Eileen Galloway, the Woman Who Helped Create NASA, Dies at Age 102

Called the "grand dame of space" by friends and colleagues, Eilene Marie Galloway, who helped write the National Aeronautics and Space Act, died on Saturday, May 2, 2009, two days shy of her 103rd birthday.

When Galloway was born, the Wright Brothers' historic flight was less than three years old. Galloway added to humanity's legacy by helping to create the agency that landed humans on the moon.

More than a half-century ago, on July 29, 1958, President Dwight Eisenhower signed the National Aeronautics and Space Act, leading to the birth of NASA on Oct. 1, 1958. And Galloway helped make it all happen.

Galloway began work with the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress in 1941, researching and writing House and Senate documents including "Guided Missiles in Foreign Countries," released just before the Soviets launched Sputnik in October 1957.

In 1958, then-U.S. Senator Lyndon B. Johnson asked her to help with Congressional hearings that led to the creation of NASA and America's entry into the Space Race. "The only thing I knew about outer space at that time," she said, "was that the cow had jumped over the Moon."

Galloway helped write the legislation, emphasizing international cooperation and peaceful exploration. She also proposed that NASA be an Administration rather than an Agency, enabling the new National Aeronautics and Space Administration to plan and coordinate across federal agencies the variety of activities involved in the development and uses of outer space.

Later, she served as America's representative in drafting treaties governing the exploration and uses of outer space and launched the field of space law and international space law.

She sat down with NASA TV in 2006 to talk about her experience and turning 100. 

Galloway also worked for several decades with the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and was also instrumental in creating the International Institute of Space Law, which serves as the forum for legal scholars and others from around the world in studying and debating the legal issues associated with the exploration and utilization of space. She was Editor of Space Law Senate Symposium (577 pages), 1958. The United Nations invited her to speak at its 1995 Congress on Public International Law about "Space Law Role of the United Nations: Organization and Management."

In the May 15, 2006, Congressional Record, in honor of her 100th birthday, Rep. Bart Gordon (D-TN), chairman of the House Science and Technology Committee, called Dr. Galloway "an influential force in the development and analysis of domestic and international space law and policy."

Dr. Galloway was born Eilene Marie Slack in Kansas City, Missouri, on May 4, 1906. She was the only child of Joseph Locke Slack and Lottie Rose (Harris) Slack. Her father joined the Marines in 1915, and her mother raised her alone. In 1923, Eilene graduated from Westport High School in Kansas City, Missouri, where she was twice captain of the debate team. She attended Washington University in St. Louis and Swarthmore College, and moved to the District of Columbia with her husband, George Barnes Galloway, in 1931.

During the Great Depression, Eilene worked for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. She once pressed the Washington Post to distribute an adult education guide she had compiled, but was told by the publisher he would need to see evidence of demand for the document. Eilene countered by securing orders for more than 1,600 copies, and the paper relented. The guide was so popular that it was reprinted, and ultimately the Post distributed some 175,000 copies.

Eilene was fearless. When she was six, her mother enrolled her in the Georgie Brown Dramatic School in Kansas City, Missouri, where she learned to be confident in front of audiences. She was one of a group of girls from the School who performed a patriotic song and dance for Theodore Roosevelt at the Muhlbach Hotel in Kansas City, when he was campaigning for the U.S. presidency in 1912. Throughout her life, she was not afraid to take on any task that came her way.
Eilene was an expert story-teller, sharing with wit and a wonderful sense of humor tales of her experiences. Once she arrived in Germany to begin a tour of countries before meeting a deadline in England. At the U.S. Army Office there, a colonel pulled down a large wall map of Europe and told her, "You cannot visit that many countries before your deadline." Eilene pulled out her pocket map and said, "The reason you think I cannot do it is because you have such a large map. I have a little map, which makes it possible for me to meet my deadline."

Dr. Galloway was a founding member of the International Institute of Space Law (IISL). Up to her death, she continued to study and write about space law and policy, authoring numerous papers, speeches, and opinion pieces. She opposed the weaponization of space and consistently and persuasively argued that the 1967 Outer Space Treaty has enabled the world community to maintain peace in space and should be preserved and upheld.

Dr. Galloway was the recipient of many awards and honors. She was the first woman elected Honorary Fellow of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (2006), the organization’s highest honor. She also was a fellow of the American Astronautical Society (1996), an honorary director of the International Institute of Space Law, and a Trustee Emeritus of the International Academy of Astronautics. She was the first recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award from Women in Aerospace (1987) and was honored as well with the NASA Public Service Award and Gold Medal (1984), granted for her achievements in advising Congress about outer space and her service to international organizations including the U.N. regarding international space law.

Dr. Galloway was preceded in death by her husband and her son David Barnes Galloway of Laguna Beach, California. She is survived by her son Jonathan Fuller Galloway, a retired political science professor, of Burlington, Vermont, six grandchildren, five great-grandchildren, and numerous friends and colleagues all over the world.

References
› National Aeronautics and Space Act
American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics: Conversations ... › With Eilene Galloway

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