

JGR Space Physics

EDITORIAL

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Special Section:

Pioneers of Space Physics Series - Invited

Key Point:

- Preface to the 100th anniversary edition of “Recollections in Space Physics” manuscripts

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Preface to the Special Collection: Recollections in Space Physics

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1. Editorial

Space Physics is a comparatively young scientific discipline, tightly linked to the era of satellite-based investigations and the discoveries that came with it. As such, we as a community are fortunate to have met, been taught and mentored by, and even become friends with, many of those who were around to witness the birth of, and in many cases establish, our field. Each of these “Pioneers” have remarkable stories to tell. These accounts from the dawn of the space age provide a glimpse into that era of scientific discovery and are an important part of our collective history that deserve to be shared and commemorated. These are stories of perseverance, ingenuity, luck, and sometimes failure. We are fortunate to live in an era in which these distinguished scientists are still with us and able to share their experiences.

To commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the American Geophysical Union (AGU), we have solicited a special collection of recollection papers to memorialize these experiences. This is not the first such effort to capture these stories. In 1994 (Vol. 99, No. A10, pp. 19,099–19,212) and again in 1996 (Vol. 101, No. A5, pp. 10,477–10,585) JGR-Space Physics published special sections entitled, “Pioneers of Space Physics,” in celebration of AGU’s 75th anniversary. Later, in 1997, Gilmore and Spreiter (1997) added a set of recollection papers on the discovery of the magnetosphere. Together, these papers containing personal accounts from the pioneers of the space age covered the period of roughly 1958–1967.

It is our great honor to present retrospective papers from several of our distinguished colleagues who contributed significantly to the explosion in understanding of space physics and aeronomy that occurred from roughly 1967–1980. We chose to start at the end of the previous set of recollections and cover the decade of the 1970s, during which our field greatly expanded. It is also a time in which the second generation of space scientists entered the field and made foundational discoveries that continue to define our discipline.

As with the previous papers, we asked the authors to “recount some of the events leading to the emergence of space physics and to put the events into a professional as well as personal perspective.” (Gombosi et al., 1994). The authors of this special collection of recollections were selected following the same guidelines as the previous efforts. We started from a long list of senior colleagues and narrowed the list to roughly two dozen distinguished scientists based on discipline and geographic balance. Some of our colleagues, when asked, felt they would be unable to devote the time or energy to such a recollection and declined. Sadly, in the intervening 25 years since the original effort, some of our colleagues who were most active during the early years of the space age have passed. Therefore, this new special collection, 25 years after the first one, is timely with the AGU centennial celebrations, but late in fully capturing the stories of the pioneers of space physics. This is unfortunate and we encourage future editors of this journal to commission special sections of legacy perspectives with a faster cadence than a quarter of a century.

References

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- Gombosi, T. I., Hultqvist, B., & Kamide, Y. (1994). Editorial. *Journal of Geophysical Research*, 99(A10), 19,099–19,099. <https://doi.org/10.1029/94JA01974>