

The Story of the Ham and Eggs Society

In the last years of the Space Shuttle development, there were continuing problems with the thermal protection tiles on the Orbiter which resulted in several rescheduling dates for the first launch. The Congress was critical and NASA management became concerned about the slips in the first launch date. The NASA Administrator, Al Lovelace, called a meeting of the top program management in early summer 1980. He stated the importance of setting a realistic launch date which could be met and to which all program managers were committed. He was very firm but ended the meeting with a bit of levity. To emphasize the seriousness of the commitment he was asking the managers to make, he told the following story.

The pig and the chicken were having a talk in the barnyard.

The pig asked the chicken, "Are you involved in the big dinner our Master is planning for next week?"

"Of course I'm involved," replied the chicken. "I'm furnishing the eggs."

"Aw, that's nothing," the pig snorted. "You're just involved. I'm supplying the ham; I'm committed."

When the laughter died down, Al Lovelace said, "I want all of you to be like that pig. I want you *committed*."

So the date was set for ten months from that meeting as April 1981 for the first launch of the Space Shuttle. The successful first launch actually occurred on April 12, 1981. After the launch, the NASA Administrator said he wanted "those individuals who had contributed significantly" to be identified and to attend the next Management Council meeting at Cape Kennedy. There he recognized those individuals and said they constituted the "Space Shuttle Ham and Eggs Society." Each person received a personalized wallet card with a picture of two fried eggs and a slice of ham with the words, "are you involved— or committed?"

Following the Management Council meeting, the NASA Administrator invited all those inducted into the Ham and Eggs Society for a barbeque on the beach at Cape Kennedy. There a group picture was taken which was made into a certificate for each member. The following people attended this first get-together of the Space Shuttle Ham and Eggs Society.



Shown left to right, front row:

*Walt Dankhoff, Walt Williams, Al Lovelace, John Yardley, Kenny Kleinknecht,
Mike Weeks, Bob Thompson, Bob Gray, Bill Lucas, Ed Andrews, Gerry Griffin,
Chris Kraft, Aaron Cohen, Tom Moser*

Shown left to right, back row:

*Earl Reese, Frank Van Rensselaer, Bob Lindstrom, Dave Braunstein,
George Hardy, Roy Day, Dan Germany, Phil Culberson, George Page,
Jim Odom, J.R. Thompson, Phil Glynn*

Not present:

*President Ronald Regan, John Young, Bob Crippen, Dick Kohrs, Dick Smith,
Deke Slayton, and Guy Cohen.*

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This story is from the book **"Manned Space Flight: Personal Reflections on the Space Program"** by LeRoy "Roy" Day to be published in July 2011.