

Cosmic Background Explorer (COBE)



**An exhilarating story of White House-induced and
NASA self-inflicted management complexity despite
which incredible mission success ensued**

Noel W. Hinners PI Forum July 28, 2011

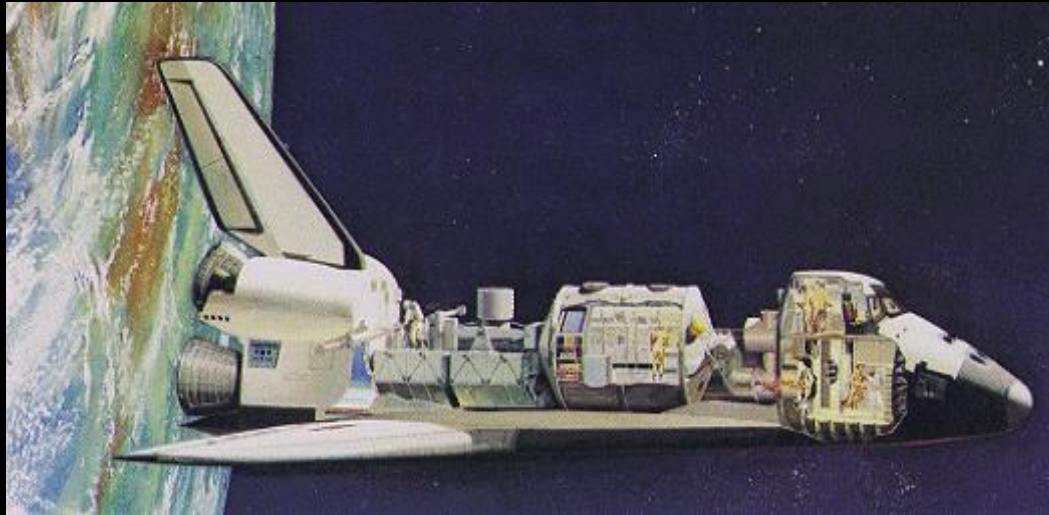


Pres. Nixon, NASA Adm. Paine,
& VP Agnew, April 5, 1969.
Agnew Sept. 1969 STG Report
Manned Mars option DOA

Pres. Nixon buying the partly reusable Space Shuttle
from NASA Adm. Fletcher
- but **no Space Station**
Jan. 5, 1972



COBE: Enmeshed in a web of challenges



1974 AO-6 Solicited Explorers for '78 to '82 flight

- Launch on Delta, Scout - or Shuttle when available

1976 Dictum: Ye shall use Shuttle for all US launches

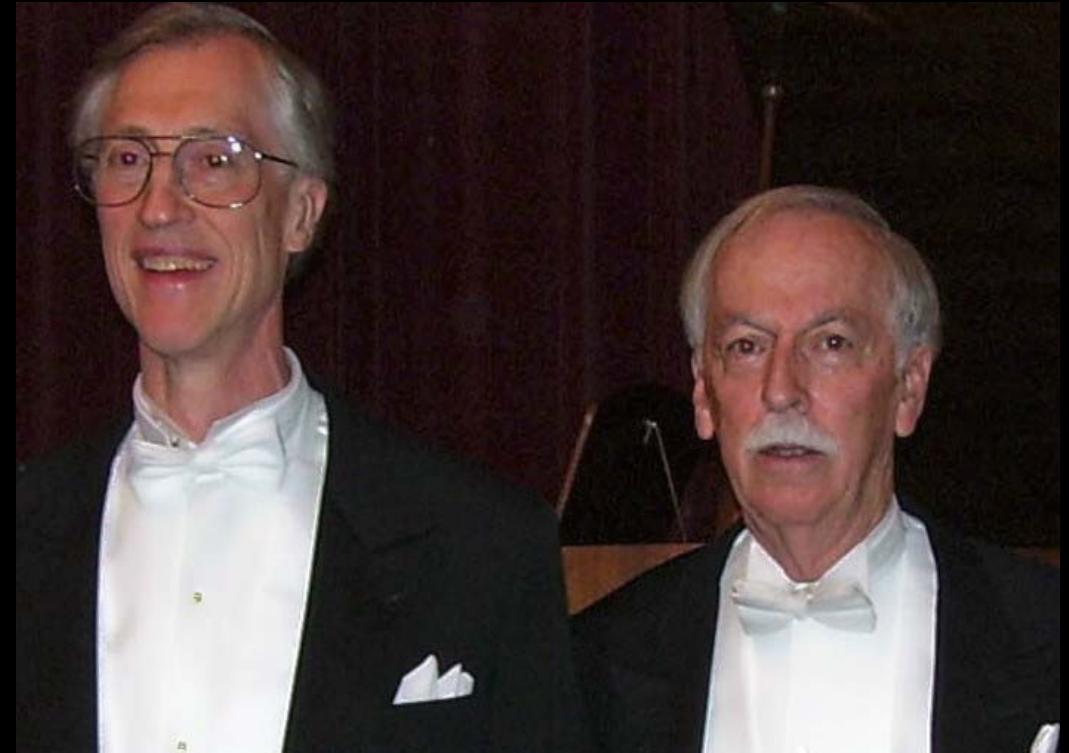
- So, COBE was designed for Shuttle; AA demurred
- Thus ELVs moved to OMSF, Life Sciences to OSS

1984 Decision to implement COBE in GSFC Engineering for hands-on management and build experience

1986 Challenger altered the rules

- COBE assigned (a management challenge) to Delta II
- Eventually stressed center manpower

1989 Launch and success



**Mission success is ultimately a function
of superb leadership and teams
overcoming challenges**

