

Biographical Sketch

James B. Odom
Director, Science and Engineering Directorate
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Huntsville, Alabama 35812

James B. Odom is director of the Science and Engineering Directorate at NASA's George C. Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Ala. He assumed that position in November 1986 after serving as manager of the Space Telescope project for three years.

Odom was educated in Alabama schools. He is a 1951 graduate of McKenzie High School in McKenzie, Ala., and attended Troy State College and Auburn University to earn his bachelor of science degree in mechanical engineering in 1955.

Odom began his engineering career with the Chemstrand Corporation in Decatur, Ala. In 1956 he joined the U.S. Army's rocket research and development team at Redstone Arsenal, Ala., as a systems engineer and transferred to the Marshall Space Flight Center in 1959, prior to its formal establishment in July 1960.

At the Marshall Center, Odom has held various engineering and technical management positions. He was actively involved in the development of earth satellites and unmanned space probes prior to his assignment as chief of the Engineering and Test Operations Branch for the second stage of the Saturn V launch vehicle.

In 1972 he was appointed manager of the External Tank Project in the Shuttle Projects Office. In 1982 he became deputy manager for production and logistics in the Shuttle Projects Office. He became manager of the Space Telescope Office in 1983.

In April 1973, Odom received the NASA Exceptional Service Medal for his outstanding technical and management leadership and effectiveness in the design, development, verification, and launch support of the S-2 stages. In September 1981, he received the NASA Distinguished Service Medal for his outstanding contributions to the development of the Space Shuttle and its successful first orbital flight test. Most recently in June 1985, he was awarded the Presidential Rank of Meritorious Executive in recognition of sustained accomplishments and exceptional technical and managerial performance marked by contributions to the External Tank; also in recognition of significant advances made under his leadership in the management of the Space Telescope Project.

He is married to the former June Peevy of McKenzie. The couple resides in Decatur and has two children: Melanie and Burt.

The Marshall Space Flight Center has a leading role in the space program. During the sixties and early seventies, the Center was best known for developing Saturn launch vehicles and lunar roving vehicles for the Apollo program and for Skylab, the first U.S. space station. The Center also has developed satellite scientific experiments, which have returned a wealth of data in astronomy, astrophysics, and other disciplines.

Currently, the Marshall Center is responsible for a wide variety of NASA projects ranging from development of the Edwin P. Hubble Space Telescope and production of the propulsion elements of the Space Shuttle to management of Spacelab Earth-orbital missions and other payloads for the Space Shuttle. Also, the Marshall Center has been given a substantial role in the development of Space Station, a permanent manned facility proposed by President Reagan to be in orbit by 1994. The station would offer the capabilities of scientific research and technology development by both government and industry; the commercial use of space in such areas as the manufacture of critical materials and pharmaceuticals not available on Earth; the assembly, servicing and repair of satellites and other large structures in space; and research focused on extending a human being's staying time in space as a first step toward more ambitious manned space programs.