

Dr. Charles "Chuck" Lundquist -- taped interview 11-19-98

*(3 good stories)*

was among Army recruits -- a Pfc -- diverted from Korea to serve at RSA in early '50s. Came to Hsv in '54 w/ Ph.D in physics, rec'd in '53.

(now Director of UAH's Consortium for Mat'ls Development in Space)

left Army in '56 -- but stayed in same job, same chair, just w/ much higher pay -- in Technical Feasibility Studies Office in pre-ABMA Army agency -- into a civic service job.

ABMA created earlier tht same year. He transferred into its Research Projects Office, as a div. chief, at age 28 (b. in '28)

met v.B early on in his (CL's) tenure at RSA. A bit later, used to trav w/ v.B a good deal.

One trip: As Project Mercury was taking shape & being implemented (pre-NASA), v.B took a planeload of peop from RSA up to a meeting at Langley (old NACA HQs). Elements of what became th Manned Spacecraft Center (lated JSC) were still housed at Langley then. Lundquist was in group that was meeting. The discussion was on various implementation aspects of Mercury program. Robt Gilruth was head of that organization then. Was clear then that it was destined to become Houston center.

Talk went on all day working details of use of Redstone in the Mercury suborbital flights. "Toward end of mtng, v.B said, "I hear reports that you're planning some kind of a 2-man capsule & you're talking to th A.F. about it. Would you care to give us a briefing on it?" And Gilruth said, "No, I wouldn't." And ~~von~~ von Braun said, "Well, we'll see about that." And that's how th meeting ended. It was th Gemini program they were working on & they were excluding, or trying to exclude, Marshall" (or still Army at that time?) (Gemini used AF Atlas as l.v.) <sup>When</sup> Von Braun went to HQs, he got the assignment, for being involved in the (launch) vehicle end of it."

Q.-- was that mostly just turf battling & bureaucratic maneuvering, & not personal animosities betw Gilruth & v.B??

CL-- Well, bureaucratic maneuverings, and that was still a lot closer ~~to~~ to WWII than we are now, and I think Gilruth was probably Jewish, so... I'm not sure he was, but that's my recollection. I could be wrong. Don't quote me, or look it up before you use that. .... Gilruth was th senior man at th meeting. And once v.B went to HQs he got it straightened out. v.B had been very nice about it. As the meeting was ending, he asked Gilruth, "Would you care to...?"

(CL felt Gilruth was not under any constraint not to discuss Gemini program w/ v.B. "He just chose not to.")

*I think*

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*The only thing missing were the white puffs of smoke.*

CL-- When Gen. Medaris took over the new ABMA, he & von Braun assembled a meeting of a lot of th senior people from ABMA, or what was becoming ABMA. ABMA formed Feb. 1, 1956. Anyway, there was a meeting. Medaris gave a std. pep talk, that he was going to be avil to fix all kinds of probs. He said, "If there are any probs that you cant ~~fix~~ resolve, let me know." Vob B. quickly said, "Ah, yes, General, there is a problem that we've been working on. The date you have selected for the launch of (a vehicle then being developed), there is a full moon on that ~~scheduled~~ date you have selected, and that will make the optical tracking of the ~~veh~~ vehicle very hard." Well, Medaris understood he had sorta been challenged: What're you ~~going~~ going to do abt that full moon?!" He took it in good spirit, and some banter went on. But it was clear that v.B was testing him, with th whole crowd there.

*X*

just — It was a funny incident, in good spirits. But v.B didnt let him get away with that (saying bring whatever prob you have to me & I'll fix it).

CL-- "Von B. never let (spirited, rancorous) <sup>board</sup> meetings bother him. He'd let folks argue it it, and when he understood all the facts he'd make a decision."

"I guess you've heard th story abt how (Hermann) Weidner became the head man tht all the lab directors reported to. V.B came to the pt where he had so many people reporting directly to him -- all th lab directors & all th other people -- that he met w/ the lab directors and said, 'I've just got to hav somebody that you all report to, between me & you. I'm just running out of time. You understand that as well as I do. And so, what I want you lab directors to do, go closet yourselves awy & pick who you want to be that person and tell me.' So, they did & they picked Hermann Weidner. Thereafter, v.B used to introduce him as 'my Pope.' And he'd explain how Weidner was selected and say that when ~~the Cardinals~~ his lab directors, ~~being~~ their counterparts ~~to~~ th Cardinals, met and made their choice, ~~and the puffs of white smoke came out~~, he knew he had his Pope."

*X*

being

*"The only thing missing were the white puffs of smoke."*

(that was before '62, because CL left MSFC in '62; CL was not present when v.B told lab chiefs to pick someone, but heard several times abt it) CL, when he left, was still a div. chief in Research Projects Lab, which at some pt. became Space Sciences Lab, under E. Stuhlinger as Dir. CL initially (in late '53 or in '54) was under "Dolf" Thiel, as lab dir.

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3 -- Lundquist

CL's wife was 1 of th founding members of Hsv. Symphony Orchestra, and he used to see v.B & Maria at the concerts, etc.  
"I know he enjoyed the music a great deal, & I assume she did as well."

After MSFC, CL went to Smithsonian & later was on a NASA-sponsored committee that ~~pick~~ picked the Apollo manned lunar landing sites -- or recommended them -- & developed the objectives & criteria.

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Q.-- what was v.B style or running meetings, of presiding over them??

CL-- He had a way of letting everybody say their piece. One way or another, he arranged to let everybody say what they wanted to say. Once everything was said, ~~and then he'd let them go to~~ or the aruments -- and he'd let them go to, not an excessive extent, but to where what was worth saying had been said -- and then he'd bring them to some kind of conclusion.

He ~~wasn't~~ did it gracefully. He wasn't abrasive. He ran a good meeting. He gave everybody a chance to say what needed to be said. But when ~~everything~~ everything had been said, he brought it to a conclusion--and they had made a ~~xxx~~ decision. He was very skillful in doing that."