

Shuttle & The Bees:

What does the Space Shuttle & the Bees have in common and what do they have to do with the Space Program? A lot of people ask me this question, so I will try to explain this answer for you. Let's turn back the clock and view some experiences that I have had from days gone by of the 1984/1985 era.

A high school student from a school in Wisconsin, as a 4H project, came up with the idea of putting a colony of Bees on the Space Shuttle to see how they would react to the weightlessness and zero "G" gravity of outer space he approached NASA with his idea. So enters Mr. Mel Coplin President of the Galveston County Beekeepers Association and a pilot of a B-57.

Mel, being a NASA employee and a Beekeeper was granted the opportunity to supply his bees and to take on this project. I had the honor and the opportunity to be one of the ones to help get the bees ready for this historic flight at his apiary in his bee trailer in Algo, Texas. We clipped the tips of their stingers (a NASA requirement) as a safety factor in case of an accident on board during lift off and marked their Thorax with a blue dot signifying that they were ready to go. Before they went to the Cape for launch, they were put on a special plane, a T-38 flying around the Houston area simulating the same effects that they would have during lift off, to see if they would stand the "G" forces on lift off, as the plane went into a series of dives and pulled out, to simulate a lift off of the Shuttle. Things went as planned, they were then shipped to the Cape and put on board the Shuttle.

STS stands for "Shuttle Transport Systems."

Remember, these are "Texas Bees."

On April 6, 1984, STS-41-C aboard the Space Shuttle "Challenger" just 14 worker bees (female) from the Coplin's apiary were chosen for this adventure. The bees performed just well as expected going about their daily lives.

The Astronauts for this mission were: Hart - Van Hoften - Nelson.

Then a year later, April 12, 1985, STS - 51-D onboard the Space Shuttle "Discovery" this same thing was repeated only at this time a whole colony