



Mechanical Engineering
Academy of Distinguished Alumni

Thomas Louis Moser, P.E.

Charter Member

BSME, The University of Texas at Austin, 1961

MSME, The University of Pennsylvania, 1963

Ph.D. (all but thesis), Rice University

Senior Executive and Program Director (Retired)

NASA

Mr. Thomas Moser entered UT Austin in ME with the good fortune of having worked during high school as an aide to the chief engineer (also a graduate ME from UT) of a steel fabrication company. At UT, he became a member of Tau Beta Pi and Pi Tau Sigma. In 1961, immediately after Tom and his high school sweetheart, Nelwyn DeLaney, obtained their BS degrees from UT, they married and began their careers at RCA Missile and Surface Radar Division in Moorestown, N.J. As a mechanical design engineer, Tom worked on multiple large, land-based radar systems and participated in the RCA graduate study program, in which he earned his MSME from the University of Pennsylvania.

In 1963, Tom began a long career at NASA Manned Spacecraft Center (now the Johnson Space Center (JSC)) in Clear Lake, Texas as a mechanical design engineer in the Structures and Mechanics Division. While working on Apollo and Space Shuttle programs and raising a family, he completed all work for his Ph.D. at Rice University, except for finishing the thesis. Tom established his technical expertise in structures and materials and progressed through the ranks of NASA/JSC organization, serving as the head of the structural design section, the structural subsystem manager in the Apollo and Space Shuttle Programs, the deputy program manager for the Space Shuttle Orbiter, and the director of engineering. Tom was senior engineering manager during the design and development of the Space Shuttle from “sketch pad to launch pad” (1969 -1981). His greatest challenges pertained to the advanced state-of-the-art Orbiter structure and thermal protection system (the infamous “tiles”).

In 1986, immediately after the Space Shuttle Challenger accident, he became the NASA deputy associate administrator for space flight in Washington, D.C. Tom was instrumental programmatically and politically in returning the Space Shuttle to flight status. In 1998 Tom became the first NASA director on the Space Station Program, where he formed and led the organization that included eleven foreign countries and four NASA Centers.

After retiring from NASA in 1990 and through 1997, he served as the vice president at Fairchild Space and Defense in Germantown, MD, and Analytic Services (ANSER) in Arlington, VA. In 1998, he returned to Texas to become the executive director of the Texas Aerospace Commission under Governor George W. Bush. Working with the governor and legislature, he established three Texas Spaceport Authorities.

Tom is a distinguished alumni of the UT College of Engineering, Fellow of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA), Fellow of the International Academy of Astronautics, recipient of the NASA Medal for Exceptional Leadership, the NASA Medal for Exceptional Engineering Achievement, and Presidential Rank Award for Meritorious Service. Tom served on the UT College of Engineering Visiting Committee.

In 2012, Tom was elected as a county commissioner. He is also a rancher, consultant, speaker and golfer. He and his wife, Virginia, live on a ranch, travel and enjoy their four children, seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.