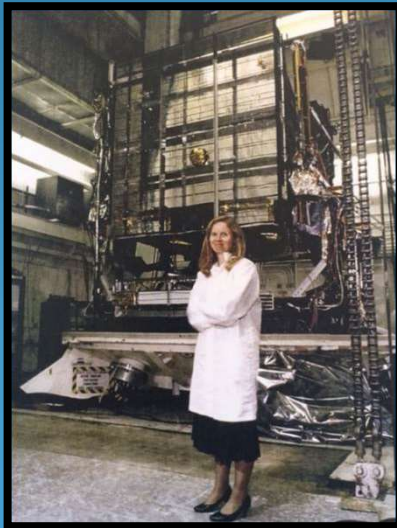# 40 Years of Overcoming Challenges

Claire Leon
June 2020

Claire Leon – Career Background

INDUSTRY

Hired into Hughes – 1979

- *Ready to learn*
- *Lots of energy*
- *Relatively naïve*

- *Learned a lot*
- *Still learning*
- *Wanted to give back*

Retired from Boeing – 2013

GOVERNMENT

Senior Executive Service –

Air Force 2014

- *A Whole New World*
- *Engineering to Politics*

ACADEMIA / Consulting

Loyola Marymount University 2017 -

Career Timeline

- Test Conductor
- Foreign Assignment (Test Engineer)
- Test Engineer

- SE Manager Commercial
- Odd Jobs
- Offsite Lead (Va)
- SE Manager-Gov't
- Verification Lead
- Bus SE Lead
- Harness SE
- S/C Manager
- Bus Systems Engineer
- Mission, ACS, T&C SE

- PanAmSat Program Manager

- Business Unit Lead
- Deputy Business Unit Lead

- TSAT Deputy PM
- WGS PM
- Special Programs PM
- STL Deputy

- VP National Programs
- VP Nav and Comm

- Director, Launch Enterprise

BSME-GWU	Propulsion	System Test	Systems Engineering	Program Management	Line Management	Program Management	Vice President	Air Force Civilian	LMU Program
		MA-Mgmt Redlands		MBA UCLA		PhD Claremont			

1975	1979	1980	1982 ---- 1992	1993	1996	2001	2008	2013
2014		2018						

| | | Married 1981 | Graham 1982 | Meghan 1988 | JoAnne 1996 | | Grand-daughter Estelle | Grandson Lincoln |

Early Career – What I Did

- Hired into Hughes right out of college
- First job was in Propulsion (11 months)
- Moved to System Test to get "hands on" hardware experience (2 years)
- Foreign assignment in Ottawa Canada-joint spacecraft program with Spar Aerospace
- Transferred to Systems Engineering to gain experience across the full program lifecycle (11 years)
- Volunteered to take on lots of different assignments

LEASAT
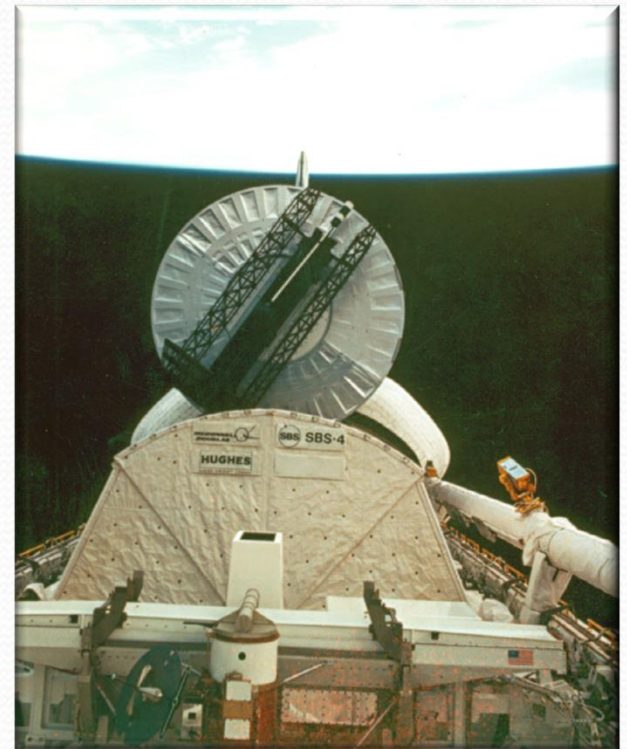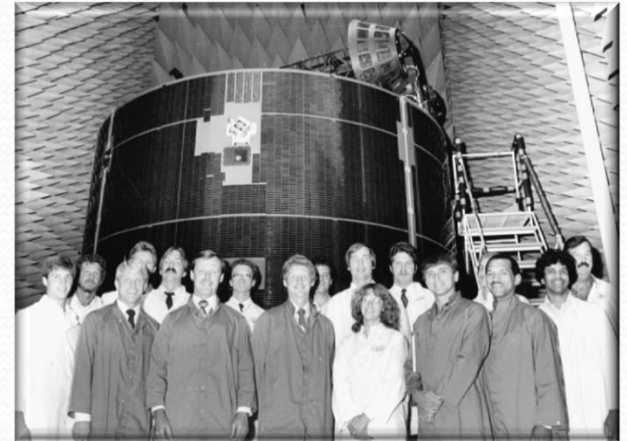
- Systems Engineering
- First time my work group felt like family

Early Career – Recommendations

- Focus on developing strong technical skills through on the job training, education, mentoring

- Create a self-made rotation program-don't stay in one area for too long *(unless you absolutely love it)*
  - When you start to get bored in one area—it's time to move to an area that will challenge you

- Volunteer for projects/assignments that broaden your skills and allow you to look at the overall company

- Pay attention to what is going on around you—not just your specific focus area

Mid Career – What I Did

- Implemented a new program office model, with a small Systems Engineering Team and support from subsystem areas
- Led initiative to capture and document the Systems Engineering Process across the program life cycle
- Developed my approach to managing teams
- MBA at UCLA
- Moved from Systems Engineering → Program Management → Line Management
- Focused on the customer

PanAmSat

- Built/launched four spacecraft in four years
- Second Ariane launch failed
- Fourth satellite built in 1 year from time of failure
- MBA at UCLA
- Supportive management
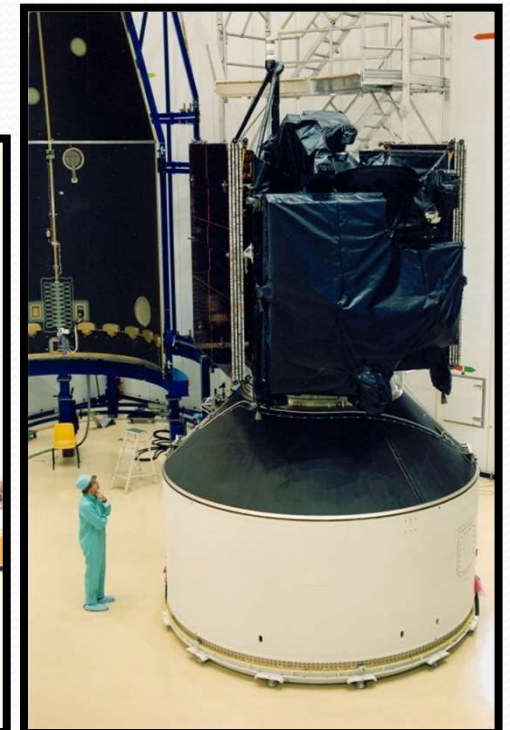
French Guiana

Mid-Career—Recommendations

Depends on what you want your career path to be:

☐ Technical focus
  - ☐ Strengthen technical skills to become a subject matter expert

☐ Line Management
  - ☐ Learn about running an organization
  - ☐ Keep in mind—functional organizations exist to serve programs and customers

☐ Program Management
  - ☐ Focus on the customer and their mission
  - ☐ Learn to manage with constrained resources

WGS

Wideband Global SATCOM (WGS) F1
in SCTV Chamber
13 June 08

Later Career – What I Did

- Overcame some big set-backs
- Took on the "messy stuff" and earned a reputation for being able to turn around troubled programs
- Strengthened my management philosophy
- Continued learning (PhD at CGU, 2000-2010)
- Learned about working "up" in the organization and out into the greater community
- Focused more on developing the team, mentoring, and helping others succeed

National Programs

US Representative Devin Nunes, CA-21st
Frank Garcia, HPSCI Staff
January 19, 2012

Adrienne Ramsey Visit to Boeing

Roger Mason Visit to Boeing

V VIP GENERAL PAWLIKOWSKI
August 22, 2011

NATIONAL SYSTEMS
SYSTEMS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

NSCP ENDURING SUCCESS
MISSION FIRST

US Representative Loretta Sanchez
April 9, 2012

General William L. Shelton
Commander, Air Force Space Command,
Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado
20 October 2011

Gil Klinger, UnderSecretary of the Air Force
Space & Intelligence
December 06, 2011

Congressman Lee Terry (R-NE)

October 20, 2011

Later-Career—Recommendations

You are now a senior person in the organization, and you need to contribute at that level

☐ Focus on leading: technical, organization, program

☐ Develop and mentor others

☐ Keep learning—or you're at risk of becoming obsolete

☐ Don't become "full of yourself"—be authentic and humble

   ☐ You can still be a driving force, and be humble

☐ Make a difference—every day

Air Force (Civilian)

- After retiring from Boeing I became an Air Force Civilian, Senior Executive Service (SES), Director of the Launch Enterprise
- Responsible for buying & launching rockets for the DoD and developing the strategy for the next generation of launch vehicles
  - Very contentious time
  - Significant work to gain advocacy for launch vehicle acquisition strategy within DoD and on Capital Hill
- One of the most challenging and rewarding position of my career
- The Air Force Officer and civilian level of commitment to service to country was inspiring

Loyola Marymount University (LMU)
Graduate Program Director, Systems Engineering

- Joined LMU as the Graduate Program Director in Dec 2017, after being a part time lecturer since 2006
- Prior to joining LMU, I worked with 2 Boeing colleagues to assess the program
  - Identified key actions to update the program requirements, to add flexibility, additional technical focus options, and interesting courses
- Supported undergraduate student research in rocket and CubeSat Design
- Needed to learn to navigate the university bureaucracy

So—what's next

- My plan (since the late 1990s) has been to retire from industry and then do a mix of teaching and consulting
- I have found that the academic world is not really what I expected
- I am shifting my focus to
  - Allow more time for consulting and
  - More flexibility to spend time with my grandchildren
  - Continue to teach in some capacity
- I still want to contribute to the world in a positive way

Open to whatever comes up……..

QUESTIONS

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