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Bus Boys

TOUR GUIDE Dick Lovern always checked. The light was green, meaning it was okay to enter the astronaut training area. Then a nearby garage door opened and out wheeled the lunar rover training vehicle, carrying a couple of suited astronauts. They waved to the thrilled crowd.

Giving guests a personal connection to the space program is important for Lovern, an assistant manager in operations at Florida's Kennedy Space Center. Lovern became a tour driver in April 1967 and drove buses for nine years before moving into management. "Things were exciting then and they are exciting now," he says. "I wouldn't do anything else."



The wheels on Bob Lindsay's Kennedy Space Center tour bus go 'round and 'round and will continue to do so after the space shuttles stop shuttling.

Bus tours of Kennedy began when the Visitor's Center opened in 1966. With their in-depth training, drivers have been sharing NASA's story with the public up to five times a day on three different tours.

Even after 42 years, Bob Lindsay's days are still filled with people-watching, answering questions, and driving a big circle around the VAB (Vehicle Assembly Building), SLF (Shuttle Landing Facility), and CT (Crawler Transporter). "But it's different every day; always another person to listen to the story," says Lindsay. "The tours bring all types of people to a common ground. We get a lot of questions, from a lot of age groups. Most people pick up on some of it. Most everyone likes to learn."

By far, the biggest attraction is the astronauts. "We would get so that we would recognize them by their cars," says Lovern, "so when we would mention that so-and-so was driving by, the bus would almost lean to one side as people moved to get a good look."

Astronaut sightings were more common during the Apollo days, says Lovern. "We used to view launches from bleachers on the north side of the VAB," he recalls. "Celebrities, families, and other viewers were all together." After one launch, Lovern saw a tall man with a big hat coming his way. He stuck his hand out and President Lyndon B. Johnson shook it.

While technician jobs at KSC are being eliminated, tour drivers will continue to tell NASA's story. "The future is going to be exciting because of the new approaches to going into space," says Lindsay.

"What most people don't realize is that all of this is theirs," says Lovern. "It belongs to us. We should be proud."

■ ■ ■ JOHN R. WILLIAMS

WORK IN PROGRESS

Third Time's a Charm

"I WAS STRUCK by a mournful picture of Hangar One at Moffett Field standing open to receive the stricken airship that would never return," says Jack Clemens, talking about the cavernous hangar near Mountain View, California, that sheltered Navy airships in the early 1930s, and the *Macon*, which was lost in a storm off the California coast. "What a kick it would be to build a radio-controlled model of the *Macon* and fly it in Hangar One as a tribute."

In 2001, Clemens got a drawing of *Macon's* sister ship, *Akron*, from the National Air and Space Museum. He chose to build a 20-footer. "One inch on the model equals one meter on the prototype – easy math and just fits diagonally in our two-car garage," he says.

Clemens says most models avoid the rigid outer shell. The complex framework of rings and stringers on his *Macon* is almost entirely balsa.

He was close to flying it when his cat landed on the hull. ("No, I did not kill the cat.") He put the model's remains into two shopping bags and started *Macon II*.

Three years later, Clemens lost *Macon II* to a light breeze. "Two more shopping bags took care of the remains," he says.

Now he reports that *Macon III* is nearly complete. Hangar One has been declared contaminated, so Clemens will fly it in Hangar Two, then donate it to the Moffett museum.

■ ■ ■ PATRICIA TRENNER

Macon II wafts along its builder's Brentwood, California neighborhood.

