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SERVING THE SPACE COAST

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Walter Kieley, for FLORIDA TODAY

Space memorabilia

Frank Rhodes, great-grandson of Walter Chrysler, holds a piece of space memorabilia for the Chrysler museum he received at a recent luncheon.

Museum to honor Chrysler space team

Former workers' memorabilia to be displayed

BY KING QUILLEN
FOR FLORIDA TODAY

W.O. Brown came to Florida in 1963 as part of Chrysler's space team at the Cape.

He joined more than 1,000 employees who checked and launched Saturn IB rockets in the early phases of the Apollo program.

Those were the glory days, the beginning of the race to the moon. They also were the days of dress codes, even in the firing room.

"In those days, we all wore white shirts and black string ties," said Brown, a resident of Titusville who is now 80 years old. "Then my supervisor decided to dress up the firing room a bit."

Chrysler workers soon sported special-order blue and white jackets that set them apart as special.

Brown took his jacket home when Chrysler ended its space operations in 1975.

This year when he learned



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Museum memorabilia. Frank Rhodes, center, great-grandson of Walter Chrysler, visited Cocoa Beach recently, where he accepted some memorabilia for the Chrysler museum. Presenting some of the articles were event hostess JoAnn Bushman and Al Olsen, both of Cocoa Beach.

CAPE CANAVERAL

To learn more

For information, or to contribute memories or mementos, contact JoAnn Bushman at 783-4753.

Frank Rhodes, great-grandson of Chrysler founder Walter P. Chrysler, was collecting space division memorabilia for a museum, Brown decided to donate his jacket.

"It had a special place in my heart," he said. "Now it will be there forever, a memento of the happy times."

On March 27, JoAnn Bushman organized a meeting in Cocoa Beach with Rhodes and 26 former launch team members. They donated memorabilia and told

him stories about working on the Apollo, Skylab and Apollo-Soyuz programs.

"These Chrysler guys were pioneers," said Rhodes. "I'd like to get this group recognized for what they did."

Phil Passarelli, a 69-year-old Cocoa resident, brought a pair of Chrysler coveralls that had hung in his laundry room since 1975. Other donations included photos, jackets, hard hats, and a launch sequence button.

The donations, and the memories, will be exhibited in a new space section in the Walter P. Chrysler boyhood home and museum in Ellis, Kan.

Rhodes has collected memorabilia about Chrysler, and the company he founded, for 20 years. Now he's adding a Chrysler space contributions exhibit.

"If I don't do it now, it's going to get lost," he said. ■