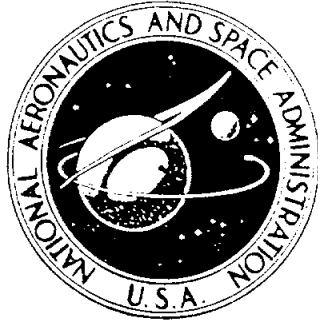




National Aeronautics and
Space Administration



MS. ANNIE J. EASLEY, MATHEMATICIAN
LEWIS RESEARCH CENTER
NATIONAL AERONAUTICS & SPACE ADMINISTRATION



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Introducing . . .



Ms. Annie J. Easley, Mathematician, NASA's Lewis Research Center, Cleveland, Ohio

Ms. Easley, a NASA employee since 1955, writes and tests out codes and programs for large-scale digital computers at Lewis Research Center. A graduate of Cleveland State University, she is currently involved in studies to determine the life of storage batteries such as those which could be used in electric vehicles and to identify energy conversion systems that offer significant improvements over existing technology. For more about her interesting career, you'll want to read our interview with her, beginning on the next page.

Q. Ms. Easley, you were born in Birmingham, Alabama and attended Xavier University in New Orleans, Louisiana. Since 1955, you have been employed at the NASA Lewis Research Center in Cleveland, Ohio. Just how did you come to build your career so far from your childhood home?

A. I went to Xavier University to attend the School of Pharmacy there. But after a couple of years, I got married and my husband and I moved to Cleveland, Ohio. My plans at the time were to continue my studies in pharmacy, but when I arrived in Cleveland, I discovered that the Western Reserve University School of Pharmacy had been closed that spring. So, in short, it was marriage that brought me to Cleveland.

Q. Do you still have close family ties in Alabama, or do you now think of Cleveland as home?

A. I still have some relatives in Alabama and still think of Birmingham as home. That's where I got my start, and if anyone asks me where I am from, I will usually say "Birmingham, Alabama." Though I have been in Cleveland for half of my life, Birmingham will always be home to me.

Q. Your current job title is "Mathematician." What exactly does a mathematician do at the Lewis Research Center?

A. Probably the best way I can answer your question is to describe very briefly what I do in my job. Keep in mind that mathematicians do different jobs in different places. Even at Lewis Research Center, mathematicians do all kinds of different jobs. I am a mathematician doing work primarily to aid the engineers. What this means specifically is that an engineer will bring a problem to me, and I will solve the problem — generally through the use of electronic computers.

Right now, I am working in a section that conducts analytical studies of advanced power conversion systems in utility and industrial applications. Using equations or an engineering model of a system, component, or process developed by an engineer, I determine and recommend methods for numerical solutions to the problems. I develop computer codes to be used in the analysis of power generation systems and their components in ground power applications. These computer codes must also be modified* and maintained for use in the management of different energy projects.

At Lewis, we use a lot of electrical power to run our test cells. One of my responsibilities is to obtain the readouts of electrical power usage at Lewis Research Center and develop profiles* of the power usage. By using computer codes, I am able to prepare profiles* by hours, days, months, or even for an entire year. This information is used in the study of alternative* power systems.

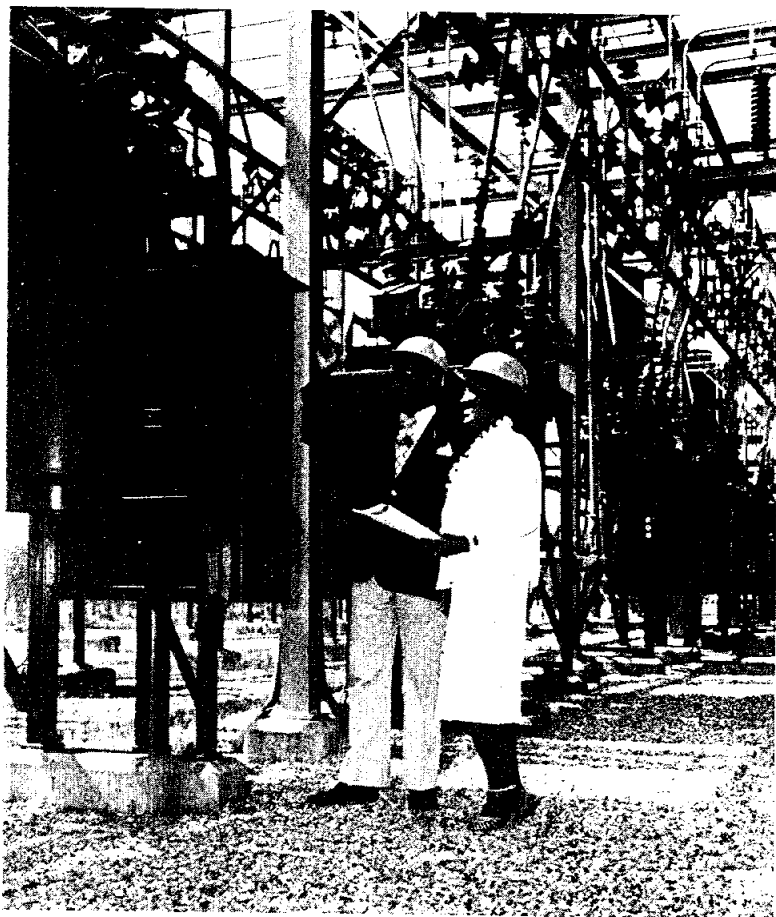
Q. What are some of the other projects with which you have been involved in your work at the Lewis Research Center?

A. Going back 20 years, I recall that I did a lot of work on a simulation* of our Plum Brook facility. At that time, mathematicians did most of their work with a desk calculator and a pencil and paper.

More recently, in the last five to seven years, I was involved in a program called GASP (Global Air Sampling Program). In this project, we rigged up an instrument that was put aboard some of the major aircrafts to record particulates* in the air. When the tapes that these instruments recorded were filled with data, they were brought back to Lewis and we analyzed the data. At that time, we were trying to determine if the ozone layers* in the atmosphere were in fact being destroyed by our use of such things as aerosol spray cans.

Another interesting project that I've been involved in is using a computer program to test the life of batteries. In this project, which is still going on, we are trying to determine the life of batteries that could be used in an electric vehicle, for example.

Q. Ms. Easley, at this point in your career as a mathematician, what aspects of your work have you found to be the most interesting and challenging?



Part of a typical workday for Ms. Easley is on-site visit to power station with engineer. Photo Courtesy NASA.

A. Overall, I would have to say that the most interesting part of my career to date has been working at the federal agency that is responsible for our nation's space shots. It's a very exciting time to be here, but it's also particularly exciting to have been a part of putting a man on the moon. Just to know that I may have played even a very small part in that through my work at NASA is very gratifying to me. Beyond that, I find it challenging to have to work and meet a deadline. To complete an assignment and know that I have met that deadline and met that challenge is always a very good feeling.

Q. Most of us are aware that NASA's major thrust at the current time is directed toward the Space Shuttle, the reusable space vehicle that can carry personnel and equipment of various kinds back and forth between Earth and space with a high level of efficiency and cost effectiveness. Does your work bring you into contact with that project by any chance?

A. Not directly; we have a Launch Vehicles Area here at Lewis Research Center that is linked more closely to the Space Shuttle program. I work in the Energy Directorate, which is responsible for energy research. I'm involved primarily with energy conversion projects for Earth applications at this time.

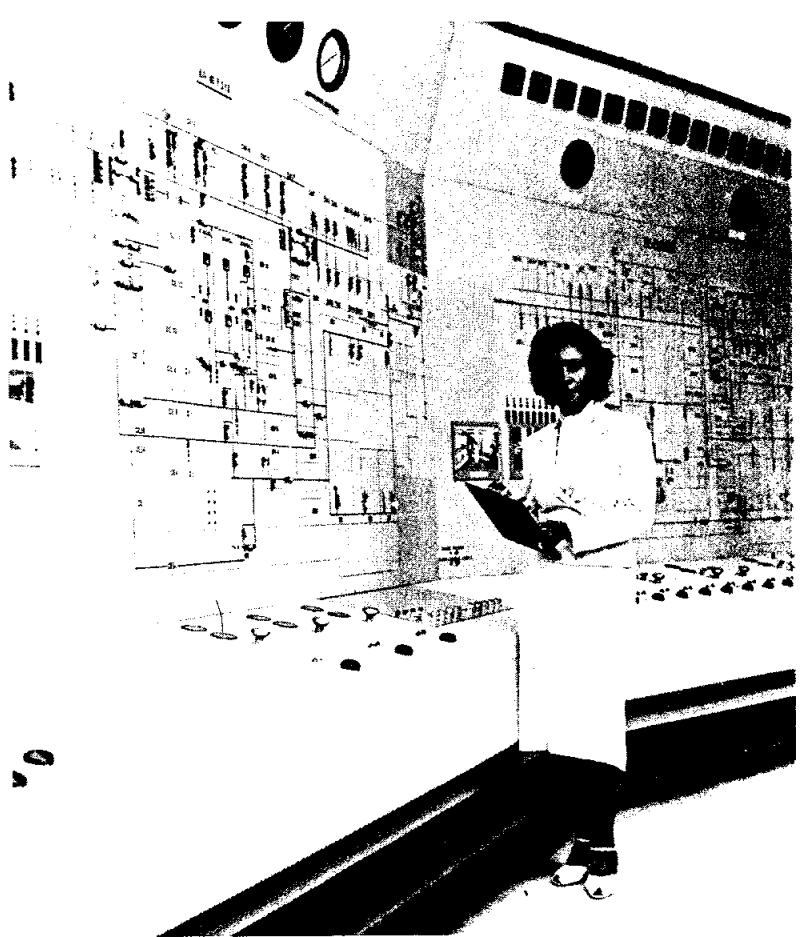
Q. What are some of the directions you can see your work taking in the future? Are there specific areas of mathematical research either in progress now or in the planning stages for the future at Lewis in which you might like to become involved?

A. I am very interested in the area in which I am working now, mostly because of one of the projects we are working on, called Co-Generation. We are looking for alternative* systems to solve some of our current energy problems, and I find this a very stimulating thing to be involved with. If I am able to make a contribution — not just to NASA, but to all people — then my work will have had a special significance. I find this project to be very exciting, and I thoroughly enjoy working on it. I hope to continue working on it for the time being.

Q. From your perspective, what do you see as the major problems mathematicians working in jobs similar to yours will have to deal with in the coming 20 years?

A. Like everything else, nothing remains constant* in the field of mathematics. I think there's no question that in the future the competition for jobs like mine will become much keener. There will be fewer jobs for mathematicians mainly because many of our mathematicians are now working in education, and fewer teachers will be needed in the future. Our country's declining birth rate virtually guarantees that.

Furthermore, I do *not* think that students who are now in college will be able to survive in the mathemat-



At work at Lewis Research Center, Ms. Easley checks on power used by test facilities. Photo Courtesy NASA.

ics job market with just a bachelor's degree. To be competitive, they will have to go on and obtain a higher degree.

Younger students who are interested in a career involving mathematics should give strong consideration to going into one of the engineering or computer science fields. This would enable them to utilize their math interest and skills and at the same time give them a sure shot at a really good job once they graduate from college.

Q. Speaking again from your experience, what are the most important qualities and characteristics a person needs to become a competent* and successful mathematician?

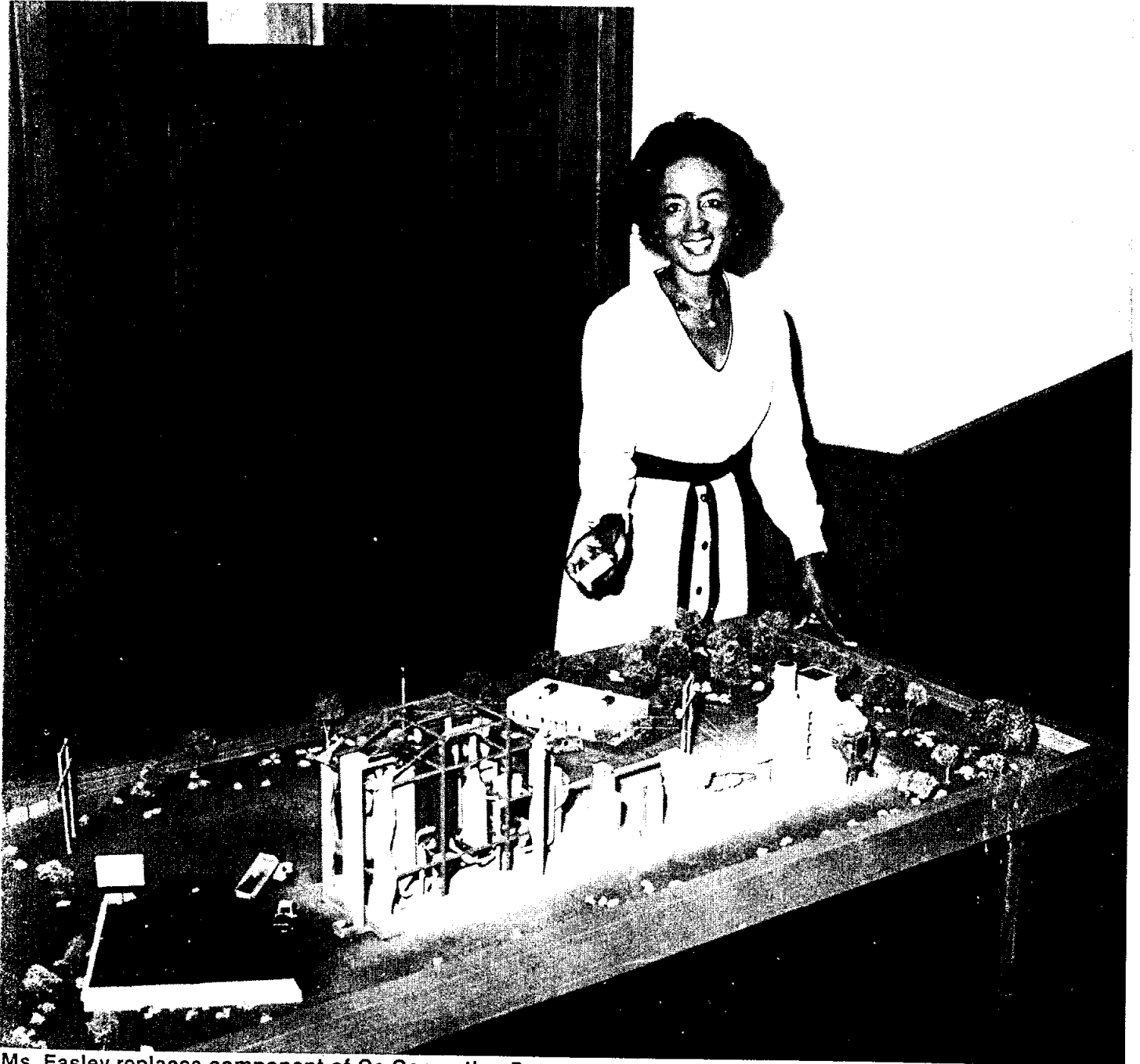
A. Students considering careers in mathematics and math-related fields should be good at understanding and working with abstract concepts, *i.e.*, ideas that cannot be easily understood in terms of everyday objects and events. They should enjoy working independently* and be comfortable with the suspense and tension that go along with trying to solve problems. They must also be able to present the results of their work verbally* as well as in written reports. The ability to communicate well is extremely important to successful mathematicians, since on the job they often

must listen to a non-mathematician describe a problem in very general terms and then must check and double-check to make sure that they understand the mathematical solution that this person needs.

Q. You seem to be emphasizing that mathematicians must be able to communicate well in order to facilitate* their work with non-mathematicians. Are you

ranges from analysis of the mathematical aspects of launching Earth satellites to studies of the effects of new drugs on disease.

The modern mathematician can be found on teams researching business and industrial management, economics, life sciences, or the behavioral sciences. The mathematician must also have a good knowledge of computer programming, since most complex math-



Ms. Easley replaces component of Co-Generation Power Plant model. *Photo Courtesy NASA; Don Huebler, Photographer.*

saying that today's mathematician will often be found working as a member of a multi-disciplinary* team?

A. Mathematics is a tool essential for the performance of many kinds of work. For example, math is used to develop theories and techniques to solve practical* problems in business, engineering, and the natural and social sciences. The work of the mathematician

ematical computation* is done by computer. It is important for the mathematician to have training in the field in which the mathematics will be used. For example, a mathematician working on a behavioral science problem can approach solving the problem more competently* if he or she also has some training in the behavioral sciences.

Here at Lewis Research Center, a mathematician

may be a member of a team consisting of an engineer, a scientist, an architect, a technician, and others. All of these people are necessary to get the project completed successfully. So, yes, today's mathematician is very likely to be found working on a multi-disciplinary* team.

Q. Besides those you've already mentioned, are there

is work for *people*. So the personal characteristics I mentioned before, *i.e.*, being able to communicate well, being comfortable with problem-solving processes, and being able to think of new ideas and approaches — all are needed by anyone who is seriously interested in a career in the field of mathematics.

Q. Ms. Easley, have you discerned* any roadblocks



Student in co-op program at Lewis Research Center asks Ms. Easley's advice. *Photo Courtesy NASA.*

any additional personal characteristics that a young woman should have if she is interested in building a career in mathematics or a math-related field?

A. A young woman will need exactly the same characteristics as a young man to become a career mathematician. Remember that we are not talking about "woman's work" or "man's work" here. Mathematics

being placed in your path as you have developed your career over the years because you are a woman? How about because you are Black? If so, how have you dealt with such obstacles?

A. As both a woman and as a Black person, I'm aware of many roadblocks. I think sometimes that I may be much more aware of them than most of the people

who place them there. Traditionally*, women working outside the home have been steered toward the so-called "women's jobs" as nurses, secretaries, teachers, and librarians. Throughout our nation's history, any employment that could be described as serving or helping has been viewed as most appropriate for women to do.

As Black people, we know that our youth, particularly our male youth, have been steered toward athletics. Similarly, many young Black people look upon entertainment as a desirable field to go into, and that is an acceptable aspiration that is encouraged in our society.

But when we, as women or as Blacks, decide to go into a scientific or engineering field, we are taking a non-traditional step and need to be aware that there are many people who don't see us as capable of these kinds of work. They don't think of us in terms of being oriented toward science, and so I think that often we are treated as if we are not able to do it. We may not be told directly that we can't do it, but we will see ourselves being the last hired, being hired at a lower level or grade, and being promoted less rapidly than perhaps the male or non-Black worker is. These are the kinds of roadblocks you have to be aware of.

How do you deal with obstacles like these? Many times, you have to go to your supervisor or to others in positions of authority and talk to them about it. You have to let them know what is happening. Very often, they may say, "Oh, I was not aware of that," or "We certainly don't *intend* to discriminate." But it happens. And, as I said earlier, when it does, you are often much more sensitive to what is taking place than the person who is doing it.

Q. What specific advice can you offer young women, particularly young Black women, who are considering mathematics as a possible career field?

A. My first bit of advice would be to get all of the math you can in junior and senior high school. Any math course that is offered, *take it!* Accept the challenge that it represents. Don't just blindly accept someone else's opinion who may say that math or science or some other academic course is too hard. If you will look around you, you'll find that you have a lot of role

models. You can see a lot of people who have done it if you will look. You have a brain; you can use it. Use it to your best advantage. You don't have to go into the so-called "easy" fields. Take all of the science and math courses that are available to you, and really work at them. Then, when you are ready for college, I want you to take college very seriously. It is not some kind of playground. It is the place where you can get the knowledge to take you out into the real world.

Q. Ms. Easley, you grew up at a time when women were generally expected to fulfill their aspirations through their role as a wife and mother rather than to carve out a satisfying professional career outside the home. To what extent do you feel that you have been successful in juggling your life around to include both of these roles?



A creative cook, Ms. Easley is pictured here trying out a new recipe. Photo Courtesy NASA.

A. It's very true that at the time when I grew up, women were expected to get married and have families. In line with that expectation, I did get married after a couple of years of college and was married for many years. But I also worked for most of those years. We had no children, but my life consisted of running the household and working outside the home. I knew that in order to succeed at my outside work, I would have to obtain more education, so I did that by attending evening classes while I was working. But I also had the household to take care of.

To handle both roles simultaneously*, you may find that you have to sacrifice some of the other things you might like to do in life. At that time, I had to give up a lot of social activities. After all, there are only so many hours in a day! I do not regret having come the way I did, but I would say that today no one *has* to get married.

No one *has* to be a mother; no one *has* to be a father. Today, there is a lot more freedom of choice as to which way you want to go, whether you want it to be marriage or a career or a combination of the two.

Q. To what do you attribute your success in combining these two roles in your life? Do you think it was determination on your part, the encouragement of your family and husband, or what?

A. I would say it was mostly determination on my part. Once I had decided what I wanted to do, I went after it. I was willing to make the sacrifices to do the things

that helped my career. To become a mathematician was an important objective in my life. It meant working problems, doing mathematical reports, and evaluating which math courses would help me to achieve my objective. It meant that I was up late many nights studying. It meant passing up many invitations to dinner, the theater, or a football game. But it was what I chose to do, and I was determined to do it. Another important factor is that I was raised in a very supportive home, and it was something that my mother had wanted of me from my early years. But I figure that determination has been my biggest asset* in doing what I wanted to do with my life.

A. The most disappointing and frustrating thing for me has been having to deal with sexism and racism in the working world. As I pointed out earlier, sexist and racist thoughts and actions often come from people who may not even be aware of what they are doing to you as an individual when they express such attitudes as "A woman's place is in the home." I've had men tell me in a joking manner, "Oh, you're one of those women who is taking a man's job. You should be at home raising a family." But just think a minute: if men who feel this way are in positions of power and authority, how likely are they to treat a female worker fairly? She doesn't have much of a chance to reach



Ms. Easley takes care of paperwork in her pleasantly plant-bedecked office at NASA's Lewis Research Center.

Photo Courtesy NASA; Don Huebler, Photographer.

Q. Ms. Easley, at this point in your career, what specific achievements have given you the most personal satisfaction?

A. Probably one of the most rewarding achievements to me has been being a part of NASA's efforts to explore space. Through my work at Lewis Research Center, I have been able to make a mathematical contribution to the effort to put a man on the moon.

Q. On the other side of the coin, what can you single out as the most disappointing or the most frustrating thing you have encountered in your work?

her full potential* with a boss like that. And it's equally unfair if people in positions of power have the same kinds of restricted and patronizing* attitudes about appropriate roles for Blacks. It is very frustrating to me to know that we have people in power who still feel that way today.

Q. When you encounter racist or sexist attitudes on the part of some of your co-workers, how do you deal with them?

A. I try to get them to understand that some of the attitudes and customs that they grew up with are not in

step with today's society. It is very difficult to have to explain to people that what they are doing is wrong or that they are creating an unfair and unpleasant situation for me, as a Black person, as a woman, or as both. Many times, I have to point out that there are fair employment and civil rights laws on the books because of the attitudes and behavior of people like them.

There are also many people who feel that problems stemming from racism are a thing of the past; I remind them that we don't have equal employment opportunity (EEO) and affirmative action plans today just for the fun of it. These programs exist because discrimination still exists. It is particularly frustrating to me that today, in 1982, we still face some of the same problems that made advancement for Blacks and women so difficult when I first began working in 1955.

Q. Ms. Easley, what kind of future career goals have you set for yourself? Is there anything which you have not yet achieved in a professional sense that you really would like to do?

A. At this point, I am pretty much satisfied with what I have done in 25 years in this kind of work. I think I have spent a full career as a mathematician. My personal goal now is to get into a different kind of work. There are other fields that I would like to go into now, fields that are more people-oriented. At this stage in my life, I think I might find it more rewarding personally to be involved with a more social services type of work. I look forward to maybe getting into that kind of field and to working more directly with people.

Q. In looking back, what do you think were the most important influences that led to your choosing mathematics as a career field?

A. I can probably best answer that question by telling you how I became interested in mathematics in the first place. Allow me to step back and mention again that when I came to Cleveland, Ohio, my intentions were to continue my studies in pharmacy at what is now Case Western Reserve University. But the university had dismantled its pharmacy program that year, and the next closest school of pharmacy was about 140 miles from Cleveland. Since I was newly married at the time, I didn't want to go away to school and leave my husband in Cleveland. So I didn't go to school; I just sort of sat it out and thought about it. "What am I going to do? Where will I continue my education?" It was a real time of decision for me.

In the meantime, while mulling over* all of the various aspects of my dilemma*, I decided to look for a job. I didn't look very seriously, but one day, I happened to read an article in the newspaper about twin sisters who worked as mathematics aides at a place called NACA. (At the time, the agency that is now known as NASA was NACA, the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics.) And I remember that the work these two women did sounded very interesting to me. So, the next day, I went out to NACA and applied for the

same kind of job. I think that everything was just right at the time, because within two weeks, I was hired and working at NACA. It was through my work as a mathematics aide that I became interested in developing a career in mathematics. I then decided to study for a degree in math.

Q. I would suppose that this was the period in your life that you mentioned earlier during which you worked during the day and went to school at night. How long did you lead this double life?

A. Seven years. In the beginning, I took only one course at a time. As time went on and I began to acquire good study habits, however, I was able to increase the number of courses I took each quarter. During the latter part of these years, I was able to carry a full load at the university as a result of having learned to use my time wisely. There were times in the very beginning when I thought one course at a college and a full-time job at the same time were too much for me to handle. But I had lots of encouragement from my friends to stick it out, and I am glad that I did.

Because it worked out so well for me, I encourage anyone who may be thinking about going to school while working full-time to give it a try. If you will give yourself a reasonable chance to adjust to the double life, you will find that you can succeed with only a few sacrifices. And they won't count in the long run.



Ms. Easley relaxes by catching up on some reading at home. Photo Courtesy NASA; Don Huebler, Photographer.

Q. To go back now to an earlier time in your life, Ms. Easley, what were you like as a student in junior high and high school?

A. I was considered a very good student throughout my years in school, and I think all that has helped me in my adult life. Things were pretty easy to me in high school. I gave it my best, nevertheless, but at that time, things were pretty easy for me.

Q. What were your favorite subjects and extracurricular activities while you were in school?

A. I would have to say that mathematics was always my favorite subject, and I especially liked algebra. It was always fun to me to be able to solve a problem. I enjoyed being able to figure out what the word problems stated and what was required to solve them. But whereas math was my favorite subject, I must also add here that history was the subject I liked least.

My extracurricular activities consisted mostly of dancing. When I was a teenager, my friends and I went to lots and lots of dances. That was the biggest thing. We might go to two or three dances a week if our parents would allow us to get out of the house that much. I also played softball and basketball, but I would say that my favorite extracurricular activity was dancing.

Q. Were you active in church and community affairs?



At home, Ms. Easley checks on the condition of her favorite houseplant. Photo Courtesy NASA.

A. I attended church regularly and belonged to the young peoples' church groups at the time. I was also active in the local community affairs; I have always been an active person and a "doer."

Q. Who were your role models when you were a teenager? Can you recall any particular persons whom you admired and looked up to in this way?

A. I would say that some of the most influential role models for me were my teachers, because teachers were something special to me, and I interacted with them daily. But the person I looked up to and admired most was my mother. She was the one who took care of me, and I thought she was great. She could do everything: she took care of her family; she helped me with my homework; she made my clothes; she cooked my food. So my mother was always my greatest role model, and I admired her the most.

Q. Speaking of your mother, can you tell us something more about your family life during your "growing up" years?

A. Well, there were two children in my family, my brother and I. My brother is six years older, so probably I could best describe him as the typical big brother who never wanted his little sister to do anything with him because, of course, she was a pest. I had friends in the neighborhood, little kids, kids my age, with whom I was very close. But in my immediate family, there were just my brother and I. We didn't do a lot of things together because of the great age difference, but I always knew I could call on him if I needed him. In our earlier years as a family, we went to church together and visited relatives and friends together. But by the time I was 12 years old, our lives were completely different, because my brother was 18 and grown. So I was sort of an only child during my teen years.

Q. What kinds of expectations did your family have for you? Did they encourage you toward a professional career?

A. I was always expected to succeed. My mother encouraged me to do my best from the time I was a little girl. In looking back on my early years, I can also see that she — like most other parents — was steering her child toward certain fields. When I was little, for instance, I can remember my mother encouraging me to become a nurse. And I retained a strong interest in nursing until I was in high school, when I decided that wasn't something I wanted to do. Instead, I chose to go into the field of pharmacy when I went to college. But my mom always encouraged me to do my best at whatever I might choose to do; she emphasized to me that if I wanted to do something, I could if I gave it my best effort. So, yes, I was encouraged from the beginning. And I was always pushed, not beyond what I was capable of doing, but to do my best.



Ready for some action, Ms. Easley arrives at tennis court. Photo Courtesy NASA; Don Huebler, Photographer.



Ms. Easley checks out ski gear to make sure it's ready for icy slopes. Photo Courtesy NASA; D. Huebler, Photographer.

Q. To return now to the present, Ms. Easley, what are some of the things that you like to do in your leisure time? What kinds of hobbies, sports, and other activities do you enjoy the most?

A. There are a wide variety of activities that I enjoy doing for relaxation, primarily sports. At this point in my life, I find that I am playing a lot of tennis and racquetball. Sometimes, when I have had a tough day and really want to just "beat it out," I'll go jogging around the neighborhood. That to me is a very relaxing thing. In the summertime, I especially love to play golf. And in the wintertime, I enjoy skiing locally. I also enjoy going on skiing trips away from the Cleveland area. I guess you might say that if something involves a lot of physical activity, I enjoy doing it. I like to be involved in *doing* things as opposed to just watching others do them or reading about them.

Another activity of an entirely different nature which I enjoy just as much as sports is tutoring some Cleveland-area high school students in English and mathematics. As a Black professional woman, I find participation in this program to be very stimulating and rewarding on a personal basis.

Q. How did you happen to become interested in serving as a tutor to young students? As I am sure you are very well aware, many people have the qualifications and ability to tutor youngsters but, for some reason, they just never get around to doing it.

A. My initial experiences with tutoring go back many years. At the time, I was asked by co-workers at Lewis Research Center to participate in some career day programs at several local schools, and it was through those activities that I soon found myself involved in tutoring kids who needed help in English and mathematics. As I said, that goes back many, many years and was a fairly informal, unstructured type of thing. I now tutor in a very organized tutoring program that meets on Saturday mornings.

Q. Since your tutoring is in English and mathematics, does your involvement with this Saturday morning program give you an opportunity to encourage the students in the program to pursue careers in the science and engineering professions?

A. As a result of the close relationships that I am able to develop with many of the students involved in the program, I feel that I am in a unique position to encourage them to work toward careers in science and engineering or any other field that they are interested in, for that matter. I also have an opportunity to do this in a more general way when I go out and do career talks to junior high, high school, and college students in the greater Cleveland area. Talking with these students about career preparation gives me a chance to discuss with them what the choices they make now will mean to them in the future. For exam-

ple, I point out to them that if they take only the so-called "easy" courses now, it will be difficult for them to make it if they decide to go into engineering or one of the other more academically-demanding fields later on.

Of course, when I talk to college-level students, I know that they have already chosen their career fields for the most part, but I can encourage them to stick with their goals. When I talk to the junior high and high school students, I try to encourage them to do their best at whatever they are going for, whether it's engineering, science, mathematics, or whatever. I know that they won't all become scientists or engineers, but I believe that if they do their best, they will come out on top in whatever career fields they might choose to go into as adults.

Q. Against this background, what are your personal feelings about the fact that the most widely-publicized role models for Black youngsters today seem to be either entertainment or sports personalities? As you talk with students, how do you go about offsetting the appeal of the lifestyle of, let's say, a Lola Falana or a Reggie Jackson, to a young person who has the potential* to become a successful scientist, mathematician, or engineer?

A. The first thing we have to make clear to our children is that not everyone who would like to is going to become a great athlete; not everyone who wants to will become a world-famous entertainer. As the expression goes nowadays, we don't all sing; we don't all dance; and we don't all have rhythm. And we must



Pictured here at a local golf course, Ms. Easley takes time out from her busy work schedule for one of her favorite summertime activities. *Photo Courtesy NASA; Don Huebler, Photographer.*

Wind Energy
 DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
 NASA JOINT PROJECT



Ms. Easley fills tutoring program student in on details of wind energy project sponsored jointly by NASA and the U. S. Department of Energy. *Photo Courtesy NASA; Don Huebler, Photographer.*

make our children aware of that. This is not to imply that there is anything wrong with the glamorous life of a singer or dancer, but we're not all cut out to be that, any more than we are all cut out to be an eminent* scientist or mathematician. I would say that students should look for their particular niche* in life and then work to be the best there is of whatever that is. We can be more. There are certainly more things in life for us as Blacks than being in sports and entertainment. We have brains, and we can use them. We can create. We can design. We can build. Study your Black history. Look at the Blacks who have gone before you. Look at your Black role models. Black kids have a lot more to look at today than I did when I grew up. Back then, "engineer" was what they called the guy who ran the train, and he was usually white. Suffice it to say that I didn't have many role models to emulate*, while today's students do. They are very visible. Seek them out; talk with them. Then decide what you want your life's career to be, and go after it. It's yours if you want it enough to give it your best.

Q. To conclude, Ms. Easley, if you were asked to state

the essence of the basic philosophy that you live your life by in a single paragraph, how would it read?

A. Most likely, it would read something like this: Live life each day; live it to its fullest. I feel that I am living today, and it's a great time to live, but I want to contribute all that I can. Anything that I can do to help myself and to help others, let me do it today. I don't wish to wait ten or fifteen years for my great day. I want to live today — every single minute of it — and make a worthwhile contribution as I live.

Q. If you could write your own epitaph*, what would it say?

A. It would say: "She loved people. She loved life. She gave what she could to other people, and she lived her life to the fullest."

NOTE: All of the photographs for this interview were provided by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration; Don Huebler, photographer.
