



Preface to the Proceedings of the 25th Annual Wisconsin Space Conference

Silver Space Grant!

I recently had a chance to wander the ruins of the American Space Program. A few students and I toured the historic launch sites of the Mercury-Apollo era of build fast, learn from mistakes, rinse and repeat. Armed with Wikipedia, a flashlight, and GPS, we explored the reinforced blast shelters ("block houses"), escape tunnels, and flame deflectors left where they stood after the last launches in the late 1960s. There are more than a dozen of these concrete and steel relics disappearing into the trees and brush on the ocean south of KSC, each with a very unique place in history. The one pictured here has special significance because it is where the Apollo 1 disaster occurred. Only a small brass plaque, barely visible against a massive concrete and steel support leg, memorializes the place where Gus Grissom, Ed White, and Roger Chaffee died in the fire that swept through their Apollo spacecraft during a "plugs out" test days before the scheduled first launch of the Apollo program.



It struck me, as we hacked through the brush and overgrowth surrounding these monuments, that NASA is not very good at preserving our history. A space program looks forward. It does not look back. So while the Silver Anniversary of these *Proceedings* is a good time to reflect on the past, maybe it's an even better time to imagine the future. And that's what you'll find in these pages. From drones to dark matter, the sense of a present future can be found throughout the work selected for celebration at the 25th Annual Wisconsin Space Conference. *Innovations in Flight*, the theme for this year's event, works well as an umbrella for the future-facing scientific contributions of our students and faculty researchers. There is much to be excited about in the work selected for publication this year and it's gratifying to see Wisconsin making measurable contributions to our future in space and on earth.

I hope you read these pages with the same sense of optimism about aerospace-related STEM research in Wisconsin that I have.

Kevin M. Crosby, Director, WSGC January, 2016