

Project Pioneer: Recording Secretary, Scientific Advisory Board Robert W. “Bob” Kamm



As the recording secretary and a member of the Scientific Advisory Board, Robert W. “Bob” Kamm was involved in coordinating specifications and early plans for AEDC. Following a lengthy coordination process in 1946, the Army Air Forces hoped for the Joint Research and Development Board’s early endorsement that would lead to passage of legislation for both the Unitary Wind Tunnel Plan and the Air Engineering Development Center. During 1947, the review of the proposed center became cumbersome, in part because the wind tunnel facilities of the proposed Air Engineering Development Center were treated under the Unitary Wind Tunnel Plan apart from the rest of the Center.

The Joint Research and Development Boards assigned a screening process for both the Wind Tunnel Plan and the Air Engineering Development Center to its Committee on Aeronautics. With his appointment as Executive Director of that committee’s Facilities Panel in 1948, Mr. Kamm began his distinguished association with what would become Arnold Engineering Development Center.

Mr. Kamm graduated from New York University in 1939 with a bachelor’s degree in aeronautical engineering and joined the Langley Aeronautical Laboratory, where he investigated spin characteristics of various military aircraft in wind tunnels. In 1946 he left the NACA to become senior aerodynamicist with the Glenn L. Martin Company. In 1948, Mr. Kamm began working in the Pentagon as director of the panel on facilities committee on aeronautics of the Department of Defense’s Research and Development Board. In the capacity of Executive Director, Mr. Kamm reviewed, coordinated and recommended action to the panel on all military departments’ proposals for new aeronautical research and development facilities, including their relative priorities. Owing to his monumental efforts to overcome significant interservice conflicts over the scope and breadth of the initial Air Force proposals for the center, in early 1950, Mr. Kamm was appointed staff assistant to Dr. Theodore von Karman, chairman of the USAF Scientific Advisory Board, in his new capacity of chief, scientific advisor to the Air Engineering Development Division.

Mr. Kamm, executive secretary of the Office of the Chief Scientific Adviser, worked closely with Dr. von Karman, Dr. Frank Wattendorf and Col. H. F. Gregory to handle day-to-day coordination in the Pentagon and to develop plans and requirements for the technical facilities to be provided by AEDC. He also maintained action liaison not only with the Research and Development Board but also with the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics and the aeronautical industry.

In October 1951, Mr. Kamm organized the Industry and Educational Advisory Board. This board, chaired by Professor John Markham of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, consisted of representatives of universities and the aeronautical industry. It met frequently to give advice to the USAF Chief of Staff of the adequacy of planning for AEDC and simultaneously created a spirit of cooperation with educational institutions

and with the aeronautical industry. The later close working relation between the University of Tennessee Space Institute (UTSI) and AEDC was in no small measure due to the significant role that Mr. Kamm played in both the Industry and Educational Advisory Boards and during the 1960s through the 1980s at UTSI.

Following the dissolution of the Industry and Educational Advisory Boards, Mr. Kamm was appointed Chief of AEDC's Operations Analysis Office, a position in which he remained until 1955, when he was assigned Assistant Chief, Research and Development Division.

In December 1956, he was appointed Assistant Chief of Staff, Plans and Operations, and in May 1957, he became the Center's first Chief, Plans and Policy Office.

In 1959 he left AEDC after he accepted an appointment as director of NASA's western operations office in Santa Monica, Calif., responsible for contract negotiations and administration, public information, technical representation, financial management, security, legal and patent administration. In 1968 he retired from that position and NASA to become assistant to the director of UTSI. He was assistant dean and director of administrative services until his retirement in 1988. The following year, he was back at UTSI to direct the year-long Silver Anniversary Celebration.

In May 1995, during the kick off of the AEDC Heritage Foundation, Carey Waldrip, then Heritage Foundation chairman, presented Mr. Kamm with a proclamation signed of the AEDC community for this dedication to the improvement of the aerospace industry.

"Mr. Kamm was instrumental in both the early legislative and planning phase of AEDC," said Mr. Waldrip. "In Dr. Theodore von Karman's 1959 dedication speech, he named Bob Kamm as an instrumental force in the founding of AEDC."

Later that same year, a portion of the UTSI Road from Estill Springs to the B.H. Goethert Parkway as renamed in honor of Kamm, who was largely responsible for the road's construction.

"Mr. Kamm played a major role in negotiating with the University of Tennessee to establish a master's level program at AEDC which led to the establishment of the Space Institute," said then UTSI vice president Dr. T. Dwayne McCay. "Years later he came to UTSI as assistant to the director, Dr. B.H. Goethert. He has been incredibly important to the institute, but he always avoids the spotlight. We are pleased to have this opportunity to honor him as he so richly deserves."

Mr. Kamm passed away June 13, 2001.



Visiting with Gov. Winfield Dunn during a trustees visit in 1972 are from left, Dr. Bob Young, Barbara Perry, Gov. Dunn, Dr. B.H. Goethert and Bob Kamm.