

The Honorable Shana Dale
NASA Deputy Administrator
Presidential Rank Awards Ceremony
February 11, 2008

Thank you for that introduction Paul.

Recently, my days have been filled with poring over budget books and background as the President just rolled out his fiscal year 2009 budget. Mike asked me to be the NASA spokesperson this year for this rollout. A lot of preparation by a lot of dedicated, hardworking individuals at NASA went into release of the FY 2009 budget. It is a real pleasure to be here and honor the people behind the numbers and words that I examined for hours. It is so nice to be with some of the outstanding people instead of being buried under mounds and mounds of budget documents.

I am so proud to honor our Presidential Rank award winners. As Paul said, winners had to undergo a rigorous nomination and selection process, being evaluated along with other nominated executives in the federal government. The awards are prestigious and unique.

That's praiseworthy enough. Yet all of you here have done more. You're dedicated to NASA's missions, to aeronautics and science and human space flight. You've guided us through many challenges, and you are opening the way for our next steps into the solar system.

We're celebrating you, our Presidential Rank Award winners, and at the same time, we're celebrating our first fifty years of achievement as an agency. There's a lot to celebrate – a whole array of amazing and astonishing achievements.

We sometimes talk about these achievements in somewhat impersonal terms – spacecraft and spinoffs; deadlines met and breakthroughs achieved. We're privileged to work at an agency with such amazing, awe-inspiring missions. Great observatories like Hubble are providing an amazing view of the universe. The MESSENGER probe recently passed by Mercury and the Mars rovers Spirit and Opportunity just celebrated their 4th anniversary on the planet. At the same time, the International Space Station is nearing

assembly completion, and NASA-derived technologies and innovations are continuing to benefit this Nation in countless ways.

But, NASA's achievements are more than images, more than spinoffs and more than spacecraft. The achievements are more than the budget numbers that I pored over for the rollout last week. They are profoundly personal outpourings from individuals like today's awardees, individuals who have dedicated themselves to space exploration, space and Earth science, and aeronautics research, and all the efforts that go into making our missions successful.

Accomplishments made by the awardees include leading teams that investigated technical issues directly related to the loss of Columbia; being part of the Hubble Space Telescope program's incredible success; streamlining aeronautics operations at Ames; making major contributions to the aeronautics budget development process; developing and implementing NASA's solar physics and geospace science programs; overseeing NASA's spectacular astrophysics programs; ensuring the success of the avionics and software for International Space Station; leading the development of the Orion Service Module; and selecting, tailoring, and applying technical requirements as we develop the Ares I launch vehicle.

These are just a few examples.

I am so lucky to be able to work with the outstanding people of NASA and we all are lucky to work on these missions.

I want to thank you, each and every one of you, for your relentless service and unstinting commitment to excellence. Because of you, this is one of the most exciting times to be at NASA. Because of you, we really are on the cusp of something extraordinary, a new era of exploration, in which we'll step beyond low-Earth orbit.

During our first 50 years, we've seen into the far reaches of the universe; we've helped make aviation safer, cleaner, and more efficient; we have not only seen the receding ice sheets of Greenland and Antarctica, but have quantitatively measured how fast these ice sheets are melting; and we've left Earth to venture to another world. It makes me shudder to think what NASA will accomplish and contribute to the human race over the next 50 years.

Your leadership will be critical to moving this agency forward and achieving the foreseeable and completely unforeseeable. You and your loved ones should be extremely proud of what you've done – please know that we, in senior leadership, are.

Thank you.