

An Abbreviated History of the Canaveral Council of Technical Societies

In the early 1950s, the Army was searching for a remote site to flight test their latest rocket designs. The Cape Canaveral area was selected and the age of Missiles and Space was born in Brevard County.

Picture the Cape back then—beautiful beaches, scrub palmettos, small communities, and lots of mosquitoes. The bridge to the mainland was made of wooden slats. The closest grocery store was in Cocoa. Into the small communities came highly technically-trained engineers and their families settling into Cocoa Beach, then spreading into Cocoa, Titusville, and Merritt Island. Sputnik was launched by the USSR and the space race was on in earnest. President Kennedy's goal to land a man on the moon by 1970 brought NASA and a flood of people into this sleepy remote area. These highly skilled and educated workers sought the benefits of technical interchanges they had in their past home areas. Branches of national technical societies like the American Society of mechanical Engineers (ASME), The American Rocket Society (ARS), The Society of American Military Engineers (SAME) and the Institute of Radio Engineers (IRE), as well as others, sprang up and began competing for speakers. Jack Wiles, acting Chairman of ASME, recognized the need for a cooperative effort to bring in nationally-known speakers and provide adequate audiences. In September 1960, Jack contacted Admiral Tedder of SAME, Cliff Mattox of IRE, and the ARS to propose a cooperative arrangement. These visionaries met in October of 1960 and agreed to begin a cooperative effort and to act as a loose federation—thus, the birth of The Canaveral Council of Technical Societies (CCTS).

Time passed and the membership grew to about a dozen local societies. The cooperative efforts were working well. The Brevard Engineering College, founded by Jerry Keuper and supported by CCTS, and the Air Force established the Fall Lecture Series. Prominent speakers such as Dr. Pickering, Dr. Reed, Dr. Clamann and Dr. Bemmer attracted audiences of 450 or more. About this time (1962), Cliff Mattox challenged the CCTS to organize a technical program similar to WESCONS. The CCTS Chairman, Dr. Jim Duffet, accepted the challenge and appointed Jack Wiles as conference chairman. The theme of the conference was 'The Challenging Pace of the Race to Space'. Because there was no place in the Cocoa Beach area large enough to hold the expected crowd, the program was held in Daytona Beach. Jack and about 40 member societies lined up speakers: aerospace industry personnel, bankers, realtors and elected officials. Feeling that the potential attendees needed a break from their heavy work load, shows, tours, and recreational activities were scheduled along with technical sessions. The registration fee was kept low, about \$2.50. Two days before the program was to start, the Cuban missile crisis occurred. Because many of the scheduled speakers were military, it was feared that many would have to cancel. However, that did not happen and we had a successful conference. The seed money of \$250 used to start the conference had grown to \$500! This conference was the prototype of the annual Space Congress that we know today.

CCTS operated as a loose federation of societies for several years and grew to more than 17 member societies. The Space Congress was successful beyond our wildest dreams, and we saw a need to formalize the organization. Bylaws were drawn up and approved by the member societies and, in March 1965, CCTS was formally incorporated.