the White House said, "Be sure and mention that the President will be along there soon." So I told everybody I was advancing Kennedy's first visit to Ireland. I wasn't, but it was a nice excuse to go to Ireland.

And I did get to see the house my dad had grown up in, who was still alive back in Ohio. And I looked at his grades in the first and second grade, and they still had the original paperwork in the bottom drawer of this teacher's—the National Irish School, and I just couldn't believe that. I got home, and I called my dad, and I said, "How come you missed two weeks in February of 1896?"

And he said, "How did you know that?"

I said, "I went down to the school and asked."

He says, "My god." He hadn't been back there in forty or fifty years.

Anyhoo, it was some of the splash that was coming up. There was this huge parade in New York after John's flight, and that was in '62, but that was for everybody. All the seven kind of celebrated that as one. And no other group did that quite like they did. They just had a pact that certain things were group undertakings, and that was one. John got the flight, but to them, it could have been anybody else. And that was one hell of a parade. They threw more paper on John Glenn than they did on Lindbergh. And the actual tonnage—and I don't think that's been equaled since. Maybe it has with the Yankees. They've won so many times. So then we got down in Houston.

JOHNSON: I was going to ask you about your open-door policy and how you approached your job in Houston. Did you have to fight for that right to get the information out to the public, or

was that something that was accepted?

HANEY: Oh, “fight” might be a hard—I might use that, but it was difficult because it was an engineering world, and I was not an engineer, and I kept trying to suggest to them, you know, if you wanted a pilot, hire a pilot. But I was in the information business, and here are some of the things we should do. And I did get in touch with the senior people in Houston.

Mrs. [Oveta Culp] Hobby was still alive. She had been President Eisenhower’s—she was the first Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. In fact, I went to that press conference when I worked at the *Star*, and she didn’t remember me. But one of the first places I went was the *Post* in Houston, and, god, she looked like one of the senior ladies out in the desert. I remember she turned around in this cane chair, which was kind of a dramatic movement, one of these South Seas movies, and I said, “Gee, you didn’t look that good at your press conference.” She’d run the WAC, too, during World War II: She said, “Oh, were you there, too?” Then she kind of warmed up a little.

She was one of about a half a dozen people that really made that center happen in Houston. That was one of the most incredible things in the country. That was the last big national construction deal where a town went out seeking [something], and they got it, and they made damn sure they got it. They had Exxon signed up for 2,000 acres out there in the Bay Area, and there were no accidents. And they had the law firms. They had all the title grants. I’ve never seen anything so—I may still have a copy of the original legal document that conveyed that to the government. But they gave it to the government. They didn’t sell it like so many other places in California in selling shipyards and space deals. They wanted that, and they were damn happy to get it and didn’t attempt to run it in any way, but they were sure happy when Webb, who was running Kerr-McGee [phonetic] in Oklahoma, but they all had a Houston kind of directory or that’s where home was, even though something like Kerr-McGee in Oklahoma.

And there was that effort on the local level, and I can't give you a better for-instance than after Gemini IV, which was a big, big Gemini flight, EVA [Extravehicular Activity] and Ed [Edward H.] White [II] and the walk in space, and certainly the biggest—it was bigger than any of the Mercury flights as far as crowds and interest, and it was something that we were trying like hell to beat the Russians in, but we didn't succeed again. They beat us by a few months. They just seemed to keep doing that.

After that flight—it was a four-day flight in early June of '65, and after the flight, we were having a little post-flight party, as we so often did, at the home of one of the pilots. The pilots got home a few days after the flight from the Cape, and invariably about twenty or twenty-five people would be called and show up and hoist a few rounds around dinnertime in honor of the occasion. I remember you could hardly hear it, but somebody was knocking at Ed's back door, and I went over and answered it. It was James [A.] Baker [Secretary of State] and [President] George Bush the First, and they had come to the servants' entrance. And I've kidded Bush about that since. Baker just introduced himself, and he said, "Ed sort of suggested we might want to come around. There was going to be a party tonight."

"Come right on in."

And Ed was one super Republican. In fact, I remember in his *Life* piece, just before that flight, he said something about the blood in his veins felt red, white, and blue. I mean, it was just so patriotic and so Republican. I didn't try to talk those guys out of much of that stuff. I said, "Come on, Ed. This sounds like you're the opening statement at a Republican National Convention."

He said, "No, that's the way I felt." I couldn't talk him out of it.

But that's the way James Baker and George Bush—and hell, Baker's still at Rice [University] [Houston, Texas], they're still running that institute, which is getting larger and larger. It's like one of those outfits. The Cato Institute in Washington is a wholly owned subsidiary of the *Post* and the Hobby family, has been for years. I don't know where this other

thing is going at Rice [University], but they have a large oil interest in that school, and it's getting larger. I see people on CNN explaining what the President of Venezuela is going to do next week in oil. And more and more I've gotten a lot of questions and circulars from them.

Anyway, Houston was all for that there space center, and there was never any question about that.

JOHNSON: You were talking about Gemini IV. That was the first one, of course, from Houston where the mission control and also long duration of the type.

HANEY: Four days, yes.

JOHNSON: Did you do the commentary on that?

HANEY: Oh yes. We did [Gemini III] out of the Cape, and it was kind of like another Mercury flight, because it only lasted three revs [revolutions]. It was typical of Mercury. It was just kind of get it up and get it down, and let's declare a big victory, first down or something.

JOHNSON: How did you learn the commentary?

HANEY: We'd been doing a lot of that in Mercury.

JOHNSON: Had you done any commentary in Mercury?

HANEY: Yes. All the Mercury flights, for the most part, were fairly short. The Mercury flight before the last, Wally Schirra's flight, was nine hours, but, hell, that was like one good shift in a simulation. But then Gordo's [L. Gordon Cooper, Jr.] flight, the last Mercury flight, was thirty-

five hours. So we had to have an overnight shift, and I was the overnight shiftee, and I'd worked all the simulations, kept track of them.

That's what was really interesting, when [Christopher C.] Kraft [Jr.] just took a lot of those people down to the Cape, and they literally lost their names. They became FIDO, and whatever their function was in the control center. And for months at a time down there, and they'd go to dinner and say, "Hey, FIDO, pass the salt," or, "Give me that ketchup." And they lost their name tag, birthday tag identities of their own making.

John [S.] Llewellyn, [Jr.] was one of the ones that made it to the thing in Washington the other night. It was supposed to be an Apollo 17 deal, because it was all vectored to when Apollo 17 geared up and left the Moon on December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1972 or '73, and that was the last of the great Apollo: Hell, I was working for two outfits in Europe. I don't know why I got invited. But some of those old people, going back to Mercury, decided, I guess, that I should be there. Plus, Jack Schmitt was a local boy up in Albuquerque [New Mexico].

That's an interesting story. Jack and the present Democratic senator [Jeff Bingaman] ... not the Republican, but the Democrat—both graduated in the same high school class from little Silver City, New Mexico. Maybe there were twenty-five kids in that class. Both of them became U.S. senators, Schmitt because the Mexican who was in office and had been—I can't remember his name. Somebody in his office got his hand in the cookie jar or something, and they had to throw him out of office, and Schmitt put his hand up, and it's about 1976 or '74, just after [Apollo] 17. Hell, he's about the hottest thing in New Mexico, *the* hottest. He already had a Ph.D. in hard-rock geology. He wrote his thesis on some rill in northern Norway. His dad taught hard-rock geology at Harvard [University], and he had one hell of a time making—he came in as a science kind of pilot, and they sent him over to Phoenix to learn to fly, and, god, that was a terrible undertaking, where it seemed like he would—he didn't mind getting up and taking on all these dirty redneck pilots, and they hated the scientists, particularly the ones like Schmitt and like the other guy who wound up landing on the Moon early, but had a Ph.D.,

[Eugene E. “Buzz”] Aldrin.

... I’ve always been amazed that a little country school system like Silver City could produce two U.S. senators who graduated in the same high school class. I mean, you take all these other huge schools in New York and Harvard and Yale [University], and they produce lots of presidents and other things, but not two from the same class. End of case.

JOHNSON: Let’s talk about some of the press briefings that began in ’64.

HANEY: The general topic. I felt like we owed—that we just shouldn’t go down and fly missions every—and Gemini was easier. We flew ten missions, ten manned missions in nineteen months, and we’ve never come close since, even the Shuttle thirty years later. And we flew every six or seven weeks. There was a certain sense that, “Well, we ought to be doing this, because that’s what we’ll be doing thirty years from now after Apollo. But whatever it is, we should show people that we can do it.”

Then it seemed like you’d get locked into a mission, and every mission had different little simulation effects. But we were very well schooled. Hell, I had fifteen commentators, and every one of them knew the whole damn mission. Some of those things were going 10 and 12 days. Gemini ’76, I think, went fourteen days, part of it. They’d get up there, and Borman—that was the weekend of the Army-Navy game, so they had a sign, “Beat Army,” or Schirra had it. That was their greeting.

I just felt like we should be—because of this, I was trying to build the relationship with Houston, and I managed to eventually, even though I was accused of other things. But I didn’t think we should make all of our news out of the control center, that it should happen on a regular weekly basis, because that, in fact, is how it happened that things would happen industrially on the West Coast or wherever, or out here at White Sands where they are constantly testing the little shape-up kind of systems. God, they fired those [thrusters] for 10 years. I’ve never figured

out what they did, but they sure as hell spent a lot of time on the thrusters, and they needed them on one of the flights, Gemini VIII.

I felt like we should be just handling whatever was the top of the news every week, Tuesday or Friday, I think it was Friday, and it seemed to go over it. The only people that got unhappy with it were various sections in Washington. I don't know whether they were unhappy because we weren't making the information co-equal, a joint release or whatever, but I never liked that, and we had gotten into that in the very early days.

We did some Moon flights out of JPL [Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, California] in the very early days. In fact, one of the first things I worked on was a Moon flight in January of '59 or thereabouts. I talked to some guy in Los Angeles for thirty-six hours on the progress of Pioneer 3, and it was a long telephone conversation, but it kind of introduced me—we were so happy, we only missed the Moon by 20,000 miles. Everybody was cheering. “Wow! Twenty thousand! Damn!” You'd think we'd done a long pass.

But I felt like that there should be a news space. And another, along about that same time, I really started bucking the trend, because, as I told you earlier, NACA had had this history of opening a center, one center every three years to the public, and usually it was just to the employee families. They never made much noise about it, and they'd bring the wife and the kids down and show them where they worked. But I thought that we ought to just have an open house on Sunday and let the people come out and see what the hell—we just put exhibits in Building 1, which was my building, and then the buildings got renumbered. You can tell there was a little politics going on. Somehow [Center Director Robert R.] Gilruth's building became Building 1. That was Building 2 under the original drawings for the center.

But we had some exhibits there anyway, and we added a few more. And one Sunday in June of probably '64, that center opened in April of '64, and I think it was June or July, sometime that summer, I thought I'd just see what it would bring, and my god, there was an amazing traffic tie-up on the Gulf Freeway. The Gulf Freeway has forever been under



construction since day one.

In fact, I've got to tell you, the first time I saw the property, the site of the Manned Spacecraft Center, was from an airplane two days after [Hurricane] Carla in 1961, September of '61. Carla was one of the worst hurricanes that visited that particular area, just kicked the dogshit out of the bay. It came up in the bay like no other hurricane has, and they've gone other places. But it went up in the bay, and that property at ground zero, where the site is, was only sixteen feet above sea level.

After that storm, there was a—I'll never forget it. NASA ran a DC-3 kind of transport service three days a week and would start at the Cape and go up to Langley and drop people off. Or if you worked in Washington, you stayed on another 150 miles. And they did that three times a week. This particular day, we took the shuttle back from the Cape, and we went to Houston, just to say we'd been there. We were about to announce the fact that it was going to be the site, only the damn hurricane came along. That's how Dan Rather got a job in New York. He was working in Galveston, and he almost got pulled off the 45<sup>th</sup> Street exit. There [is] still a lot of film of that.

As we came in over the bay, I said, "Where the hell—where's the center? Where's the center going to be?"

And the guy says, "Well, that shrimp boat where you see, that's going to be kind of the middle." He had a big blueprint.

I said, "You're kidding me." The first thing I thought, it was going to be like an offshore oil platform. I thought, goddamn, how novel to put a space center out in the middle of the Gulf of Mexico. Because that's what it looked like. It was still under water, and this shrimp boat had stuck right where Building 1 became. I wish I had a snapshot of that.

Then we went on back to Washington. That little shuttle thing was a lot of fun. I rode the hell out of it.

Walt [Walter C.] Williams, who was one of the major—he taught Chris Kraft how to be

an operations person. He was born in New Orleans and went to LSU [Louisiana State University], and he loved to drink. I tried to hold him back. But I can remember one time at Langley going into the Officers' Club, and we decided to stock up—we each bought a gallon of martinis, and we sold them on the shuttle between Langley and touchdown, only 150 miles away. It was a forty-five-minute flight. But we got our money back from the other passengers, and nobody had figured that out.

But that was quite a—to see that thing for the first time. We delayed the [press] announcement of the Manned Spacecraft Center because of the ... hurricane. It began to put in question whether we had the ... thing on a platform, but then it went away, and we went ahead and said, "Ah, they don't have these things very often," which is why I finally moved from that area.

In '83, we had three hurricanes in about eight weeks. I was driving out to the coast, and I stopped in East El Paso and bought the house, and didn't even go see it until I came back and became kind of intrigued with desert life, although there were a hell of a lot of sandstorms down there that April and October. We've never had a standstorm up here. But we know—we can see the clouds when they're having them down below.

JOHNSON: In Chris Kraft's book, he made the statement in the book, "Haney understood the need to feed the press," and he talked about the news center and how you got the information to the press.

HANEY: Yes. Chris became a great help, but at first he had some very strange ideas, and he kept deferring to Williams during the Mercury Program. He'd say, "That's all Walt's area. Talk to him." And we wound up with a pretty good arrangement.

Shorty sat next to Walt in the control center, and I sat right behind the glass and had access to everything else, and I was usually talking to a few people in Washington that had

needed to know.

The best thing that happened about the Mercury Program was going into Al Shepard's first flight. We still didn't have a very disciplined—I'd asked for an information program where we'd reach a point where everything would become available at—I guess the first time around was about T minus seventy-two hours, three days before the flight, where everything became real time. And during the mission everything would be reportable on a real-time basis. That was not the case under the various Air Force or Army launches. They held the provision was fire in the tail, and nothing was to be released until that thing lifted off, and then only prescribed statements that had been approved beforehand. And if something did something before—if it turned over and started heading for one of the larger cities in Florida, you'd say it an event of an unexpected nature happened, and it was all prescribed, no matter what it did, and you just looked like a goddamned idiot, particularly with television that would set up outside the Cape and were taking a feed, and nobody could stop them from taking that picture, although the Air Force tried a few times. We just looked ridiculous.

And I had pitched Glennan, and he had passed it around through the senior council. During the first two years when we got down, we launched some Vanguards and some other things where we looked like idiots, and I'd written this thing up to go to a real-time use of all the circuits. I remember I'd lose every time, and Glennan would come back and pat me on the head and say, "They still don't like it much."

And I'd say, "How bad was it?"

He'd said, "Thirteen to one," or twelve to one as senior council.

But when Webb came aboard, we were a hell of a lot closer to—well, it was right on the Shepard flight, I decided to pitch it again in particular, and Webb said, "I don't want it. I'm not interested. See what they say about it at the White House." That had never happened before.

We took it over and gave it to [Press Secretary Pierre] Salinger, and I was down in Florida at the news center. I got a call from the President's office, Mrs. Lincoln. I remember she

never called me again. That was Kennedy's main secretary. And she said, "The President would like a word with you."

I said, "Well, he's allowed."

There I am sitting in the middle of this motel [office], and then he sort of got on. Salinger got on the line and said, "Paul, the President's wondering about that escape rocket on the Mercury. He wondered what the history of it is." You could tell what kind of a gambler he was. And I'd just read something a night or two before, that [the escape system] had worked fifty-six or fifty-seven out of fifty-eight tests, and the little solid rocket that was to pull everything off and get your laundry out of the way free. I had the answer right there, and I could hear Salinger. There was something else going on in the background, and then a little laughter. And then he said, "The President says go ahead. Give it a go. See if it works."

I remember throwing that goddamn telephone up as high as I could, and it hit the ceiling and double-dribbled off. And that was the phone call that put the Public Information Program in business. I never did get anything signed. All the engineers wanted something signed in triplicate and notarized, and I asked Salinger about it later, and he said, "Oh, shit, we don't sign this stuff. You did the right thing." And he said, "He liked the outcome." And I certainly liked the outcome, because that changed forever the Information Program, and it just got better and better as we improved on it. It went through some more bumps.

I don't know what the hell they're doing today, but you can't do any better than real time. Particularly I remember in Gemini VIII, we had one of the first real incidents aboard when we had a problem when the spacecraft started rolling up, because some thrusters got stuck. At first, they thought we'd just docked with another vehicle, and they figured it was the other vehicle, because it hadn't flown before. It was independently launched. And they backed off from the other vehicle, and the damn rotation got worse. It was Neil Armstrong and Dave [R.] Scott. And they had to use most of the juice you'd normally reserve for coming in to get the damn rotation stopped. And it was a real melodrama because we were in the Pacific [Ocean] and you were

going forty minutes without any contact. We noticed it over Africa, and then it was forty minutes to Australia from South Africa. And we got into Australia, and Neil was breathing again. He said, "We finally got it stopped, but we need to come down soon."

And they came down one rev [revolution] after that. I remember Kraft looking over his shoulder, and [saying], "We're going to China." To me.

And I said, "We are?"

They came down about a mile and a half off Kemoy Island. Kemoy and Matsu are Chinese islands. And, boy, the Chinese were just raising hell. And the thought was, "... We'd better land that thing in the right bay or we're in deep trouble," because the Chinese weren't going to be any help at all. They were going to do to those people what the Hawaiians did to Captain Cook. They threw him in the stewpot, if you remember.

Anyway, we didn't go to China, but that was about as close as I've ever been to going to China. We started taking suitcases, clothes, to launches, and had a special DOD [Department of Defense] flight laid on. A team would go to wherever the spacecraft was, and we didn't have to, because it came down, it was a lot easier for the Navy to pick it up, and then they took it to Hong Kong or somewhere, big airport, and sent them home. But it was pretty exciting.

One of the biggest television shows at that time was an ABC show called *Lost in Space*, half an hour, and we were competing with *Lost in Space* during that evening, 8:00 to 8:30 or something like that. And when the *Lost in Space* people put up a bulletin or something, or broke into the program, there were a hell of a lot of calls, particularly in New York, who said they didn't give a damn about this NASA stuff. They wanted the program, and they wanted to know what happened. They got delayed somehow. That showed you how quickly they'd gotten over all the mystery of these launches. And that was damn close.

JOHNSON: I think we're going to stop for just a minute.

[Tape recorder turned off.]

JOHNSON: I was going to ask you about the change-of-shift briefings and how that came about and if you had to coach the flight directors and the center directors and whoever was involved in those, or if that was something that came easy to them, or is that something that you had to—

HANEY: ...If there was a problem in the flight, it was fairly specific to, well, the electric circuits, say.... We had a couple of interesting little run-ins on that, but to get to your question about on a change-of-shift basis, it was something that I worried the hell out of. ...The engineers would get up on the briefing stage and say, “Well, we just don’t know yet. We haven’t analyzed the data.” [That] ... would be a typical engineering cover-your-ass kind of position.

But as we got more and more into it, people like Chris Kraft or the lead flight director, I just got a whole new appreciation for [them]. I began to try to think of happenings that would stymie him, and I usually couldn’t. And even when, a couple of times, when I knew he was running ... thin ... trying to explain something, he was so damn convincing, god, he’d win me over with the first 50 words....

...In Mercury, we didn’t need change of shifts, because one shift was it, except for Gordo’s flight. And we did have a little change-of-shift briefing, had an overnight thing. We said, “Gordo went to sleep.”...

So it was in [Gemini] ... when we got into these ... long, much longer missions, 12, 10, 14 days.... From [a] mechanical standpoint, Kraft really earned his money....

Kraft had the ability to ... bring out the ... very best in people, including me.... I’ve never been a very good golfer, for instance. Kraft has been a superior golfer all his life. And for some damn fool reason, he used to ask me ... to play when we were in Florida or at home or wherever. And invariably, I would [try harder]. I shot the best game of golf in my life playing with Chris, and I gave him all the credit for it.... Apollo was a little hairier because it was

farther from home, and [the heat loads were heavier]....

[Kraft] was a ... bit narrow going into [Mercury].... He was very worried about the frequencies that were used during Project Mercury, and under no circumstances did he want [us], PAO, putting those in the press kit and broadcasting them to the world. He was sure the Russians were going to come out there and sit in trawlers offshore, and somehow jam the frequencies and make it so [we] couldn't communicate.

I suppose if the Russians really were serious about launching [missiles] during the early Kennedy administration from as close as Cuba, that it was a possibility, because they did show up with a trawler every once in a while.... He reserved the right to cut Public Affairs off, to shut down our microphone [and shut down our information access].

I'd say, "That's not within your right. I mean, you're running this thing technically, but you're not running it from a—."

And he'd say, "Yeah? Well, let's just see about that."

And so there was ... unhappiness, but it all kind of came together nicely....

Good things [happened]. We were talking earlier about trying to get the community involved. [In 1964, we asked the senior staff and got approval for] ... a two-hour Sunday [afternoon public opening of the center. A] one shot "Let's see how it works, see if anybody gives a damn."

We created the biggest traffic jam in the history of the Gulf Freeway. That same weekend down in Galveston, they were showing off the USS *Texas* for the first time, they had almost nobody show up for the *Texas*....

... From then on, ... we started opening ... every Sunday afternoon. And then it got to be Saturday and Sunday afternoon. That was when we had all the press stuff was across the street, which was something arranged pretty much by somebody in Washington. I didn't know about it until they'd signed a lease on the GE Building, which was Building 6. It really wasn't all that bad, frankly. We didn't have that good of an accommodation on our side, but we should have

been doing it on our side of the [highway], but what the hell. It was easier to check the press in and do the change-of-shift briefings and everything else, which is what we did during Mercury, during Gemini. And then somewhere along toward the end of Gemini—we were still over there in Apollo.

JOHNSON: When it moved on site in '65?

HANEY: Yes, because I remember coming up on the January 27<sup>th</sup> [(1967)] and the fire. That press conference was held over at Building 6, what we used to call the GE Building. Then we went about eighteen months there without flying anything and Apollo just doing all the tests, and at that time somebody else decided, “Gee, why don’t we do it on our own front lawn? Why do we go across the street?” And it was a discussion I decided not to get into, and I let the other people bang heads. I knew which way I was going by that time.

JOHNSON: Did everything come through PAO, or did any of the other directorates have the ability to release anything to the press?

HANEY: No, ... [it all came through PAO]. There was a lot of pulling and tugging between [Donald K.] Deke Slayton’s [Director of Flight Crew Operations] office and mine, because particularly as we got into Apollo, we developed a plan for each flight where we’d take the crew and we were trying to [involve] the contractors. We did some of this in Gemini, too. I remember the first Gemini flight we did a thing up in Baltimore. The Martin Company was a major contractor on ... Gemini. And we did something out in the Maryland countryside with the crew, [Virgil I.] Gus [Grissom] and John [W.] Young. That sort of set the stage.

We did a thing in San Diego [California] for one of the boosters, where one of the boosters was made. I’ve forgotten whether it was—hell, that might have been Mercury. It was



fairly early. And they had several astronauts out there, and, God, they had 20 or 30,000 workmen out in the yard at noon, ... hardhats and everything. Gus was supposed to make a speech, and he got this long, twenty-minute introduction from a vice president of the company, ... Gus finally stood up and said, "Do good work," and sat back down. [Laughter] The shortest speech in the history of speechifying. But the crew, they just loved it. "Oh! More!" Whistle. Beat on their hardhats. The shortest speech in the history of the space program.

JOHNSON: You had some interest in putting television cameras as early as the Gemini flights.

HANEY: Yes.

JOHNSON: Of course, that didn't happen.

HANEY: Not much luck. I've forgotten which Gemini it was, but we were kidding afterwards, it looked like we took a picture of a black cat in a coal mine, because you couldn't see a damn thing except the little squiggles in the light, and for some reason it wasn't tried again. There was some effort to put a camera on the last Mercury flight.... [It flew but didn't work], so it wound up on one of the early Geminis....

There was one hell of a struggle. You could see it coming years away, and for some reason ... the crew as much as anything, and they were sort of bargaining for other things with the powers-that-be, and they knew what our [(PAO)] position was, and I just held from day one. I said, "You can't tell me you don't want a stationary camera on the Moon that shows that LM [lunar module] lifting off," because there was no backup in the LM system. It just had one fundamental way of igniting and going up. The only system in all of space that had no backup. And if that damn thing didn't ignite or the sparkplug didn't work, you didn't get off the Moon, and there was no other way to [record it].

Just on the basis of that, I said, “You can’t tell me you don’t want a camera that’s stationary and sitting there, just to take that picture and forward ... the signal up to the other spacecraft going around or back to Goldstone” or wherever.

... God, this went on for years. It started about ’64 or ’65, during the Gemini Program. And I can remember we had a big “This is where we are” kind of a deal one day in late ’65 in the auditorium, and we had at least a thousand people had come in from all over the world to get the status on Apollo, which was flying little flights here and there ... [sprinkled] in between Geminis. [We] flew the first mile [to the moon] over here at White Sands, literally the first mile. It was an abort test, and it went up one mile, and it worked, but we had a whole crew that came out. I remember Sigurd [A.] Sjoberg, who has since died, who was very close to Kraft, ran that thing out here, and he did a wonderful job.... We had pretty good press [turnout] on that.

I got to learn a little about New Mexico. First time I came out to New Mexico, I remember ... Salinger had said that President Kennedy was coming ... to New Mexico, and he wanted to do a ... space thing. Where should he stop? Las Cruces, El Paso, or Holloman? Holloman [AFB] is just west of Alamogordo....

It was my first trip out there. I got off the airplane in El Paso, and started out [I-10], which wasn’t completed.... I got into the damndest dust storm I’ve ever seen halfway to Las Cruces, and I finally found a field to pull off in, and I just sat there. After about an hour [later], ... I was able to [get out] of the car. The car did not have any paint [left] on it.... There was [a man] in Boston [selling cars made] in Ireland. They were called D’Orleans. They were gray metal, and that’s exactly what [my] little Ford rental car looked like. It didn’t have a spec of paint from here to there. I was pretty proud of it. And they didn’t charge me extra to paint it, because, apparently, that had happened to ... other cars.... Anyway, where the hell [were] we? Oh. Kennedy finally stopped at Holloman [AFB] and stayed about two hours, didn’t go anywhere, made all the mayors ... to him. but that was the first space stop in this area, in ’62, I guess.

Speaking of [Kennedy], there's a fairly small ... group who attended "the last supper," as we [called] it, with him, which was held ... at the Rice [Hotel], the night before he went to Dallas. About 400 [of us heard JFK talk] about an upcoming Apollo flight that was going to put up the largest weight [ever].... The line in his speech [went] something like, "And, God willing, if everything works out in January, this nation will place in space the largest [payload] in the history of the world." ...Instead of *payload*, he said, "The largest *payroll*." [The audience started to laugh].... [Where after JFK] stopped, and ... said, "Well, as a matter of fact, it will be the largest payroll, and you people in Houston should appreciate it." That really destroyed the audience. And [JFK] even laughed a ... bit at that....

JOHNSON: I was going to ask you about during the mid-sixties, and you mentioned the Apollo 1 fire earlier. During that time period, there were some astronauts that, unfortunately, were killed in various accidents. How did PAO deal with that?

HANEY: [I remember one young pilot was killed in an auto accident in West Texas.]... I was up at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs [Colorado] making a talk about Apollo [that night]. Then Ted Freeman hit a bird and crashed short of the runway at Ellington in 1964.]...

The [Apollo] fire [January 27, 1967] was so bizarre and so incredible.... I got divorced that morning at nine o'clock. I tell people the day started on a positive note and went to hell [later]. At nine o'clock in the morning, the decree became final.... As a result of the divorce, I needed a car.... I was out testing a 1961 Nash Rambler. My administrative assistant, Roy Alford, knew ... where I was, and called.... "Kraft was just ... here, and he said to get your ass over to the control center now," [Alford said]....

It was around six o'clock [in the evening].... Right away [we] started listening to [the fire] tapes.... I ... recognized Ed White's voice, and he said things like, "Fire in the spacecraft," which was what he's supposed to do. That was his job in the middle seat. [Then] he said, "And

it's a *bad* fire." Then I heard the guy on the right [Roger Chaffee]. Gus never said a word. He was just—he was Gus, and he was bound and determined to get that damn door open....

The door was like a time lock on a bank [vault] where [you] turn certain wheels inside. That's what Gus was trying to do. And then as soon as you turned them inside, somebody else had to turn them outside. Well, it was so hot outside, nobody could hold on, even with gloves. And somebody tried. They tried and couldn't, and finally, it took at least five minutes to get that [hatch] open.... [Meanwhile, the spacecraft ruptured.]

One of the ... oxygen hoses had broken loose [in the spacecraft]. When oxygen is [ignites it's] called acetylene. It was like a welder's torch. It ... [nearly took Chaffee's] head off. [The crew was dead in a couple minutes.] ... The fire started at Gus' left knee, in a little box.... [It involved a] circuit [that] hadn't worked all day.... [At one point, Gus wondered how we were going to get to the moon when the spacecraft couldn't talk to the blockhouse at the Cape]....

It's now 1967.... [In 1965, we lost a Gemini crew when their plane crashed into a building at St. Louis airport where their Gemini spacecraft was being assembled. Elliot See and Charles Basset were killed in that accident.

Public Affairs (Julian Scheer) had developed a plan whereby the responsible center released a bulletin on major accidents. This was followed by an hour or so with an expanded release of information on the parties killed or injured. The Cape information person (Jack King) and I put out a bulletin on the fire deaths an hour later.

The next step was supposed to be a press conference identifying family members wherever they lived—in this case the Houston area. Washington (Scheer) said no. Houston (I) said yes, we should have a news conference. And six hours later, we (Houston) did have a new conference.

Two years later, just weeks before the Apollo 11 moon-landing flight, I was told to report to a new job in Washington. Instead, I quit NASA, just before the 11 mission.]

JOHNSON: Was there anything specific about any of the Apollo flights that come to mind for you as far as what PAO was responsible for?

HANEY: Well, we had a tremendous struggle [within the Houston center regarding a lunar television] ... camera. [If we were going to the moon, we should show it real time with television, I argued].... Other offices were using [the camera] as a bargaining chip for getting other things, and they'd change their vote. I [recall] not too long before the flight, I got into the most involved leak of my career where we leaked certain information to, we'll say *Time* magazine, and they leaked it to NBC ... where it was going to come back to ... NASA for resolution. I also felt like it had to get resolved, because we were getting down close to what was going to go aboard [Apollo] 11....

[Tape recorder turned off.]

JOHNSON: You were talking about some of the Apollo flights and coming up to Apollo 11.

HANEY: Yes. As I said, we were doing more and more expanded things with the crews, and we had multiple flights involved.... The [Apollo] 8 crew was pretty much backed up by the 11 crew. I ... remember ... we were ... in El Paso, ... down along the river doing some kind of a geology thing, or maybe it was with the 11 crew, and the 8s were backing up. It kind of swam together....

Over at Kitt Peak [east] of Tucson [Arizona], [a] huge ... telescope [operation] ..., the scientists there didn't want to look at the Moon, because the Moon is so close, only 240,000

miles. Hell, they'd much rather look at something that's out there fifty light-years out....

I can remember one night going in [Kitt Peak] with a crew at nearly midnight, which is one of the best viewing [times].... [Suddenly, the] PA system [cut loose with], "Fly Me to the Moon." It was not the sort of thing you'd expect from a bunch of hard-nosed [scientists]....

[Even] Bob Hope [got into the act] after the Apollo 7 flight. [He] did a show from the [NASA Houston] auditorium, his regular weekly show.... I never could figure out where the hell he got my console phone number. He called me during the mission, though, just out of the blue. He said, "Hi. This is Bob Hope."

I said, "Yeah, and this is [Genghis Kahn]." ...

He said, "No, this really is Bob Hope."

"... You're not Bob Hope."

He says, "Yeah, I am."

I said, "Where did you grow up?"

He says, "Well, I was born in England, and then I moved to Cleveland."

I said, "What part of Cleveland?"

He says, "Oh. You must know Cleveland."

I said, "Yeah, I know Cleveland. Where did you grow up in Cleveland?"

He [said Eudid Avenue in the 50s] I said, "Hi, Bob. What can I do for you?" ...

[Hope didn't make me any new friends at NASA Washington. He insisted on working with us ... at the Houston level.... But it was a good show.

It was during [the Apollo 7] mission that this ... thing about the drinking club that had started at Edwards came out. Are you a [turtle].... The original pictures are in the Smithsonian.... We [flew] a television camera on 7, and [Wally] Schirra called them the cue cards. One of them they held up said, "Paul Haney, are you a Turtle?" Another card said, "Deke Slayton, are you a Turtle?"

Turtles, this was a drinking club formed [at a] bar, ... Pancho's at Edwards during World

War II. [Pilots would] sit around thinking up any excuse to get drunk, and sometimes meet their wives or girlfriends there.... Turtledom ... presumed that everybody had a beast of burden, a donkey or an ass. There were four or five questions, all very suggestive that had a very straight answer, and let the person trying to answer the question be bemused by the other answer.

... If [a turtle] out in public [is] asked if [he is] a Turtle, [the] answer [is], “You bet your sweet ass I am.” [Refusal or lack of the proper answer meant] ... you had to buy a drink for everybody within earshot who were real turtles. And we were going live that afternoon to about 300 million people, including ... turtles in Chile and Japan and all over the world....

That’s the only time [the center director Bob] Gilruth ever called me into his office and said, “What is ... this [all about]? Why did you answer that question?...” [I explained the history after the Bob Hope show, Gilruth felt better.]

[By virtue of carrying turtle cards into orbit, Schirra became turtledom’s master of the outer shell.]

JOHNSON: You ended up leaving NASA in 1969. Was that before Apollo 11?

HANEY: Just before, yes. I had gotten into—it was kind of a running thing with Julian Scheer, who came aboard at the end of the Mercury Program, [six years earlier]. He was a consultant for about a year, and we had a similar background. We both worked for the Knight organization, John S. Knight, me in Akron, which was Knight’s hometown, and Julian in Charlotte, North Carolina, at the *Observer*.

Anyway, Scheer and I more than once got into ... hissing matches. ... He came down to the Cape for that last Mercury flight, and I introduced him to Gilruth. They’d never met. We were at this big [restaurant in] downtown Cocoa Beach, and Gilruth was a little bit loose that night.... I said, “This is our new administrator of Public Affairs in Washington,” and Gilruth got up and drew back to hit Scheer]. I’d never seen Bob [Gilruth] in such a combative mode....

[Scheer and I had] a competitive relationship.... He was the new kid on the block, and we'd had an awful lot of new kids on the block in that position. I think he was the seventh or eighth person to fill that [job] in ... five or six years, and I have never been so worn out from breaking in new bosses in my life.

One of them was a sociology prof [professor] from the University of Georgia. I think he lasted six months. Another one sold soap with a big company in Cincinnati. He lasted three days....

He was also taking advantage of—we'd just elected a new President named [Richard M.] Nixon, and he decided to move during that December-to-April period as if I were a political appointee, and I wasn't, of course. But somewhere in my files there, I've got a file of "Scheergrams," as I called them. And they would be three and four pages of, "I just don't understand how you can demonstrate such wisdom on Monday and then do things like not calling me to do this or that on Tuesday," and most of them I didn't respond to.

Then as we were getting down on the short strokes, we did Apollo 9, and I'd laid on [Apollo] 10 the press kit for [Apollo] 11, and most of the conferences were out of the way, but I guess 9 or the early part of 10 was the last mission I worked. I'd gotten this thing, a three- or four-page Scheergram about something was terribly wrong, but he was sure that I could do better. And then I got a Scheergram which said, "We've decided that you're just under too big a load somehow down there. You've been carrying this for about eight years, and somehow I would like for you to decide, do you want to do the mission, just be the mission commentator and work the missions, or do you want to back off and designate somebody to do that and you stay over and work the books and do the day-to-day stuff and keep the charts on who attended what?"...

Later, a letter came down telling me to report to Washington—there was no other interim discussion—as a new Special Assistant to the Administrator for Public Affairs... "Thank you very much," [I said]. "I guess I have some options here, and I choose to exercise one. I quit." ...



The next day I went to London and got two jobs. That was that....

JOHNSON: Before we wrap up the day, I was just going to see if Rebecca or Jennifer had anything real quick to ask before we close.

HANEY: Sure.

WRIGHT: I just have one quick question for you. What kind of impact was on your office after Frank Borman and his crew's Christmas greeting from Apollo 8?

HANEY: ... Frank, as you may know, is [or was sort] of a bishop in the [Presbyterian, I think, church].... He was very active around Houston in that sort of thing. I had no idea that [he was going to read from Genesis]. He had told Kraft that he was going to do it. Didn't ask permission or didn't need to. I thought it was very effective coming as it did, when it did [(Christmas Eve)]

....

JOHNSON: I appreciate you letting us come to your home and listen to your story today.

[End of interview]