

Rotary National Award for Space Achievement Foundation  
by  
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It all began in 1985. Owen (Owen Morris) came to Charlie (Charles Hartman) with an idea. We need to have a National Space Trophy to honor U. S. Achievements in Space Activities. We need to recognize individuals and/or groups who have led us into the space age. And who better to do this than the Space Center Rotary Club. Charlie was the current President (1984-85) of Space Center Rotary and an avid Rotarian with many ideas of his own. We called Charlie the Propeller Man because, although he did not work for NASA or one of the NASA contractors or in aerospace, he was command pilot of multi-engine bombers (B-24's, etc.), all propeller driven. Charlie flew countless combat missions in World War II. His air group had annual meetings through the years with amazingly high attendance (of those who made it through the war). Owen's move was extremely fortunate. Charlie was of German heritage, hard working, task orientated, and always coming up with new ideas. That is why we probably hit if off so well. We, and others, were always dreaming up new ideas and projects that might have the promise, through Rotary, of making this world a better place for all. I told Charlie he was a hardheaded German because once he set a goal he would not allow anything or anybody to detract from achievement of that singular goal. No jaunts down side roads - stay on track. That is exactly the way we conducted ourselves in the Apollo Program. A singular goal to land men on the lunar surface and return them safely to earth before the end of the decade. No side jaunts or interesting pet research investigations allowed. Stay on track. I had the utmost deep respect for Charlie, his beliefs, his values. Like I said, we hit if off extremely well – like brothers, in a sense.

Charlie though Owen was on to something, and he bounced it off me. I thought it was exactly the right thing to do. And although it would be a monumental task, I had no doubt that we could pull it off. The first thing to do was to clearly define the task, scope it, size it, time it. What all it would take – manpower, resources, etc. Of course, firstly, would be to form a core group to brainstorm it, plan it, and thrash it all out. Timing-wise, we knew right away that we were talking many more months, maybe even a year to create and put in place the infrastructure needed. That meant that we most likely could not have the first dinner and award event until my year as president (1985-86). Charlie had no problem with that at all. It turned out that the undertaking was so sizeable that we did not make it until Jim Hargrove's year (1986-87). Our first award was to Max in 1987.

Anyway, we immediately started forming the core group – Jack Lister (Jack), Billy Smith (Billy), etc. As we talked to more Rotarians, the enthusiasm began to snowball. All thought this was a great thing to do and be involved in. We knew there was already the Goddard Dinner held by the National Press Club in

Washington D. C. each spring. Even though our event would be smaller, our goal was to make it into the elite event - first class all the way - color guards, black-tie, etc. to develop the prestige that a National Space Trophy deserves.

We made many visits to the appropriate committees and foundations of the Houston Rotary Club to learn how they formed and structured their annual Vince Lombard Award Dinner held each fall to honor the college football lineman of the year, a national event. They were extremely gracious and helpful with many valuable suggestions. They thought we were right on target and gave us much encouragement.

We decided we needed to have a formal organization. The Houston Club had created many foundations within their club to accomplish many different tasks and projects. So Billy set about to create a foundation incorporated in the State of Texas as a part of our club. Thus was born the Rotary National Award for Space Achievement Foundation. The acronym, RNASA, we thought, was appropriate to the creation of a nationwide prestigious event since, at the time, NASA was highly regarded in the aerospace industry. But, from the start, we intended all space endeavors to be included, not just those of NASA. That is evidenced by our early Board of Advisors that we created for support and for selection of the awardee from among the many nominees. The Board of Advisors was carefully crafted to include all branches of the Department of Defense as well as other non-NASA participants.

We utilized a concept of a group of avid, interested individuals to be involved in this project. If they were interested and could find the time, they were welcome. From this pool of individuals, we would take turns, as appropriate, to fill the slots of officers and directors of the foundation corporate structure. Thus, the group of participants through the years was always larger than the number of formal officer and directors.

Some of the tasks that we took on and touched on earlier included establishing the foundation, creating contact lists, creating a Board of Advisors, creating a nomination and selection process, creating the trophy design and manufacturing it, creating a smaller version to give to the recipient each year, making hotel/dinner/program arrangements, creating a dinner program brochure, making tux/picture arrangements, creating table seating approaches, etc. Since this was to be a nationwide event and not just a JSC or NASA event, we chose a dinner location in downtown Houston. The Houston Hyatt was ideal. It had a section able ballroom that could accommodate up to 1200 participants which would give us plenty of room to grow. The Hyatt was a first-class hotel in keeping with our theme. From the start the hotel management was most helpful and anxious to add us to their customer base. They offered us many extra amenities through the years such as a group of contiguous suites on the top floor to use for entertaining before and after the dinner, various splinter rooms for Executive

Forums, press conferences, industry hospitality venues, etc. and discounted room rates for attendees staying overnight. Also, free parking.

Since Jack was very familiar with award processes from his days at NASA as Director of Human Resources, he led the effort to create the process for RNASA. Of course, Billy, as an attorney, created the corporate structure. John Francis (John) owned a public relations and advertising business so he took on those tasks as well as creating a program brochure. He also set out to conceive and create the large and small trophies. After researching and contacting several potential sources, he recommended Stueben Glass to be commissioned to provide the lead crystal trophies. John also felt there should be some additional recognition for the unsung heroes in the trenches. We all whole-heartily agreed. Thus was born the Stellar Award program. Later, we also created an occasional special award of elite status and named it the Corona Award. It was created for the first recipient, Dr. Gilruth. We gave another later on to Walter Cronkite. Ron Blilie took on the task of creating an activity schedule that all could work to that would show what and when things needed to be done. Owen, as a former part of NASA management and current owner of Eagle Engineering, had many contacts in NASA, DOD, and the aerospace industry without which we could not have succeeded. We always met in Owen's conference room at Eagle Engineering. And Owen always made coffee. It was great coffee. If Owen was on-travel, John Watson made the coffee. It was good also.

This was to be a black-tie event at \$200 per plate, first class. So tuxes were needed for group pictures and the dinners. Mike Razi (Mike) of Gingiss was a friend of Rotary and he graciously loaned us tuxes for the pictures and gave us all discounts for the dinners. Many a time 20 to 30 tuxes were picked up and transported to Hal Neely's Subsidence District Offices on a Saturday morning so Pam Culpepper could take a picture of all of us in Hal's Board Room. Made a nice background. Of importance was the attire that would show in the picture. One year there was a fine picture that inadvertently included Bob Mitchell's sneakers. Good for lots of laughs. Through the years more and more of our group purchased their tuxes. But as the Stellar Program expanded there was plenty of business for Mike. Since he dissolved his business he turned his customer base over to Al's Formal Wear, which we use today. Mike helped us out at a time when we needed a lot of help.

Through the years we tried many enhancements to make our event ever better. Some helped and some did not or were not worth the efforts. We tried staging Executive Forums. The intent was to provide an opportunity for top corporate and top government, NASA, and DOD, executives to meet informally and exchange ideas, needs, plans, etc. After awhile they became panel discussion before audiences. There was much interest at first but then slowly waned. So they were discontinued. We also held a few formal press conferences to give the media an opportunity to question panel members, including the trophy winner. Again, interest at first, then waned, then discontinued.

When the Stellar Awards were added, John Francis personally sought recommendations from corporate and agency entities in a particular field such as engineering, life sciences, space promotion, space communicator, etc. which changed from year to year. This program has been a huge success as it morphed and expanded into what it is today.

Rotarian retired General Harold (Hal) Neely provided a wealth of knowledge and effort in properly adhering to accepted formal protocol especially with the DOD involvement. This included proper seating arrangements at the Head Table, Color Guards, pick-up and transportation of dignitaries and special invited guests from across the country. He knew all the rules of proper conduct that should accompany formal affairs.

These are just a few examples of the tasks undertaken when we started. There were many, many others.

We had to borrow seed money from the Club to get started including \$35,000 for the large display trophy, a truly great work of art of leaded crystal. All borrowed funds were repaid to the Club.

We created a huge multi-media presentation of our event that was shown at several Rotary functions including the Rotary District Conference.

The corporate structure created by Billy required an initial Board of Directors. Those are found in the Foundation By-Laws and are as follows:

- Owen G. Morris, Director
- Charles S. Hardwick, Director
- Charles A. Jacobson, Director
- Jack Lister, Director
- A. M. Jowid, Director
- Charles H. Hartman, Director
- H. Don Kirk, Director
- Billy R. Smith, Director
- Robert G. Minor, Director
- Robert J. Wren, Director

A special designation was made in the By-Laws to honor our Club's only Rotary Past District Governor (at that time) as follows:

- Dr. Floyd D. Boze, PDG, Advisory Director for an indefinite term, as willing.

The individuals who were involved for the Initial core group, or committee, included the following:

- Owen G. Morris
- Charles S. Hardwick

Charles A. Jacobson  
Jack Lister  
A. M. Jowid  
Charles H. Hartman  
H. Don Kirk  
Billy R. Smith  
Robert G. Minor  
Robert J. Wren  
Floyd D. Boze  
John Watson  
John Francis  
Frank Morgan  
Ron Blilie  
Bob Mitchell  
Vic Maria  
Hal Neely  
David Hamblin  
Terry Stock  
Don Robinson  
Sam Boyd

And perhaps others not remembered at this time.

We needed to have a Chairman of the corporate structure who would also serve as President. We chose Charlie Hartman for many reasons. Firstly, his passion and dedication were hard to match. Secondly, he did not work for NASA or a NASA Support Contractor thereby avoiding any possible conflict of interest and maintaining a sense of independence as we got started. Later on this became immaterial. Thirdly, he had the time and desire to devote to the considerable effort required to orchestrate the formation and start-up of this immense undertaking. Fourthly, he was a positive, inspiring influence on us all. Charlie gained our deep respect and admiration for his principles and values, his devotion to Rotary and his belief of the importance of the Space Program. Charlie would not allow us to not succeed. He was totally right for the task at hand. We wholeheartedly and unanimously agreed that Charlie should be our leader. Charlie, the Propeller Man.

As time went along we were indeed very successful in establishing our event as the première space award activity. And we did maintain our first-class status and today the award's prestige is undeniable.

We have had many, many members of our group, or committee, and many, many Directors from that pool through the years. All have been extremely dedicated. And we have been fortunate to have many fine leaders who have invested their time and dedication to our enterprise. Charlie, Mike Dennard, Jack Lister, Admiral Dr. Clay Fulcher, Floyd Bennett. And now Rodolfo Gonzalez.

We are on track for continued success in the future.

#### Postscript

Some have asked who were the founders of RNASA. That is difficult to answer because we have had so many fine, dedicated individuals contribute to the success and good fortune of our enterprise. There is no doubt it was originally Owen Morris's suggestion. Perhaps, the best way to approach an answer is to include all of the individuals who were involved in the initial core group, or committee, if you like, as founding fathers or founders. Or, at the least, the Directors as listed on the founding corporate structure. So many gave of their time, effort, and ideas it is a difficult question to answer fairly.