



News Release
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Hampton History Museum's newest exhibit honors the legacy of an unsung NASA hero

Hampton, VA – February 28, 2024 marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of Hampton native Christopher Columbus Kraft, Jr. On this occasion, the Hampton History Museum will open an exhibit celebrating his life and accomplishments as a preeminent NASA scientist. The exhibit opens to the public on February 29. The exhibit continues at the Hampton History Museum through March 2, 2025.

About Chris Kraft:

Chris Kraft was born in Phoebus, Virginia (now part of Hampton) into the family of well-known businesswoman Clara Albright, his grandmother. He attended Hampton High School and Virginia Polytechnic Institute (now Virginia Tech) before joining the staff of Langley Memorial Aeronautical Laboratory in 1945.

Kraft passed in 2019. His family honored the Hampton History Museum by donating a collection of personal memorabilia that Kraft saved through his life as a Phoebus and Hampton native son, his career at NASA Langley Research Center and beyond. The Hampton History Museum exhibit will tell of his legacy as a Hamptonian, a highly-regarded engineer at NASA Langley Research Center, and his central role in the manned space flight program. The exhibit will feature this previously unseen collection as well as other artifacts from his family. To add to the unique nature of this exhibit, it'll feature a significant collection of previously unseen images taken by Kraft's contemporary, NASA Documentary Photographer Bill Taub.

In 1958, Kraft was assigned to the NACA Space Task Group where he was given the job of putting a man in space and bringing him safely home. Kraft was a central figure in projects Mercury, Gemini and Apollo. He led the development of the ground operations control system for the new agency, NASA, which became famous as "Mission Control." Kraft became the flight director responsible for all of the flight components of the missions whether near Earth or in space. Eventually, Kraft became director of Johnson Space Center until his 1982 retirement.

Hampton History Museum

The Hampton History Museum is located at 120 Old Hampton Lane in Downtown Hampton. There is plenty of free parking in the garage across from the museum. Open

Monday-Saturday, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Sunday 1:00-5:00 p.m. Closed major holidays. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors, active military, active NASA, AAA, children 4-12, free to children under 4.

For more information, call 757-727-1102, visit www.HamptonHistoryMuseum.org, or like the Hampton History Museum on Facebook and and Instagram.

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Image Library:

Kraft 1: Phoebe native Christopher C. Kraft, Jr. at Mission Control for Project Gemini, ca. 1965. Courtesy of NASA

Kraft 2: Chris Kraft at Mercury Control Center, ca. 1962. Courtesy of NASA

Taub 2: Bill Taub with Mercury astronaut John Glenn at Launch Complex 14 (LC-14), Cape Canaveral, Florida. The Mercury Atlas 6 (MA-6) spacecraft is in the background. This photo was made in early 1962 as preparations were underway for the launch of MA-6, the first American orbital mission. Courtesy of NASA and Myra and Ron Specht

Flight 7: Chris Kraft celebrates successful Mercury-Redstone 3 splashdown, May 5, 1961. Photograph by Bill Taub. Courtesy of NASA and Myra and Ron Specht

Flight 8: Chris Kraft (left) and John Glenn (center) guide President John F. Kennedy (right) through Mercury Control Center on February 23, 1962. Photograph by Bill Taub. Courtesy of NASA and Myra and Ron Specht

Partially bordered by the Hampton Roads harbor and Chesapeake Bay, Hampton, with the 344,000 sq. ft. Hampton Roads Convention Center and the award-winning Hampton Coliseum, is located in the center of Coastal Virginia and the Hampton Roads metropolitan area. Hampton is the site of America's first continuous English-speaking settlement, the site of the first arrival of Africans in English North America, and is home to such visitor attractions as the Virginia Air & Space Science Center, Fort Monroe National Monument, Hampton History Museum, Hampton University Museum, The American Theatre, among others.