DULUTH AVIATION INSTITUTE

preserving yesterday, inspiring today, exploring tomorrow

Gilruth during Apollo 11, July 20, 1969 Photo Credit: NASA

Proposal to Name the New Terminal at Sky Harbor Airport
The Robert R. Gilruth Terminal
Honoring the Father of Human Space Flight

Developing Sky Harbor Airport to be a treasured Duluth asset for the community is a challenge we face. Perceived as an airport for a select audience of aviators, the Sky Harbor terminal project can be an opportunity to do more for our community.

The Duluth Aviation Institute is proposing to name the new Sky Harbor terminal the **Robert R. Gilruth Terminal** after Robert R. Gilruth, a Duluth native who is considered to be the Father of Human Space Flight. The Duluth Aviation Institute fully supports this project and will provide the necessary funds for this proposal, working closely with the Monaco Air Foundation. The project includes providing outside signage and an indoor display to honor Robert R. Gilruth. The Institute proposes to work with the DAA staff and the DAA's outside consultants to design the signage and display.

Robert Rowe Gilruth (1913-2000) grew up in Duluth and was part of the great generation of achievers. Born during the pioneering days of aviation and *The Lark of Duluth*, his vision of the future was space flight. Gilruth went on to lead NASA's efforts to send astronauts safely to the moon and back.

The Robert R. Gilruth Terminal at Sky Harbor Airport will give our community pride in the achievements of one of its own.

Family

Robert R. Gilruth with his mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. Henry A. Gilruth (left) and his wife, Jean, are shown on the White House lawn shortly after receiving the "President's Award for Distinguished Federal Civilian Service" from President Kennedy on August 7, 1962. (NASA Photo S-62-04851.)

Born in Nashwauk, Minnesota to Henry and Francis Gilruth on October 8, 1913, Robert Rowe Gilruth moved to Duluth when he was just nine. The family lived in a modest home at 701 North 20th Avenue East until 1956. His maternal grandfather, a mining captain, grandmother, aunt and uncle lived just two blocks away.

While in graduate school, Gilruth married Jean Barnhill, a fellow aeronautical engineering student and pilot who had flown in cross country races. A friend of Amelia Earhart, Jean Gilruth claimed membership in the flying group she helped found, the 99s, a women pilot association. The Gilruths had one daughter, artist Barbara Jean Gilruth Wyatt.

In 2000, at the age of 86, Gilruth died after suffering for a long period with Alzheimer's. In addition to his second wife, Jo (Georgene Evans) Gilruth, he was survived by a daughter, Barbara Jean Wyatt, and a stepson. Gilruth's first wife Jean Gilruth died in 1972. Daughter, Barbara Gilruth Wyatt, suffered a stroke and died in the Twin Cities in 2007. She is survived by her sons Mark Geoffrey Wyatt and David Lee Wyatt.

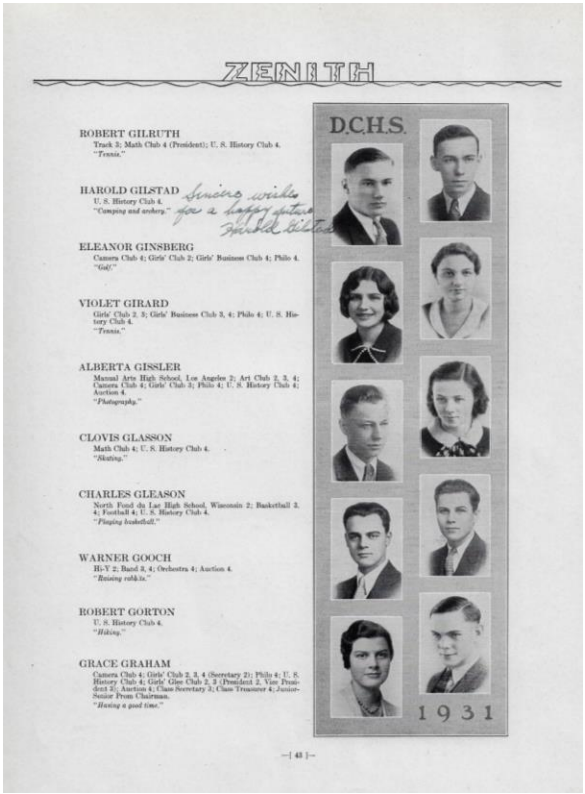
Education

The son of educators, Gilruth's father was the principal of Morgan Park High School. His mother was a substitute teacher primarily in high school math and home economics.

Gilruth went to school at the Duluth Normal School, a training school for teachers, East Junior High School, and Duluth Central High School, graduating in 1931. He was active in the U.S. History Club, president of the Math Club, and played track and tennis.

He continued his education at Duluth Junior College, on the top floor of Denfeld High School and graduated in 1933. With the depression settling on the nation. Gilruth chose to continue his education at the University of Minnesota. He received a master's degree in aerospace engineering in 1936.

Just before Gilruth received his graduate degree, he was offered a job as a junior engineer at NACA, National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, the predecessor of NASA. The Gilruths moved to Hampton, Virginia.


ZENITH

D.C.H.S.

ROBERT GILRUTH
Track 3; Math Club 4 (President); U. S. History Club 4.
"Tennis."

HAROLD GILSTAD
U. S. History Club 4.
"Camping and archery."

ELEANOR GINSBERG
Camera Club 4; Girls' Club 2; Girls' Business Club 4; Philo 4.
"Golf."

VIOLET GIRARD
Girls' Club 2, 3; Girls' Business Club 3, 4; Philo 4; U. S. History Club 4.
"Tennis."

ALBERTA GISSLER
Manual Arts High School, Los Angeles 2; Art Club 2, 3, 4; Camera Club 4; Girls' Club 3; Philo 4; U. S. History Club 4; Auction 4.
"Photography."

CLOVIS GLASSON
Math Club 4; U. S. History Club 4.
"Skating."

CHARLES GLEASON
North Fond du Lac High School, Wisconsin 2; Basketball 3, 4; Football 4; U. S. History Club 4.
"Playing basketball."

WARNER GOOCH
Hi-Y 2; Band 2, 4; Orchestra 4; Auction 4.
"Raising rabbits."

ROBERT GORTON
U. S. History Club 4.
"Hiking."

GRACE GRAHAM
Camera Club 4; Girls' Club 2, 3, 4 (Secretary 2); Philo 4; U. S. History Club 4; Girls' Glee Club 2, 3 (President 3, Vice President 2); Auction 4; Class Secretary 3; Class Treasurer 4; Junior-Senior Prom Chairman.
"Having a good time."

1931

Photo Credit: Duluth News Tribune

Career

Robert R. Gilruth, MSC director, presents President John F. Kennedy with a mounted model of the Apollo spacecraft. Photo Credit: NASA

Robert R. Gilruth's entire professional career was devoted to government service, first with the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA) and then with its successor, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

Summary of Gilruth's Career (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_R._Gilruth)

Gilruth had been working on hypersonic missile rockets as the assistant director of the Pilotless Aircraft Research Division of NACA. He and his team pushed their superiors to pursue a program to launch satellites into space, but he was rebuffed by administrators. The dynamic quickly changed after the Soviets succeeded in launching Sputnik, and Gilruth became involved in the transition of NACA into NASA.

When NASA was created, Gilruth became head of the Space Task Group, tasked with putting a man in space before the Soviet Union.

In 1961, when President John F. Kennedy announced that America would put a man on the Moon before the end of the decade (the 1960s), Gilruth was "aghast" and unsure that such a goal could be accomplished. He was integral to the creation of the Gemini program, which he advocated as a means for NASA to learn more about operating in space before attempting a lunar landing.

In 1962, he was awarded the President's Award for Distinguished Federal Civilian Service by President John F. Kennedy.

Soon the Apollo program was born, and Gilruth was made head of the NASA center which ran it, the new Manned Spacecraft Center (MSC) (now the Johnson Space Center). Gilruth was inducted into the National Space Hall of Fame in 1969 and served as director of the MSC until his retirement in 1972. He was inducted as a member of the inaugural class to the International Space Hall of Fame in 1976. He oversaw a total of 25 crewed space flights, from Mercury-Redstone 3 to Apollo 15.

In 1971, Gilruth, along with the Apollo 15 crew, was awarded the Collier Trophy.

In 1992, Gilruth was inducted into the International Air & Space Hall of Fame at the San Diego Air & Space Museum, in 1994, he was inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame and in 2015, the Minnesota Aviation Hall of Fame as a posthumous induction.

In the Words of Gilruth's Successor, Christopher C. Kraft, Jr.

Robert R. Gilruth, a father of human space flight, never sought public attention, and his leadership and technical contributions were often overlooked. Of the many heroes in the early days of the U. S. space program, Gilruth was among the most respected. He led the United States in the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo efforts and directed the greatest engineering achievement in history: the safe voyages of humans to the moon.

Robert Gilruth's achievements and life history are simple enough to trace; however, his effects on people were deep and continuing. He was such an interesting personality, a beautiful man, a true leader, and a mentor. When I succeeded Bob as director of the Johnson Space Center, I was fully ready. No one could have prepared me better.

In Robert R. Gilruth's Own Words

Below is an excerpt from an interview conducted with Robert R. Gilruth by David DeVorkin and Martin Collins on March 2, 1987. The interviews were conducted as part of the Smithsonian Institute's National Air and Space Museum Glenn-Webb-Seamans Project for Research in Space History. https://history.nasa.gov/SP-4223/ch4.htm

Q: "I'd just like to ask you one last question, which is most open and general. As you look back on your career, which is quite a long and complex one, what do you see as the most satisfying part?"

A: "I think the most satisfying thing to me is the memory of all of the years and the developments over those years, to have been an active participant in so many of the great things that the United States of America has done in aviation and in space flight."

Accomplishments

U.S. President John F. Kennedy presents Robert R. Gilruth,
Director of the Manned Spacecraft Center, Houston, Texas,
with the Medal for Distinguished Federal Civil Service. 1962.

Father of Human Space Flight
Architect of the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo Missions
Assistant Director Langley Research Center
First Director of the Manned Spacecraft Center (now the Johnson Space Center)
Author, *Requirements for Satisfactory Flying Qualities of Airplanes*
www.google.com/books/edition/Requirements_for_Satisfactory_Flying_Qua/BchJPwAACAAJ?hl=en

Awards

1950 Sylvanus Albert Reed Award from the Institute of Aerospace Sciences

1954 Outstanding Achievement Award from the University of Minnesota

1960 Governor of the National Rocket Club

1961 Fellow of the American Astronautical Society

1962 Honorary Doctor of Science from the University of Minnesota, Indiana Institute of Technology, and George Washington University

Louis W. Hill Space Transportation Award
NASA Distinguished Service Medal
Goddard Memorial Trophy of the National Rocket Club
Great Living American Award from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce
President's Award for Distinguished Federal Civilian Service

1963 Honorary Doctor of Engineering from the Michigan Technological University

1965 Spirit of St. Louis Medal by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers

1966 Honorary Member of the Aerospace Medical Association
Daniel and Florence Guggenheim International Astronautics Award of the International Academy of Astronautics

1967 Space Flight Award by the American Astronautical Society

1969 NASA Distinguished Service Medals (Apollo 8 and Apollo 11)
One of the first 10 persons installed in the National Space Hall of Fame
Rockefeller Public Service "At Large" Award

1970 Honorary Doctor of Laws from the New Mexico State University ASME Medal from the American Society of Mechanical Engineers

1971 James Watt International Medal from the Institution of Mechanical Engineers National Aviation Club Award for Achievement

1971 Robert R. Collier Trophy of the National Aeronautic Association and the National Aviation Club

1974 Member of the National Academy of Sciences

1975 One of the 35 space pioneers inducted into the International Space Hall of Fame

1992 Inducted into the International Air & Space Hall of Fame

1994 Inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame

2015 Inducted posthumously into the Minnesota Aviation Hall of Fame

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Why Name Sky Harbor Terminal in Honor of Robert R. Gilruth?

Sky Harbor Airport is an appropriate community asset to acknowledge Robert R. Gilruth many accomplishments. He served our country dedicated to further aviation and space flight. The success of early space flights, the International Space Station, and future space flights are built on the foundation of his leadership at NASA and as the recognized Father of Human Space Flight.

Sky Harbor Airport will benefit from naming the new Sky Harbor terminal as follows:

- ★ Community pride as the hometown of this exceptional leader and aeronautical engineer
- ★ Encourage the pursuit of public service in aviation careers
- ★ Acknowledge the historical magnitude of Gilruth's accomplishments
- ★ Position Duluth as an aviation community of significance
- ★ Develop educational experiences for families and visitors to Sky Harbor Airport
- ★ Present aviation as a platform for planetary and environmental research
- ★ Present the future of aviation through space flight moving into the 21st century
- ★ Inspire visitors and citizens with Apollo messages of hope
    - *One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind*
    - *The eagle has landed*
    - *We came in peace for all mankind*
- ★ Add intrinsic value to Sky Harbor Airport through the culture of accomplishment and service to humankind