

She was an amazing woman – a true NASA legend and pioneer. She got her Astronomy degree in the 1940's. She worked with James Van Allen (of the famous Van Allen belts), at the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics lab, that got her into the missile business. She then went to California and lived on a mountaintop at Lick Observatory for a couple years and worked on the 36-inch telescope there. She then moved to Aberdeen in the missile business reducing data and she discovered they had an opening at White Sands for someone doing the kind of work she was doing. So she moved out into White Sands, New Mexico, and reduced data there, and they were just bringing the early V-2s in. The war was over and they were just beginning to launch V-2s. So she got to reduce data on the V-2s. My favorite quote from her - "And all the rules they made at White Sands were based on what I did. If I did it, they had to make a rule against it, was the way it worked. " Dr. Debus and Von Braun and Karl Sendler and all those people used to come running into her office and grab the film out of her hands. When she was out there it was all optical data. Telemetry was just getting started. When she started at White Sands she was the only woman working there except for the secretaries. She started a data reduction group and had about a hundred people working for her, and she brought in a lot of women into her group. Another one of my favorite quotes from Virginia - "because I always figured it was a real advantage to be female 'cause the guys would do anything for you." And you know this was true her whole life – she could always accomplish anything she would put her mind to. She moved to PAFB for a while doing a similar job for Dr. Debus and the Germans before there was a Kennedy Space Center. She then took off for a while to sail and raise her kids. She taught at Cocoa Beach High the year it opened – former Center Director Jim Kennedy was her student. After teaching she got hired by NASA and became a Launch Site Support Manager – managing missions such as the initial launch of the Hubble Space Telescope. Virginia retired in 2008, She turned 87 in March of this year. She was a special lady and a friend to many.

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