



Wings in Orbit: Scientific and Engineering Legacies of the Space Shuttle, 1971-2010

By Wayne Hale, Helen Lane, Gail Chapline, Kamlesh Lula

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The Space Shuttle is an engineering marvel perhaps only exceeded by the station itself. The shuttle was based on the technology of the 1960s and early 1970s. It had to overcome significant challenges to make it reusable. Perhaps the greatest challenges were the main engines and the Thermal Protection System. The program has seen terrible tragedy in its 3 decades of operation, yet it has also seen marvelous success. One of the most notable successes is the Hubble Space Telescope, a program that would have been a failure without the shuttle's capability to rendezvous, capture, repair, as well as upgrade. Now Hubble is a shining example of success admired by people around the world. As the program comes to a close, it is important to capture the legacy of the shuttle for future generations. That is what "Wings In Orbit" does for space fans, students, engineers, and scientists. This book, written by the men and women who made the program possible, will serve as an excellent reference for building future space vehicles. We are proud to have played a small part in making it happen. Our journey to document the scientific and engineering accomplishments of this magnificent winged vehicle began with an audacious proposal: to capture the passion of those who devoted their energies to its success while answering the question "What are the most significant accomplishments?" of the longest operating human spaceflight program in our nation's history. This is intended to be an honest, accurate, and easily understandable account of the research and innovation accomplished during the era.

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