



PETER B. TEETS

1942–2020

Elected in 1999

“For contributions to the nation’s space and launch vehicle programs and for management of aerospace programs.”

BY NORMAN R. AUGUSTINE

PETER BURRITT TEETS died November 29, 2020, in Colorado Springs, Colorado, at the age of 78. He devoted his 37-year industrial career to Martin Marietta and Lockheed Martin, and served 4 years as undersecretary of the United States Air Force.

Pete, a westerner at heart, was born February 12, 1942, in Denver and spent his life in Colorado except for a tour at the Lockheed Martin headquarters in Bethesda, Maryland, and his government service in the Pentagon. He graduated from East Denver High School and attended the University of Colorado Boulder, where he received a bachelor of science in applied mathematics (1963). He subsequently received a master of science degree, also in applied mathematics, from the University of Colorado Denver (1965). Later, recognizing his remarkable talent and leadership potential, Martin Marietta sponsored his attendance at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where in 1978 he received a master of science degree in management.

Pete’s ability to learn and contribute to new fields took him from mathematics to engineering to government policy. His initial role at Martin Marietta in Denver was that of a flight control analyst during the early intercontinental ballistic missile program, where he was responsible for the solution of a number of vexing technological problems in guidance, control, and navigation. Based on these contributions he was

promoted to manager of the inertial guidance system effort on the Titan III ballistic missile program. His next step up the management ladder was to serve as program manager for the Transtage, an upper stage used in the US space program. Soon thereafter he became director of all space systems activities at Martin Marietta Denver, and then vice president of business development for the Denver Aerospace Division. As anticipated by all, when the position of president of Martin Marietta Denver Aerospace opened, Pete was selected for it.

The time eventually came for Pete to leave his beloved home state when in 1993 he was called to the corporation's headquarters in Bethesda to serve as president of the Martin Marietta Space Group. When Lockheed and Martin Marietta merged, representing the combination of all or parts of 17 different firms as the industry consolidated following the sudden end of the Cold War, Pete became president and chief operating officer of the Information and Services Sector (1995–97) and then president and chief operating officer of the entire Lockheed Martin Corporation (1997–99).

Throughout his career, Pete's accomplishments marked him not only as an immensely capable technologist but also as a strong manager and leader. He was identified at every stage as an individual with enormous potential for greater responsibilities, which he undertook with high ethical standards and as a leader of teams that included diverse talents. Working in the space program strongly left its imprint on Pete, given its demand for focus on mission success, attention to detail, and functioning as part of a team...not to mention confronting the unforgiving nature of space activities.

Pete's ever-expanding responsibilities and record of success found him highly qualified to serve as undersecretary of the Air Force, a position to which he was confirmed by the Senate just as the new millennium began (2001–05). In that capacity he also served as director of the National Reconnaissance Office, where he focused on improving procurement practices and utilizing commercial space capabilities to serve national defense needs.

He was recognized with numerous awards and citations, including the Gen. James V. Hartinger Award for contributions

to military space (2003); W. Stuart Symington Award (2004); Robert Goddard Memorial Trophy (2008); James E. Hill Lifetime Space Achievement Award (2009); Wernher von Braun Space Flight Trophy from the National Space Club of Huntsville, Alabama; Bob Hope Distinguished Citizen Award, presented by the Los Angeles chapter of the National Defense Industrial Association (NDIA) to those “who have made significant contributions to the space industry” (2004); and membership in the Space Foundation’s Colorado Space Heroes Hall of Fame (2016).

He was elected a member of the National Academy of Engineering in 1999 and a fellow of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics and American Astronautical Society, and received an honorary doctor of science degree from the University of Colorado. In 1996 the NDIA’s Space Division established the Honorable Peter B. Teets Award, recognizing public or private sector leadership or achievement that results in significant contributions to the development, introduction, operational contribution, or support of space systems.

Pete served on several boards including those of the Aerospace Corporation, Draper Laboratories, Challenger Center of Colorado, First Presbyterian Church of Colorado Springs, and as an honorary member of the board of directors of the Space Foundation.

Among Pete’s favorite pastimes were tennis, golf, skiing, and hiking in the Colorado Rockies. He was known to all for his outgoing personality and cheerful greeting of everyone who crossed his path. He is survived by his wife Vivian (née Brearley); their children Karen Avery (Rich), Jennifer (Mike Welch), Kevin (Cathy Moorhead), Matthew (Rhonda), and Christopher (Ashton); and seven grandchildren. He was predeceased by son David.