

30-foot antenna comes tumbling down

BY TOM CAMPBELL

During a recent signing ceremony at Langley's Flight Electronics Technology Division, the center officially transferred its deactivated 30-foot dish antenna to the State of Florida to support satellite-oriented research activities of the Florida Space Institute (FSI) in Cape Canaveral.

The antenna, valued at \$2.6 million, will be refurbished as part of an FSI effort to develop a multi-user "ground station" capable of supporting payload tracking, data retrieval and command and control operations for earth-orbiting satellites and other space research payloads. The ground station will also support launch operations at the Cape Canaveral spaceport.

"Florida has long lacked a dedicated capability to provide on-orbit support to scientific and commercial payloads at the Cape," said Florida Congressman Dave Weldon, vice chairman of the Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee and a long-time supporter of the FSI initiative. "With the right investment in infrastructure and people, the state's academic community can become a world leader in space research, while providing the education and training necessary to maintain our leadership in the launch industry."

Dr. Ron Phillips, director of FSI, and Jerry Grover, project coordinator, plan to fully refurbish Langley's antenna with new support equipment and proposed data links to the University of Central Florida (UCF) in Orlando.

The Cape Canaveral-based ground station would allow researchers from around the state and around

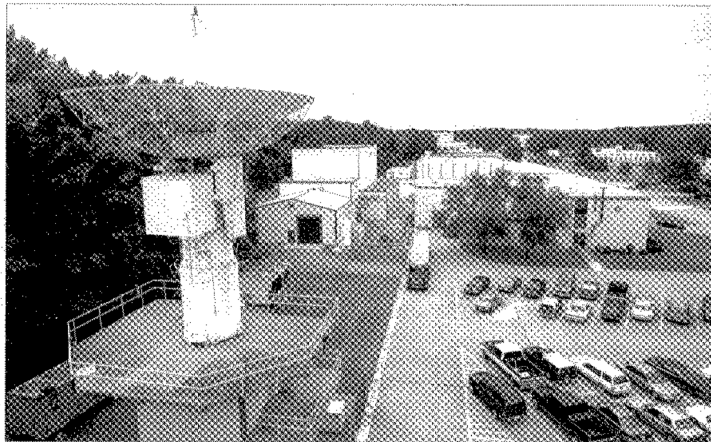


Photo by Jeff Caplan

Langley's 30-foot dish antenna, located on Dryden St., now belongs to the State of Florida to support the Florida Space Institute's satellite-based research in Cape Canaveral. The antenna was deactivated in the late 1970s. The transfer to Florida may occur by the end of September.

the world to remotely access data through the internet from a wide variety of satellites. The system would initially be used for the FSI's "photon" laser communications satellite and for training Florida engineers and technicians. Establishing a similar capability with a new antenna would cost about \$3 million.

The FSI project is part of a statewide effort to increase academic involvement in, and support to, Florida's space-related industry. FSI is a partnership of the Spaceport Authority, UCF, the NASA-sponsored Florida Space Grant Consortium, Brevard Community College, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and the Florida Institute of Technology. The Boeing Company also supports FSI, which works closely with the Air Force 45th Space Wing and NASA Kennedy Space Center.

The antenna may be shipped from Langley to NASA Kennedy Space Center by the end of September.

Representing Langley in this transaction were Dr. Doug Dwoyer, director of the Research and Technology Group; H. Milton Holt, chief of the Flight Electronics Technology Division; Tom Campbell, Electromagnetics Research Branch; Theresa Elliott, property disposal officer; and Sharon Smith, Office of Chief Counsel.

In addition, Robert Holt and Allen Langford, electronics technicians with the Electromagnetics Research Branch, are supporting the transfer of the antenna to FSI.