The new Christmas Star shines brightly in the heavens, we're told, but the prime developers of the man-made orb will not see the end results of their product until several months after the Yule season.

Langley Research Center personnel were quite elated this weekend when they learned that "all systems were go" for both the space package and booster vehicle in the recent NASA effort to launch a 12-foot spherical satellite to study upper atmospheric conditions in the polar regions.

Because the sphere blossomed in the skies during the holiday season, it was quickly pegged the Christmas Star by avid space age enthusiasts—namely the American press—ourselves included.

The new satellite was built here at Langley Research Center. Under the guiding hand of Scientist William J. O'Sullivan, the originator of the inflatable satellite concept, the program evolved from a few paper sketches of a futuristic star into bright aluminum fact which is today streaking through the skies high above the earth. Scientists estimate the orb will have the brightness of a third magnitude star at its perigee or the lowest point to the earth during orbit. It will be seen by millions of people around twilight time for several years, it is believed.

Prime project personnel for the space package at Langley were Gerald M. Keating, associate scientist; Claude W. Coffee Jr., project manager-mission director; William A. Carmines, technical project engineer, and Charles V. Woerner, air density e'or'or engineer.

The satellite is comprised of 40 flat zones of aluminum-mylar, and was folded accordion style and stowed into a metal cannister before being lofted into the skies aboard another Langley Research Center specialty—the Scout rocket.

Several tests were also run on the rocket which apparently proved successful. Scout is the only operational solid propellant launch vehicle with orbital experience.

Langley personnel charged with the rocket phase of the recent launch were Eugene D. Schult, head of the Scout project office; James R. Hall, director of the Scout project operations, and James D. Church, launch vehicle field director.

"We're very happy that the project was so successful," one Langleyite said this weekend when it was learned that the satellite had achieved orbit and was visible.

He cautioned, however, that the Christmas Star would not be visible to Peninsula residents for a while yet perhaps a few months.

"We'll have to wait until its orbital path is over the area," he said.

Incidentally, the scientific name for the new satellite is Air Density Explorer. Better mark that down, because unless we miss our guess it'll be called the Christmas Star as long as its shiny sides are visible in the heavens.