

**BUSINESS**

## Effort Underway To Restore Apollo Mission Control

**HOUSTON—Here in Houston, home to NASA's Johnson Space Center (JSC), a funding drive is underway to restore the aging landmark Apollo Mission Control Center (MCC) for enhanced public viewing.**

The suburban city of Webster, home to many of those who now and once staffed the MCC, has already chipped in \$3.5 million toward the \$5 million goal. A companion Kickstarter campaign is meant to enhance the goal to ensure the restoration can be sustained, serving as an inspiration for many of the 1 million people who visit annually through Space Center Houston, the Smithsonian Institution-affiliated official JSC visitors' center.

"This was the Apollo generation, the end of the Greatest Generation," reminisced legendary MCC Flight Director Gene Kranz of the Apollo workforce, prior to an April 11 screening of the new documentary, "Mission Control: The Unsung Heroes of Apollo."

"Many of the kids were born during the Depression and they grew up during World War II," Kranz said. "They entered Mission Control with a clear understanding of what they were doing for our country. If we failed, they would be the survivors. They would be the ones remembered for not getting the job done."

A prominent figure in the documentary, Kranz and the Apollo Alumni were a force for initiating the restoration, which is expected to get underway soon and be complete before the July 20, 2019, 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 Moon landing, according to William Harris, president and CEO of Space Center Houston.

Officially known as Mission Operations Control Room 2, the Apollo nerve center debuted in June 1965 with Gemini 3, best remembered for the first U.S. spacewalk carried out by astronaut Ed White. Now flanked by control rooms for the International Space Station and future Orion cislunar and Mars missions, MOCR2 closed in late 1992 with STS-53, NASA's final classified space shuttle mission for the Department of Defense. In 1985, MOCR2 was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Kranz is hopeful the restoration as well as the documentary will serve as an inspiration to the nation's youth. "The real lesson that must come back is the story of how it all began, with a brash young and articulate president, John F. Kennedy, who issued a challenge. This was at a time when our country had many of the same problems that we have right now," Kranz said. "Our nation stepped up to accept the challenge—not only to go to the Moon, but win the battle for space. This was a group of unsung young people who made it all happen. We want the young people of today to step forward. When they visit

Mission Control, we want them to remember that we accomplished our mission, and they must step forward for theirs."

The documentary covers the tragedy, triumph and suspense of the 1967 Apollo 1 launch pad fire at Cape Canaveral that killed three astronauts assigned to the first Apollo launch; Neil Armstrong's Apollo 11 landing at the Moon's boulder-strewn Sea of Tranquility with a rapidly diminishing fuel supply; and the lifesaving scramble to identify and shut down systems aboard Apollo 13 crippled by an onboard explosion while more than three days from Earth.

"The film does a really good job of letting us express what we really felt, what we saw with some of the failure and some of the successes as well," said Gerry Griffin, a flight director on 10 Apollo missions, including all six that landed on the Moon.

"I had the feeling we were making history. All of us did," said Sy Liebergot, a longtime key flight controller over Apollo electrical, life support and communications systems, in his film testimony. "It was just a golden opportunity to be part of it."

"Early on, the [U.S.] Air Force people thought maybe we didn't know what we were doing," said Milt Windler, a flight director on six Apollo missions. "We didn't pay much attention to that. We just kept doing the things that needed to be done and didn't worry about what we could not do. We worried about what we could do."

"The other things we had with leadership was that we lived in an environment of trust. Our bosses ... we didn't think of them as bosses. We thought of them as leaders, but our leaders trusted us to do things," recalls Lunney, who served as a flight director on seven Apollo missions, including three that reached the lunar surface. "Do what you have to do, and we will back you up. That is the way it was. When you get trust like that, you work very hard to show you have earned it."

Chris Kraft, the native Virginian who dreamed of being a baseball player until he met the challenge of aviation, went on to develop the concept of a Mission Control. Asked at the April 11 screening by a crowd of mostly current and past NASA workers where the U.S. should go next in space, he didn't hesitate to answer.

"Today, they say we are going to Mars, and I want to ask the question: Why the hell do you want to go to Mars?," Kraft responded to considerable applause. "The Moon is three seconds away by voice, its 40 minutes by voice to Mars. I would not want to be the flight director of that thing"

He backed up his position with more than nostalgia, citing concerns about radiation exposure and other health issues as well as technical challenges. "We have the equipment, the people and we have enough money to go back to the Moon, exploit the resources of the Moon and find out how we could really live on another planet," Kraft said. "Why would you want to do anything else?"

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