GENTRY LEE

Gentry Lee is chief engineer for the Planetary Flight Systems Directorate at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Pasadena, Calif. In that position Lee is responsible for the engineering integrity of all the robotic planetary missions managed by JPL. His major recent work included not only the oversight of all engineering aspects of the twin rover missions to Mars that landed in January 2004, but also the implementation of NASA’s successful Deep Impact and Stardust missions.

Previously, Lee was chief engineer for the Galileo project from 1977-1988 and, after working in a variety of positions on the Viking project from 1968-76, was director of Science Analysis and Mission Planning during the Viking operations activities. The historic Viking mission, mankind’s first successful landing on another planet, consisted of two Mars orbiters and two robotic spacecraft that landed on the Martian surface. The Galileo mission explored Jupiter with both an atmospheric probe and an orbiter that mapped the major Jovian satellites during a decade of operations.

In addition to his engineering work, Gentry Lee has been an active novelist, television producer, computer game designer, media columnist, and lecturer. Between 1989 and 1994 he co-authored four novels, CRADLE, RAMA II, THE GARDEN OF RAMA, and RAMA REVEALED with revered science fiction grandmaster Arthur C. Clarke. All four books were New York Times bestsellers and were translated into over twenty languages. Since his collaboration with Clarke, Lee has written three more successful solo novels, BRIGHT MESSENGERS, DOUBLE FULL MOON NIGHT, and THE TRANQUILITY WARS.

From 1976 until 1981 Lee was the late Carl Sagan’s partner in the creation, design, development and implementation of COSMOS, a science documentary series for television that won several Emmys and the prestigious Peabody Award. COSMOS was the most successful nonfiction documentary of its time, eventually being shown in over sixty different countries. Between 1995 and 1999, Lee was also chief designer for two commercial computer products, a role playing adventure game named RAMA and an encyclopedia of the solar system entitled EXPLORING THE PLANETS.


Lee received a B. A., Summa Cum Laude, from the University of Texas at Austin in 1963 and an M. S. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1964. He then attended the University of Glasgow in Scotland on a Marshall Fellowship for one year. Mr. Lee (64) has seven sons—Cooper (29), Austin (26), Robert (20), Patrick (19), Michael (17), Travis (15), and Hunter (12).

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