



History Travel Newsletter - Special Issue Astronaut Hall of Fame Induction 2024 Bharat Ramanujam Parthasarathy Ramanujam Vol 3: Issue 2; April-June 2024

Astronaut Hall of Fame Induction and Gala Event 2024

We have been attending these events for the past several years, held jointly at Hilton Cocoa Beach and Kennedy Space Center. It is organized by the Astronaut Scholarship Foundation ([ASF | Astronaut Scholarship Foundation](#)). 2024 induction ceremony and the gala were on June 1. Two or three astronauts are inducted into the Astronaut Hall of Fame (displayed at the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex). The inductees this year were David Hilmers and Marsha Ivins.

The format for this multi-day comprises of a pre-event, which is usually a special event such as a tour, followed by a day of panel discussions involving several astronauts, NASA personnel etc. The highlight is on the next day with the induction ceremony in the morning followed by the Gala dinner in the evening. Both these events are conducted at the Atlantis building and the Saturn Center at the Kennedy Space Center respectively. In the morning after the induction events, the inductees present themselves to the public at the Kennedy Space Center, for a short time. Although a much smaller event, the inductees interact with the audience.

This multi-day event gives us an unique opportunity to meet and talk with several astronauts (and obviously take photos with) who come in large numbers to honor the inductees. This year was no exception in that regard, especially since the ASF was celebrating its 40th Anniversary, with many early astronauts' family being in attendance. We saw quite a few astronauts whom we met for the first time.

Big kudos to astronaut Curt Brown (Chairman of ASF) and Caroline Schumacher (President, CEO of ASF) and their team for organizing such a series of sub events over different locations, involving busing to these locations. For us, vegetarians, the food was exceptionally good this year. The special tour was a pleasant surprise. Our only request for future events (if possible), is to extend the photo op (we had one for Joan Higginbotham), to more astronauts (3 or 4 at a time for 15 minutes during the break) during the course of the event (Similar to what they used to have at the event in Novato, CA)

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About our Activities and our Newsletters (current and previous):

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Website: GoHistoryTravel.Org ; Facebook : Gohistorytravel
Email: Gohistorytravel@gmail.com

President: **Parthasarathy Ramanujam**
Director of Research, Travel Planning: **Bharatkumar Ramanujam**
Associate Editor, Secretary, Photography : **Malathy Ramanujam**

DAY I : Special Presentation by Joan Higginbotham



After the photo op, Joan Higginbotham, made an excellent presentation on her early years, initial involvement in NASA and also her story about her becoming an astronaut. She presented details about her space flight, STS-116. She spent a few minutes to talk about the decision of joining the industry instead of proceeding with the second space mission.

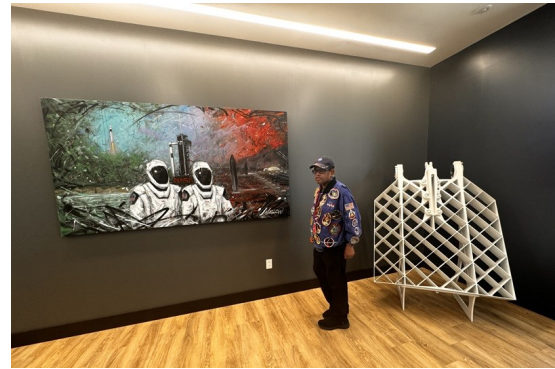


DAY I : Tour of SpaceX



Amazing and Informative Presentation on SpaceX at the lobby of Launch Control followed by a group photo

DAY I : Tour of SpaceX



Artwork

Info on all three Launch sites: 39-A, SLC-40 and Vandenberg



View from Outside of SpaceX Launch Control



This was followed by a tour of the rocket refurbishing facility (No Pictures Allowed)

DAY I :Quick Tour of launch sites 39-A,



39-A, 39-B and Saturn (This was special, since the tours of 39-A and 39-B are no longer included in the regular bus tour at the Kennedy Space Center)

Day 2: Book Signing by Astronaut Tom Jones ('Space Shuttle Stories')



Day 2: Presentation by Astronaut Andy Allen - His life story



Day 2: Astronaut Panel Discussion on ISS



This panel was moderated by astronaut Bob Cabana (STS-88, that carried the first US ISS module, Unity Node) with ISS astronauts Richard Mastracchio, Nicole P Stott and Shane Kimbrough, sharing their ISS experience

Day 2: Panel Discussion on Commercial Space: Medical Aspects



Discussions on medical coverage for astronauts when space becomes commercial, future medical requirements etc., Moderated by astronaut Chris Ferguson - Panel: Medical doctor astronauts Bernard Harris and Robert Satcher, Alicia Robinson from Blue origin, Astronaut Scholar Grace Robertson from Sierra Space

Day 2: Panel Discussion with Astronaut Scholars



Discussion on the impact and life being an Astronaut Scholar
Moderated by astronaut Scott Altman

Panel
 Colin Burnett,
 Winter Jones,
 Julian Moreno,
 Vikas Patel,
 Emma Shafer,
 Sarah Stamer

Day 2: Poster Presentation with Space Artists



Space Artist Chris Calle



Space Artist Dave Ginsberg



'Artist in Space' astronaut Nicole P Stott

In parallel with the Artist presentation there was poster session on projects by Astronaut Scholars Alumni. About 15 Scholars presented many interesting projects. We will be prepared to spend more time on this next year.

Day 3: Astronaut Hall Of Fame Induction Ceremony



The Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony was held under the Space Shuttle Atlantis, as has been the last few years we had attended. From the start, the race was on to finish the ceremony before the launch of the first Boeing Starliner Crewed Launch (the rocket did not take off that day!!!!).

Astronaut David Hilmers, the first inductee, was introduced by his long time friend and his fellow astronaut on STS-42, Norm Thagard. What was so impressive was the fact that Norm Thagard introduced him with quite a few details from his history with no notes or paper in front of him (we specifically commended him later in person, on this feat).

David Hilmers in his very acceptance speech surprised us (I am sure many in the attendance too!!) that he had not visited Kennedy Space Center in almost 30 years(!!!), due to his focus on his medical career after retiring from NASA.

Marsha Ivins, the second inductee, was introduced by astronaut John Grunsfeld (her fellow astronaut on STS-81). He gave many details about her talents in space shuttle operations, photography and cooking.

Marsha Ivins, gave one of the shortest acceptance speeches we have seen (probably wanted to see the Starliner launch more than anyone) thanking many who had supported in her illustrious career.

It was amazing to see all the existing Hall of Famers and other astronauts being introduced at the start of the ceremony. At the end, all the existing and the new inductees took the stage for everybody to take a picture. It was a treat to watch the new plaques for the two inductees unveiled towards the end with both inductees on the side.

The astronauts and NASA personnel who had passed away last year were also honored.

Credit goes to the Astronaut Scholarship Foundation and the organizers for opening this event to the all the visitors to the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex.

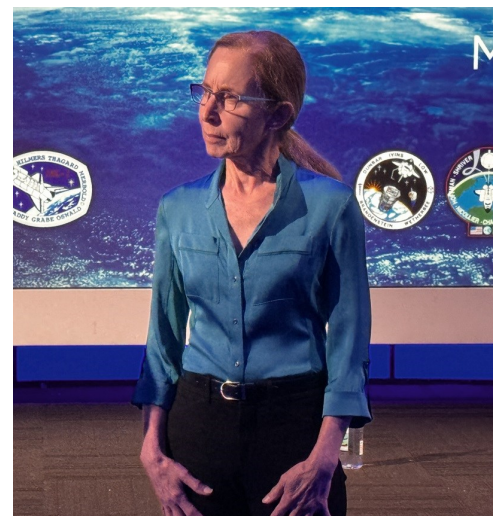
The MC for the ceremony was John Zarella, who also was the MC for the evening Gala Event.

Day 3: Astronaut Induction Gala



The evening Gala that was for the special guests and ticket holders, was one more opportunity to meet and greet many astronauts. Both the inductees were introduced and gave shorter speeches (again). An appreciable amount of time was spent on showcasing the Astronaut Scholars, for whom the Astronaut Scholarship Foundation was originally established. The final act was a musical presentation by a group of Astronaut Scholars.

Day 4: Hall of Fame Inductees at Kennedy Space Center



This event was held at the Kennedy Space Center visitor complex, the day after the induction events, on June 2, 2024. This year, it was held at the Mars building, with a new format with the inductees answering questions from a small audience for nearly 30 to 45 minutes.

It was interesting that both David Hilmers and Marsha Ivins, looked very relaxed and spoke a lot more than during the two induction events, answering every question in quite a detail.

It was great to see that this event also is open to all the visitors.

Astronaut Gallery (With Link to their pages on my website)



[ANDREW ALLEN – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)



[SCOTT ALTMAN – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)



[BONNIE DUNBAR – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)



[ROBERT CRIPPEN – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)



[BOB CABANA – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)



[JIM BUCHILI – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)



[CURTIS BROWN – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)



[DAVID C HILMERS – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)



[CHRISTOPHER FERGUSON – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)

Astronaut Gallery (With Link to their pages on my website)



[DOUGLAS HURLEY – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)



[EILEEN COLLINS – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)



[ELLEN S BAKER – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)



[FRANKLIN CHANG DIAZ – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)



[BERNARD HARRIS JR – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)



[ROBERT HOOT GIBSON – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)

[RHEA SEDDON – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)

[NORM THAGARD – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)



[MARSHA IVINS – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)

[THOMAS DAVID JONES – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)



[JANET KAVANDI – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)



[JOHN GRUNSFELD – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)

Astronaut Gallery (With Link to their pages on my website)



[JAMES REILLY – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)



[RICHARD MASTRACCHIO – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)



[GEORGE PINKY NELSON – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)



[Thomas David Jones – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)



[SHANE KIMBROUGH – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)



[ROBERT SATCHER – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)



[Kathryn Thornton – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)



[Brewster Shaw – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)



[Nicole P Stott – History Travel US \(historytravel-us.com\)](#)