



LANGLEY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

LAA Publishes Its First LAA Quarterly Newsletter

June 2021

By Rick Ross

Welcome to the Langley Alumni Association's first quarterly newsletter! These newsletters will be published prior to the general meeting in March, June, September, and December. Newsletters will be posted on the LAA website and a link will be emailed to each member when a new issue is published.

The newsletter serves as a complement to the LAA website. While the website provides timely information about upcoming events and serves as an archive for past accomplishments, the purpose of the newsletter is to:

- Summarize accomplishments for the quarter
- Describe tours, judging, and mentorship activities

- Convey members' interesting experiences and trips
- Share charitable or community activities by members

The front page features stories of greatest interest to members. Page 2 contains important messages from each of the LAA officers. Reports from committee chairs and members are included on page 3, and the back page features member articles and flyers for upcoming events.

LAA members are encouraged to submit short articles and photos that would be of interest to other members. Please submit articles by the 10th of the prior month (February, May, August, and November). This is your newsletter—please help to make it a great one! ♦

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LAA Hall of Honor Nominations for Class of 2022

By Duncan McIver

The NASA Alumni Association (LAA) and the NASA Langley Research Center (LaRC) are preparing for the 3rd class of the Langley Hall of Honor in 2022. A nomination form for the Class of 2022 will be available for download from the LAA website on September 1, 2021. An experienced team of LAA and LaRC professionals are meeting on a regular basis to develop the operational and selection plans.

Information on the current and earlier Hall of Honor Classes is available on the LAA and LaRC websites. Honorees of the first two Classes, 2015 and 2017, are presented in the display at right in the NACA Room of the Langley Cafeteria. ♦



2021 LAA OFFICERS

President

Damodar Ambur

Vice President & Programs Chair

Daniel Palumbo

Treasurer & Registered Agent

Geoff Tennille

Secretary

Ray Whipple

Communications Officer

Richard Hueschen

COMMITTEE CHAIRS & OFFICIALS

Membership Committee

Michael Marcolini

Nominating Committee

Daniel Palumbo

Hall of Honor Committee

Duncan McIver

Website & Newsletter Committee

Olaf Storaasli Richard Ross
Wayne Richie Richard Hueschen

Langley Representative

Melanie Robinson

Immediate Past President

Roger Ferguson

Bylaws Committee

Linda Bangert Peter Jacobs

LRKC Ad-Hoc Committee

Marilyn Ogburn

LAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Class of 2022

Linda Bangert Sharon Stack
Charles Cockrell Bill Tennis
Pete Jacobs Ray Whipple
Anthony Pototzky

Class of 2023

Manjula Ambur Doug Morris
Todd Hodges Geoff Tennille
Richard Hueschen

Class of 2024

Vicki Crisp Jaroslaw Sobieski
Charles Laney Olaf Storaasli
Michael Marcolini

President's Report

By Damodar Ambur, President

I am most thankful for the well-being of my family and the LAA families during the COVID-19 pandemic. I am grateful to the dedicated and brave medical professionals for taking care of the sick, and the scientists that made the COVID-19 vaccines possible.

Despite challenges from the pandemic, LAA members stayed engaged through virtual meetings and made significant progress during 2020 and 2021 as summarized below to strengthen the Association.

- Presented information about LAA to retirement-eligible Langley employees and contractors.
- Developed and widely distributed the new LAA brochure to increase visibility.
- Expanded monthly program activities to include one-day tours and "Life after Langley" talks.
- Introduced speaker gifts with the new LAA logo.
- Aligned bylaws with LAA functions and working to secure the non-profit status for LAA.
- Instituted Lifetime Membership option and Honorary Lifetime Membership awards.
- Continued to share the vast experience and expertise of our members with Langley.
- Transitioned LAA website to HDL, a new host, to save LAA \$600 per year, and added a new banner.

Publication of the first LAA newsletter is another example of our commitment to improve membership communications. Our focus going forward will be to grow LAA membership, increase member involvement with STEM education activities, and select the next class of NACA/NASA Hall of Honor awardees.

Thanks to the collective efforts of the

many Board members and Association members that made all this possible. We need your continued participation and support to enhance the LAA and contribute to Langley and the community.

With best wishes,
Damodar ♦

Treasurer's Report

By Geoff Tennille

I was elected as Treasurer at the March LAA Board Meeting and would like to thank Charlie Cockrell for his service as LAA Treasurer and for his assistance in my transition into the Office. Lifetime Memberships have become very popular since the Board introduced that option in December 2020, and that option has improved the organization's financial standing. On December 1, 2020, the LAA had \$9,039.45 on deposit with the LFCU and by January 1, 2021 that amount had increased to \$9,820.00, which reflected the first paid life memberships. As of May 1, 2021, the balance had grown to \$11,878.56 and is continuing to rise as more members opt for Lifetime Membership. The LAA is now in a stable financial position for the foreseeable future.

On April 15, 2021, I filed the LAA's application for Tax-Exempt Status with the IRS, with the proviso to not contact the IRS about the application for at least thirty days, which will be during the week after our May meeting. Once that application is approved, membership dues and donations to the LAA will be tax-exempt for those who itemize deductions on federal taxes. Individuals who don't itemize may still be able to take up to \$300 in charitable deductions off their federal taxes. The LAA will also be able to request free office software from Microsoft to help us communicate more efficiently with our members and avoid paying state sales tax on purchases. ♦

LAA Promotes STEM Education

By Linda Bangert

One of the purposes of the Langley Alumni Association is to “Facilitate Alumni interactions with students from elementary school through college to promote Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education opportunities.”

Currently, more than 60% of the available high paying jobs in our country require STEM education. These jobs are expected to grow at 13% per year, with 2.5 million going unfilled in 2021 to 3.5 million in 2035 due to a shortage of qualified candidates. There are data which suggest that students drop out of STEM courses at different stages of their education. We have an opportunity to address this at some level in whichever locality we live.

At the end of March, we surveyed the LAA members to determine which STEM activities they would be interested in participating.

Based on these survey results, the top choices were:

- Tutoring students in math, physics, and computer science at the middle school, high school or college level
- Volunteering at the NASA Langley open houses
- Judging middle and high school science fairs
- Assisting students with writing resumes and with presentation skills at the high school and college levels
- Coaching students through middle and high school science fair projects

If you are interested in any of these, but didn't have time to take the survey, please contact Linda Bangert at LSBangert@cox.net to let me know of your interest. Your assistance is greatly appreciated! ♦

Meet the LAA Communications Officer

By Dick Hueschen

Hi, fellow LAA members. My name is officially Richard Hueschen, but in the 50+ years I worked at Langley, I was known as Dick Hueschen. I was born and raised on a farm in Nebraska and came to work at LaRC in June 1965 and retired in October 2015. For most of my time at LaRC, I did research on navigation, guidance, and control systems for transport aircraft.

As this is the first LAA newsletter, the following briefly states what the Communication Officer does for the LAA. This officer is responsible to communicate various things to the LAA membership, which is done via regular emails. Generally, the things communicated are items of interest to other LAA members brought to this

officer's attention by other LAA members and the LAA Liaison to LaRC Melanie Robinson. Another duty of the Communications Officer is to announce the LAA General Membership meeting and agenda provided by our LAA President. Sometimes this officer may be asked to email information to other LAA board members.

When a LAA member's email is rejected, this officer tries to resolve why it was rejected. Lastly, as the LAA Communications Officer, I make changes to the active list of LAA members' email addresses as retirees join the LAA, members' addresses change, and others decide to drop their membership. ♦

Website Enhancements

By Olaf Storaasli

Duncan McIver and Vectec web developers began our first LAA website around 2000 using WordPress “middleware” to simplify coding. This served LAA well for over 15 years, but it was expensive at \$614 per year.

Retiring from LaRC in 2005 for a second career at Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL), I recently joined LAA to serve on our Board and as Webmaster. Why? At a 2020 LAA Zoom meeting, I suggested LAA's website cost could be reduced to \$49.95 per year using [HDL](#) as I'd done for years. I created and hosted Family History, Church, Sons of Norway, Travel, Beekeeping and Ecology websites on HDL and six home servers. LAA supported the idea which saved \$600, the cost of six \$100 LAA Lifetime Memberships. Thanks, all!

Our latest addition to the website is a forum for targeted communications among our members, developed by Dan Palumbo. Be sure to check it out at <https://larc alumni.org/forums>.

Our talented web team of retired NASA techies are sticklers for website speed. Our WordPress website code takes 9.8 seconds versus 1.4 seconds for our native HTML website code, which corresponds to Google's PageSpeed Insights rating of 51% for our WordPress site compared to 100% for our HTML site. We are exploring additional website optimization and website analysis techniques suggested by Steve Scotti, a veteran webmaster. Meanwhile, HDL CEO Steve Pierce (critical in porting our site) reminds us nothing beats the speed of the web's native code, HyperText Markup Language (HTML).

These are only the first steps. Check out the related article on page 4 for more information about the website's goals and plans for the future. ♦

Website Questions and Answers

By Olaf Storaasli

Five questions reveal LAA website goals and give a glimpse of what the future will bring.

1. *Why does LAA have a website? Who is involved?*

Our LAA website shares and communicates info to and from LAA members. Not just a one stop for "All LAA," but soon we'll have online forms and forums. Not only can officers share information, but members will have options to ask questions, participate in online polls and sign up for events, an alternative to email which is easily lost.

You'll find LAA history, officers, how to join, accomplishments, meeting minutes, current and future events and slides and video recordings of speakers at past meetings you may have missed. Former Webmaster Duncan offers sage advice and computer-savvy Rick Ross is invaluable updating our website plus editing the inaugural issue of LAA's newsletter that appears in June. Wayne, Darnodar and Dan also offer advice and encouragement along the way and we welcome others.

2. *Why switch Website hosts to HDL? Are they identical? Was it easy?*

Our April 13th switch from Vectec (\$614 per year) to HDL (\$49.95 per year) gave us more capability for less. To be safe, we kept Vectec as a backup until April 30. We overcame some annoying WordPress latency issues by using pure HTML with one-second response, rated A by GTmetrix and 100% by Google PageSpeed Insights website performance measuring tools. Although a fun learning experience, it's definitely challenging. In retrospect, LAA is at a much better place by reducing our biggest expense.

3. *Are there any big worries?*

As a longtime HDL customer, I shared my enthusiasm for HDL with LAA, prompting LAA's vote to switch to HDL. Following our vote, after 27 years with no data loss and little downtime, HDL went down due to a fire. Fortunately, I had backed up my personal HDL site, so it was back up and running the next day. HDL plans another 27+ years with no data loss.

We all know backups are critical, so we backup our website daily. It takes approximately one minute to backup our 1 MB website. We link to large videos for presentations stored on our private LAA [YouTube](#) account, which minimizes the storage space required on our website.

4. *Is our website vulnerable?*

We keep the website safe by blocking about 5,000 attempted intrusions per month, tracking offenders via Wordfence alerts, and blocking access for five days. Passwords may be used to protect sensitive information to only officers and board members.

5. *Can LAA members keep up with modern cybergeeks?*

By all means! Working at NASA, you've demonstrated research and logic skills, bringing the cyber realm within your grasp if you are interested. We welcome your help and website feedback. I'll share more in my LAA talk on June 8 and in future newsletter articles. ♦

LAA Membership Report


By Mike Marcolini

As of May 6, 2021, the Langley Alumni Association has 22 Honorary Life Members (members who made sustained, exceptional contributions to LAA and Center Directors), 42 Paid Life Members (an impressive number since we just initiated that this year), and 84 Active Members (members who are current on their dues).

For those of you who have either recently retired or are planning to do so

shortly, and wish to join, simply go to the LAA Web site (www.larcalumni.org) and click on the "Join LAA" button on the left-hand side. It will take you to the signup page.

FYI (as you can see on the Web site), dues are *free* during the first calendar year. After that, membership is only \$10 per year, or \$100 for a lifetime membership. If you have questions, you can email me at larcalumnimembership@gmail.com. ♦



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The LAA Newsletter is published quarterly. Please submit articles for publication to rick.ross@verizon.net no later than the 10th of February, May, August, or November for publication the following month. Please contact mhueschen@gmail.com to subscribe or unsubscribe.