

Apollo-STS Last Landings



Think back to the good old days of spacecraft water landings and the great work of LRD and DOD to successfully conclude human spaceflight missions. Although LRD as a division ceased to exist in 1972, the core essential LRD people soldiered on with recoveries for the remaining Apollo lunar, Skylab, and ASTP missions. The grand finale for the Apollo spacecraft was the successful ASTP recovery on July 24, 1975, on the USS New Orleans in the Pacific Ocean, and recovery engineer Milt Heflin was there as documented in the above montage.

Like many of his dedicated LRD colleagues, Milt went on to work on mission operations for the Space Shuttle Program. Incidentally, Milt as lead flight director was part of the recovery team who was awarded the prestigious Collier

Trophy for their accomplishment of the HST repair mission on STS-61 in December 1993. The citation honored the team "for outstanding leadership, intrepidity, and the renewal of public faith in America's space program by the successful orbital recovery and repair of the Hubble Space Telescope." (His copy of the Collier Trophy sits in the Oklahoma Aviation and Space Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City.) Milt's Shuttle work spanned the entire program through the landing of the grand finale mission STS-135 on July 21, 2011, at KSC, when he was there as JSC Associate Director (Technical) as documented in the above montage.

Milt emailed the above montage and writes: "I was able to get down to the Cape for the landing of the last Space Shuttle mission, STS-135...I was at the midpoint of the Shuttle Landing Facility runway as *Atlantis* touched-down...the main reason I did this was so I could be the answer to a trivia question years from now...and that question would be, "*Who was the only person on the planet to have been on the scene at the last Apollo landing (Splashdown) in 1975 at the end of the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project mission and also at the last Space Shuttle landing, STS-135, in 2011?*". So, I had the attached montage made...its background is the picture taken by Astronaut Mike Fossum from the ISS during the early part of re-entry of *Atlantis* and I'm the one with his hands-on-his-hips on the *USS New Orleans* and the runway at KSC."

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