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**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW**

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OFFICE OF PRIME RESPONSIBILITY = JSC  
NUMBER ON DOCUMENT = 00  
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PROGRAM [3-letter Program Archive code] = INS  
AUTHOR [Interviewee's Last Name] = WHITBECK  
LOCATION OF DOCUMENT [Numeric Shelf Address] = 091-04

SUBJECT OF DOCUMENT: [use relevant bold-face introductory terms]

Oral history interview with Philip H. Whitbeck  
[full name of interviewee]

about MSC Administration  
[main focus of interview]

Title: 1962 - Dep. Asst Dir for Admin  
[interviewee's current and/or former title and affiliation]

1968 - Dir of Admin

Interview conducted by Robert B. Merrifield - Staff  
[interviewer's name/position]

Historian at MSC  
[location of interview]

Transcript and tape(s). [for inventory only: # pages 12 # tapes 1]

Abridgement  
[edited to remove ...]

Master 1

**CONTENTS:**

**Biographical** - [date/place of birth; family background] \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Education** - \_\_\_\_\_

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**Career Path** - 1961 - STG

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**Topics** - Organization of STG; Personnel program;  
personal involvement of senior people;  
management analysis + organization; recruiting;  
management intern program; Summer intern  
program; Management training in universities;  
Resident research fellowship program;  
equal employment issues; minority recruiting;  
Co-location of Personnel w/ technical  
people served; Support contractors  
decentralization in field; use of  
military detailees;

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\_\_\_\_\_ .

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Bob Merrifield  
Looks fine!  
Phil

November 21, 1968

Phil,

The transcript of your interview, edited to remove extraneous material, is attached.

If you will, please read the statement and mark those sentences with brackets [ ] that you would not want alluded to in a Center history for reasons of embarrassment to an individual or the Center. As I mentioned during our recording session, this interview is to be part of the source material for the history, and it is doubtful that I will quote from it verbatim. Therefore, please don't worry about a sentence here or there which might not be as polished as would be desirable were it to receive public scrutiny.

If you want to add information feel free to do so. Just tack it on at the end of the statement, unless you prefer that it be inserted into the text.

After you return the transcript to me, I'll send you a copy for your personal file.

Thanks,

Bob Merrifield  
BN

Code (or) Administration age, P. 9

Name - co-location of personnel/financial  
management

- procurement mt

- centralized functions

P. 11, policy of Mr. Webb-Libgaden  
to field centers.

		Change and Detail
		Signature
		Date
		Recommendation
		For Review/Consideration
		For Approval
		Notes and Remarks
		Approved For Forward
		Unauthorized and Copies
		Information
		File
		Comments/Notes
		CC: (if)
		Approval
		Action

Mail Code

Name

NAVJ  
FORM 58-7011  
(REV. 1-65)

Routing Slip



Levni - 1963

send list of quotes  
⇒ 7/22/82 - J. Whitbeck

prior to '61 talk to Glush

Glush

Williams - Assoc. Dir.

Hjornub - Asst Dir

> when Mar. '61, when  
Wes came on  
board

Whitbeck & Hjornub prepared report over a weekend. Bright  
off. organization.

Prior to Al Shepard flight - so that really didn't go.

at KSC Glush, Williams, Faget, Chuck Matthews, Wes. Hjornub & P.H.  
Chuck Bingham - Secretary. (Spring, 1961)

Talk about Glush as personality - what was Glush  
famous - could at picking people

- could at picking right concept

mode of management was to delegate

- avoid white elephant

⇒ prior to Low. Hjornub did all budget work

⇒ the guy on physical buildings - made decisions  
on how the Center was built

⇒ critical issue w/ KSC

≡ control of configuration

+ those other things in paper

⇒ Has left SSC alone in organization

- check w/ Wes & J

& Jack Young

⇒ Subsystem management

Jim Elms

Wes

512-288-2062

(Home - Austin)

Bingman

(202)-426-8661

(DOT - Spec. Asst. - Dept.) &c.

Wes, J, Low, & J

INTERVIEW WITH PHILIP H. WHITBECK  
October 18, 1968

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I joined STG in March 1961. At that time, Hjernevik had been appointed the Assistant Director for Administration. STG had as its Director, Dr. Gilruth, its Associate Director, Walt Williams, and as an Assistant Director, Wes Hjernevik. This was prior to the orbital shot of Al Shepherd and it seemed clear to Wes and me that the program was going to lead to a tremendous increase in public interest in NASA and STG. This happened, and a few weeks after Al Shepherd's launch, the President went to Congress and laid on the lunar program.

125-3  
Our planning from the outset primarily involved deciding how we should grow from a 500-man task force to a large, permanent and continuing institution. The immediate problems were in organization and personnel. One of the first things we did was to undertake a major organization study of how STG should be organized, if and when it was converted to a permanent and much larger institution. This involved, obviously, going from a single project organization, (and STG was basically a task group doing single projects), to a continuing Center with the capability of doing multiple projects and programs. We did the study, Dr. Gilruth and his staff reviewed it and all of them agreed with it. I accompanied Dr. Gilruth and Walt Williams to Washington when they presented it to Abe Silverstein then Director of the Office of Space Flight. He agreed with it and we then presented it to Seeman who also approved. The whole process took one day as I recall.

At the time Wes and I went to the STG there were a total of above 50 people in administration, including drivers, messengers, file room people,

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78 etc. We had only seven people in Personnel at that point. We had to grow a major Personnel program, select the Personnel Director, plan for the approach we wanted to have in Personnel. We had originally selected me based on my background in organization and personnel, because he felt that these along with the budget and procurement were going to be the principal problems we would face in a new Center.

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78 One conclusion we reached very early, and I am still committed to it as a matter of principal, was that to have a viable personnel program a generalist approach is required. We made the decision we wouldn't implement the traditional functional structure in Personnel. Instead generalists would be recruited who could handle all aspects of personnel: classification, recruitment and placement, etc. During this period, I selected Stu Clarke to be the first Director of Personnel at the MSC. Stu had been the Deputy Director of Personnel at the Army Ordnance Missile Command in Huntsville and came with us in the spring of 1961. We had some problems then and over the next two years in really making effective the concept of a generalist program in personnel administration. Several times we felt it wasn't working too well and we finally determined why--we had failed to delegate to the generalists enough authority and responsibility to do their job, and somehow because the concept was new to the leadership in personnel, we tended to retain most of the responsibility back in staff groups in Personnel and the generalists became basically messengers. Once we corrected that situation and began to give the generalists real authority we noticed that two things happened: first, the operating people became much more pleased with the kind of personnel service they were being given, and second, the personnel officers became a lot happier with their

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role.

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The second thing that Hjernevik and I have felt very strongly about is that to have an effective personnel program, it is necessary to have the personal interest, and personal involvement of the senior people in the Center. To a large extent we've had this. For example we have used executive promotion boards composed of the Director and his senior line officials.

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Another area where I have been particularly interested is in management analysis and organization. As I indicated earlier we had a major problem facing the Center in this period of rapid growth and in adjusting organizations as we went forward. The second selection I made, and in fact the only person that I took from Washington to the STG, was Chuck Bingman, who served for a number of years as Chief, Management Analysis. Chuck was an unusually able person who have management analysis a status in the Center that it typically doesn't have either in a field installation or in a headquarters.

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One of the things in Personnel that we were faced with at the beginning was a very heavy recruiting load. We doubled the strength of the Center the first year and again the second year. We were hiring at the rate of about 100 per month and throughout the first three years of our history, each year we were given a major increase in staff and at the same time were told that we weren't really going to be able to fill those positions, as it was just too big a job. But each year we somehow managed to do what we felt was a good job of recruiting and had all the billets filled by May. We never failed to meet those recruiting schedules and meet them with what we felt were quality people.

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Another early decision we made was that we ought to be concerned almost immediately with the development of our own people. Obviously when the STG grew very rapidly and when that 50 people in administration grew to 700-800 and eventually to almost 1200 people, we were faced with the prospects of hiring trained people--people from other agencies and from industry, who had the background and experience in the various functional areas: personnel, procurement, etc. However, in addition we needed to develop our own people. At the time we established our personnel operation in the late spring of 1961, we agreed that we would have a management intern program. The management intern program is a program common to most federal agencies in Washington. Interns are selected for special training and rotating work assignments for a period of normally six months or one year. The interns are selected from a special Civil Service management intern register. Something like 29,000 people take this examination annually. I can't remember the numbers exactly, but about 3000 of them pass the written exam. About 1000 pass the oral examination and somewhere around 500 end up actually getting hired. It's a very selective program. As far as we know, we are the only field institution that has run this particular type of program. Beginning in 1962 we hired six interns and since that time we have increased the number to about 12-14 interns each year. Dr. Rosenthal from the University of Minnesota made a study of the impact of the program last summer and his study indicated we were running what he believed to be one of the outstanding programs of federal service. The interns who had gone through the program were consistently ranked by their superiors as being outstanding performers. The productivity of the program and the people who have gone through the program was exceptionally

high and by all standards the program was an extremely worthwhile part of the MSC plans for developing employees.

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188-2  
There were arguments in 1961-62 that we couldn't really go into a generalist program or start an intern program until we were over the hill on our major recruitment activities. Mr. Hjernevik and I took the position that if we waited that long, we would miss the boat. We felt we had to start the program immediately, so in spite of the very heavy workloads we had in recruiting, selection, classification, etc. we did begin the program at that stage.

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Another program we started--and I can't recall the year--was the summer intern program. This was a program for hiring students who had completed their undergraduate work and had been accepted for graduate study. In effect, we launched the program because we wanted to avoid the possibility of developing a pattern of hiring where our contacts were primarily with local schools. We felt the manned space flight program was national in scope and we wanted to be sure we were dealing with universities throughout the country. The summer intern program was extremely successful. We've had about 45-50 interns a year. Of this number about 30 are in the fields of science and engineering, 12-15 in the fields of public administration and business administration. The program involves both a seminar program and selected work assignments. The universities have indicated to us they feel the program has been an extremely good one and students who have this type of exposure before going into graduate school get a great deal more out of graduate work. It's interesting to note we've had students from universities throughout the country from MIT and Harvard in the East, from Illinois, Michigan and Minnesota in the mid-

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west, and the University of Colorado, Stanford, and the University of Southern California in the West. The program normally blankets the country. We've supported the program using regular summer billets that are available to all of the Centers, and have always used a portion of these for this special summer intern program. We feel the program as a whole has been extremely successful and the universities concur. We are the only Center that really runs this kind of program.

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Another program we launched about three years ago was based on our strong interest in what was being taught in management in the universities. This coincided with the personal interest of the Administrator, Mr. Webb, who is extremely interested in public administration and management generally. Our first venture was the summer faculty program. During the first two years we ran only a pilot program with only about two or three faculty members. Last year was the first fullscale program with seven faculty members. We had a Dean of Industrial Engineering, three full professors in the field of public administration, and three faculty members in various fields of business administration. This particular program offers the faculty an opportunity to get some real world experience in their particular areas of interest and to conduct management research in their specialized fields. It also provides an opportunity for the faculty to have a direct dialog with our senior management people. During the course of a summer, in addition to the day-to-day contacts, we normally schedule three to four meetings with division chiefs, and try to encourage an exchange of ideas. Participants last year felt they got a great deal of experience that would be useful back on the campus and we felt the work they produced for us was extremely good. Last year we had representatives

from the University of Cincinnati, the University of Minnesota School of Business and public administration, Oklahoma State, University of Oklahoma, and the University of Texas. This year we had people from Colorado, Southern California, Minnesota, and a number of other schools. We feel this program has had a major impact, and has been well received by the academic community. As far as we know it's the only program of its kind in the business or public administration area run by any government agency.

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384-v Our second program in the university area involves formal agreements with eight universities throughout the country and is called a resident research fellowship program. The program involves graduate students in the field of business or public administration who come to the Center under agreements with their universities to conduct management research here. This management research is usually accepted by the university toward thesis requirements at the doctor's or master's level. We have agreements with the University of Minnesota, Purdue, Oklahoma and Oklahoma State, University of Houston, University of Texas and San Diego State University. We've had students in this program from all these institutions. As might be expected, we've had varying degrees of luck with the quality and caliber of the work done, but by and large we feel it has been a successful program and that we've gotten some very good work from the graduate students who are involved. Research projects are jointly selected by the universities and the Center. The research papers are normally published in a new publication series we have established at the Center called the Management Research and Management Reports series.

Both of these university programs were undertaken because we were con-



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cerned about the problems of keeping our organization dynamic. We had seen many organizations who, after a few years, became bureaucratic, developed hardening of the arteries and had great difficulty in maintaining the drive that is necessary. In looking at how we might create a climate that would assure we didn't fall into this situation, we felt that programs actually involving the physical presence in our Center of faculty members and graduate students who tend to be curious and whose backgrounds lead them to question how and why things are done, would be a major stimulus to our employees. I think there is no question that this had been the case over the years.

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305-7  
Soon after the Center moved to Houston we became concerned with how we could develop a viable program in the equal employment area. We made a number of efforts many of which turned out not to be too fruitful. One of the problems was the work environment of a place like MSC is alien to many minority group members, so one of the early programs we developed was a work study program. We entered into agreements with the University of Houston, with Prairie View A&M, and Texas Southern University in which students would attend school in the morning and work for us in the afternoon. We ran that program for about two years. We had a problem in continuing it because we found students would locate more lucrative employment elsewhere and while the program itself offered an extreme learning opportunity, it couldn't compete financially.

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At the same time we were concerned about the fact that there were few minority group applicants for federal jobs and that in many cases minority groups failed to pass the Civil Service examinations. In 1963, we proposed to Texas Southern University that we teach a seminar in public

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administration at Texas Southern. Texas Southern did not teach any courses in this area, and we felt this would be a way to stimulate interest on the part of some of their Negro students in federal employment. We did teach such a seminar. I organized and led it, but unfortunately the degree of interest at the school was extremely limited and we didn't continue it. Our activities in this area in the last few years have been directed more at the various standardized federal programs--the Youth Opportunity Program, Joy Programs, etc. In addition we have several new programs that have been started and which primarily originated by the personnel people and directed at high school seniors who plan to go on to college. Minority group members are hired for this special summer program in order to prepare them for entrance into engineering and science curriculum in the colleges. We had 12 last year.

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One other area in which we've been interested, is how to more effectively support a technical and scientific organization like NASA's in the various administrative areas. One of the things we did was to co-locate our Personnel people with the technical people they serviced. We didn't do this uniformly but this became our objective. We found very quickly that the co-location of people resulted in a much more effective relationship with the people they serviced. Dr. Sayles in one of his books at Columbia points out one of the principal problems in providing support to a group is communication. This co-location seems to do a great deal to solve this basic communication problem. Whatever the reasons, we found that people who were rated as average in Personnel when they were servicing a technical division from the Personnel Office, suddenly became outstanding in the minds of the technical people when these same Personnel people were co-

located with them. Over the last four or five years we have made an effort to co-locate all the Personnel people servicing the technical people and have extended this principle with specialists in the Management Resources area. The budget and program control type people have been co-located for some time both with the program offices and all of the directorates they support.

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The use of support contractors has caused a great deal of interest, particularly with the recent challenge by the unions of use of the support contractors. Basically, there is an assumption that support contracting has been a way of evading personnel ceilings. Actually, our experience with the support contracting area didn't come up in this context at all. In 1962, as we were growing very rapidly, we decided to determine those areas where we felt we would want to limit the use of government employees, and see the function handled by contractors. Some studies were made in late 1962, and the determination was made that we would never staff these areas with civil service people. The guard service was one--we've never had a guard on the NASA payroll. We felt there were so many things that would require the attention of senior management and administrative people at the Center, that the guard function was a very good one to contract and to turn responsibility for the management of that activity over to a contractor. There are a large number of companies who specialize in the provision of guard services both to industrial concerns and to government agencies. We've always followed that pattern in the guard area. Building and grounds maintenance is another example. The operation of the Center support facilities--the heating plant, cooling plant, the sewerage treatment plant--was another area where we elected to contract this entire func-

tion. We never had any intention of staffing or directly performing these services. I mention this because in late 1962, the Center was under no staffing constraint. The decisions were made as a conscious choice of management. Obviously since that time, the support contractor issue has become very foggy, hazy, and has been subjected to a great deal of emotion. One of the assumptions that was basic to the planned use of support contractors was that they would give the Center the ability to quickly expand and quickly contract. There also was an assumption that this Center would not always be running a program of the size and magnitude of Apollo, and the use of support contractors meant we could relatively easily expand and contract the work force, which would not be possible with a permanent Civil Service corps.

125-13  
NASA has always had a policy that there should be a heavy decentralization to the field. Mr. Webb felt not only that the field should be responsible for carrying out the wide range of programs but he expected the fields to originate and innovate in administration. The result has been that the flexibility of field centers has been very extensive. I've already mentioned things like the management intern program, summer intern programs, and university programs that this Center operates. All of these programs are unique to MSC; they aren't carried out in other NASA Centers or for the most part at Headquarters. I think it's a tribute to the Agency that over the last 10 years we have been able to maintain such flexibility in our management operations. The various senior NASA administrative people have all strongly encouraged the concept that the field must have and should have this degree of flexibility. As a result our day-to-day relationships with senior management people in Washington have been extremely

close and good. Obviously, this flexibility exists within the broad guidelines established by Headquarters.

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The use of military detailees has fallen into two categories. One category is people who have been detailed to the Center by the military. Frequently this is done by the military in their own special interest. The military wants to train its people in some of the new fields of technology that we are familiar with. The details therefore have a mutual advantage to both the military and to NASA. A special case of the use of military detailees was in the flight operation and flight crew operations areas. Several years ago 128 Air Force people were detailed to these two directorates, for the most part in Chris Kraft's Flight Operations Directorate. Here the situation was different. The Air Force was particularly concerned with training people who could eventually work in the MOL programs. During the first year of the program, the military financed the entire cost of the program and the second year of the program its cost was shared between the military and NASA. This year NASA is paying the whole tab. The future of this program is in question. As the needs and the attention of the Air Force focus more and more on Viet Nam, obviously there is less opportunity and desire on the part of the military to participate in our program. But in terms of a long range relationship, it is very clear that the DOD has been very interested in working closely with us. We've been very interested in working with them to be sure we have a full and free exchange of information. The best way to get this seems to be the actual detail of people as opposed to writing letters or reading reports.