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Skunk Works Mailing List

Re: Guess what may fly at the Edwards Open House?

From: betnal@ns.net
Subject: Re: Guess what may fly at the Edwards Open House?
Date: Sun, 19 Sep 99 05:59:19 GMT

On 9/11/99 12:04AM, in message
<Pine.SUN.3.95.990911024731.12859C-100000@ursa-major>, Mary Shafer
<shafer@spdcc.com> wrote:

> It's not certain, but it looks to be highly probable that Dryden will
> actually go along with the AFFTC request for a flight at their Open
> House. There may even be one flight each day (Saturday, 9 October, and
> Sunday, 10 October). This would be in addition to the last data flight,
> scheduled for 27 Sept, I believe.

> I got the word from a fellow engineer who got the word from Fast Eddie,
> so it's not just a rumor. There's even a good chance Ed will be the
> pilot for one flight, maybe both. I'll try to ask him in person next
> week, but he's kind of hard to track down now that he's the Acting Chief
> Pilot.

> Regards,
> Mary

Both NASA and USAF say that the A is planned to fly each day, although it's not indicated on Edwards' web site yet (In fact, the posted schedule said that the Entire "NASA Review" would be a total two minutes long. Who says USAF isn't willing to share center stage?). The A will be flown a few times in FY00 to maintain experience in SR operations. Starting in FY01, the programs that were expected to be funded then should start materializing. Shades of Aurora, two of them involve pulse detonation engines!

My understanding is that the two birds from USAF (971 and 967) will go into long term storage. They won't be retained in near-airworthy status as they were until May, but will be kept up, much as 971 was before it went back to USAF. It looks like there will be about five year's worth of work, and it's quite possible that at least one of the USAF As could be restored to flight status later on.

Of course, as Mary's mentioned, it all depends on NASA's funding. What's especially galling is that even with occasional strange forays such as X-33/VentureStar, NASA has been doing a great job of rethinking itself and becoming far more efficient. It has been justly held up by the Administration as

an excellent example of what Government agencies can do to give more bang for the buck. However, right after saying, "This is the way to do it", it then punishes NASA.

It seems that it's thought in Washington that one of the big reasons for NASA's existence is to be a way to funnel money to the Russians. Having them on board was already going to make the International Space Station more expensive than it had to be. It turned out this past year that they didn't have the money to produce their agreed upon contribution to the station. AS a result, we are having to send them the money to pay for what they were supposed to provide themselves. The aeronautics research program was savaged to come up with the money to send over there. Now, the House has decided to cut \$1 billion from NASA's upcoming budget, although it's hoped that will get reversed in conference with the Senate. So, all plans for the future can be thought of as firmly locked in Jello. Congress does need to hear from us.

It's great to hear that 968 was saved, here's hoping USAF doesn't succeed in cutting up 962 (they did request money to do just that, remember).

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