

Picturing the Space Shuttle: The Early Years

John Bisney

J. L. Pickering

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Before its retirement in 2011, the US space shuttle was iconic in design—innovative and recognizable. John Bisney and J. L. Pickering chronicle how it came to be in their excellent photographic history *Picturing the Space Shuttle*, with dozens of images never before published. It is a valuable chronicle of the shuttle's development.

The book begins in 1965, when the shuttle concept originated, and includes illustrations of various early shuttle designs, showing both the variety of approaches taken by different contractors and how much the design changed before arriving at a working version of the spacecraft. Some of the designs look like vehicles out of science fiction, others more like modified gliders; the photographs and illustrations demonstrate how the design evolved.

Special attention is given to the development of the *Enterprise* and *Columbia* programs, with photographs from sites including Edwards Air Force Base, the Marshall Space Flight Center, and the Kennedy Space Center. Along with the shuttle itself, *Picturing the Space Shuttle* documents the human side of the shuttle program, with images from the training of the shuttle crews, behind-the-scenes work at the command center, presidents discussing the program, and crew members preparing food, using the onboard sleep restraints, and working in the cockpit. While *Picturing the Space Shuttle* is mostly a book of photographs, its section introductions and detailed captions provide enough context to explain the shuttle's development, as well as the important milestones and individuals depicted.

In its comprehensive approach and its introduction of images not often seen, *Picturing the Space Shuttle* is a collectible time capsule of the first decades of one of NASA's crowning achievements.

JEFF FLEISCHER (September / October 2021)

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