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## NASA Day Special Report: An Interview with Dr. Edmond Wilson

Rebecca Burrows  
rburrows@harding.edu

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**Author Bio:**

Rebecca L. Burrows is a senior History and Medical Humanities double major from Tea, South Dakota. While at Harding, she currently is serving as the President of Phi Alpha Theta, Vice President of Chi Omega Pi social club, and the Anatomy and Physiology II Teacher's Assistant. After graduation, she plans to take a gap year before pursuing her master's, and hopefully doctoral, degree in history.

## **NASA DAY SPECIAL REPORT: AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. EDMOND WILSON**

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**By Rebecca L. Burrows**

On January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020, Governor Asa Hutchinson of Arkansas proclaimed January 27<sup>th</sup> as NASA Day in Arkansas. Harding University celebrated NASA Day across campus with lectures by NASA’s chief technologist Dr. Douglas Terrier, educational exhibits, and career discussions. Dr. Terrier’s visit drew students, teachers, and people from all over Arkansas to Harding to learn about NASA and its connection to Arkansas. Dr. Edmond Wilson, professor emeritus at Harding University and a key connection between Harding and NASA’s continued relationship, Hannah Owens, Harding’s Director of Digital Media, and several students from the science department helped coordinate the event with Harding staff and presented exhibits open to schoolchildren and the public. During the day, Dr. Terrier awarded Dr. Wilson a “Certificate of Appreciation for My Contribution and Support of NASA.” Dr. Wilson writes that this award “was a big moment in my life but really, my reward for being a part of ASGC (Arkansas Space Grant Consortium) and NASA is the pleasure of working with over 240 students, mentoring their research and then seeing them establish their careers.”

Harding’s relationship with NASA began in the 1960s with a grant-research program related to the first moon launch. The studies looked at astronaut physical fitness using twenty-four students per each of the twenty-eight studies. Non-paid voluntary faculty contributors worked with students and community members to get the data needed for NASA. Since this research, the connection between NASA and Harding has continued to flourish with new projects and grants geared at promoting space education and excellent scientific experiments.

While Dr. Wilson was not a part of the faculty members doing NASA research in the 60s, he has been an integral part of Harding and NASA’s partnership and a leading figure at Harding’s NASA Day. Harding holds membership in the Arkansas Space Grant Consortium

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(ASGC), partly due to Dr. Wilson and Dr. Don England's efforts to expand the research availabilities of the university. Dr. Wilson acted as the liaison and helped write the original grant for the establishment of the ASGC. In the foundation of the ASGC, seven colleges and universities found themselves inducted into the National Space Grant Program. NASA leads this program with the mission to train the next generation of scientists and engineers for our country. Several scholarships and fellowships are awarded to students throughout the United States to conduct research supporting NASA's mission.

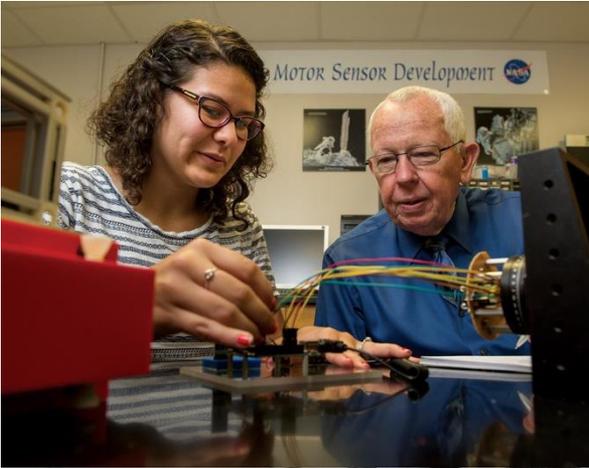
Over the past many years, Harding has received a number of grants from NASA. These grants are geared towards helping Harding students get scholarships and materials for NASA research. Dr. Wilson played a key role in attracting many of these grants. By his estimate, around "135 grants are from my work" and he has "been able to attract 1.8 million dollars to Harding" to further NASA research. Along with the grant program, students are required to visit a NASA facility and meet top researchers involved in similar or the same projects. These experiences have blessed over 200 students and the faculty members that mentor them.

Dr. Wilson writes that Harding students are conducting several NASA research projects currently. From "improving our mobile robotic vehicle to measure carbon dioxide levels for use on space missions" to "doing research to determine the best laser wavelengths and energies for printing 3D electronic circuits on paper, skin, plastic, and cloth", Dr. Wilson and students have kept busy finding new ways to help NASA explore the universe.

NASA Day allowed Dr. Wilson and students working on projects to show the university what exciting things were happening because of helpful mentors, supportive faculty and family, and a connection to a program that desires to empower students to discover the world. As this partnership continues, it is the hope of events like NASA Day to encourage younger students, and current university students and faculty, to see the wonders that are out there and to engage in further

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learning. Dr. Wilson shared his gratitude to the university and students and expressed that “without my dear wife and daughter’s encouragement and support, I couldn’t have been able to do all this. I know that God has truly blessed me in all areas of my life.” His contribution to NASA Day and Harding will live on through further research and projects of students determined to help NASA look to the stars.



(Top): Dr. Wilson works with a student on a NASA project.



(Bottom): Bob Corbin working with a student volunteer using a special mask spectrometer and lung gages attached to a treadmill in the 1960s.

*Images courtesy of Harding University*