



Director of Airspace Systems Program



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Director, Airspace Systems Program

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My job as NASA's Airspace Systems Program Director, is to address the following challenges of today's air traffic control system:

- Accommodating projected growth in air traffic while maintaining safety.
- Allowing pilots more flexibility and efficiency to use airports, airspace, and aircraft, while reducing delays.
- Supporting the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) by researching new modes of operation and supporting its commitment to "Free Flight."
- Keeping informed of changes in a dynamic technical environment.

Areas of expertise:

- Aerodynamics
- Flight dynamics
- Aircraft stability and control
- Management of technical organizations

How I first became interested in this profession:

I was born on a farm in the Central Valley in California, the youngest of three. As a child, I grew up loving all things that fly. In my free time, I enjoyed building and flying model planes and rockets. When I was in high school, Sputnik I was launched on October 4, 1957 by the Soviet Union. It was the world's first artificial satellite to orbit the Earth, weighing only 183 pounds, and no larger than a basketball. Sputnik captured the imagination of many and inspired me and many young people to go on to careers in aerospace.

What helped prepare me for this job:

My father owned a small, war surplus airplane, which after the war was neither expensive nor hard to come by. As a young child, I remember the joy of flying next to him. This experience no-doubt helped fire my love of flying. When I was 8, my father died and we all had to help our mother with the farm. It was expected that we would live our lives on the family farm, so when I announced my plans to attend the University of California in Berkeley, I did not get much encouragement or support. But, I was determined to pursue my dream. I was admitted to UC Berkeley, where I studied Mechanical Engineering with an emphasis in Aeronautical Sciences. I completed a bachelor's degree in 1965, and a master's degree in 1967. I then continued to carry out graduate work in UC Berkeley and Stanford.

My role models or inspirations:

I am grateful to my wife, Jennifer, for her strength and her support of my career goals. As a bonus, Jennifer is a marriage and family therapist and an intelligent listener. She has, over the years, helped me sort out the complex situations that invariably arise in managing people. I believe that a fundamental quality of a good manager is being an excellent listener.

My education and training:

- B.S. and M.S. in Mechanical Engineering with an emphasis in Aeronautical Sciences, UC Berkeley
- Graduate studies in Aeronautical Sciences, Stanford University

My career path:

- Twelve years as aerospace engineer at NASA Ames Research Center
- Eleven years in the aircraft industry in research and development
- Eleven years at NASA-Ames as project manager for the development of RASCAL (a research helicopter); the TAP project to increase airport capacity; and Director of the Aviation Systems Capacity Program

What I like about my job:

I like being in a position where I can make a difference. I enjoy the interactions with all kinds of people, from engineers and managers at Ames to high level representatives at the FAA in Washington. I enjoy flying my small private plane from my home in Reno to a local airport near Moffett Field. I also enjoy traveling as a passenger in commercial airplanes. I find this kind of life stimulating and exciting!

What I don't like about my job:

The only difficult part has been that work often takes me away from my wife, Jennifer and our home and family.

My advice to anyone interested in this occupation:

Do not be bashful about your capabilities, and don't feel constrained by what others may think. When you are willing to work hard, the possibilities are endless!