

that he came to Minnesota to work with Wangenstein on the problem of post-operative bowel paralysis. "My primary objective," Wild recounts, "was to measure the thickness of the human bowel." He proposed to use sound waves to do it.

Although his affiliation with the department of surgery ended sooner than he might have wished, Wild found a spot at the university in the department of engineering. To his considerable satisfaction, he discovered that, at a Naval air station near Minne-

apolis, there was a radar trainer that no one was using. The device had a frequency of 15 megacycles, which was just right for his work, and, Wild declares, "Nobody seemed to object to my using it." So he used the Navy's equipment to bounce sound waves

H. Allen Smith Jet Propulsion Lab—or What's in a Name?

Thanks to an obscure act of Congress, the California Institute of Technology's renowned Jet Propulsion Laboratory will henceforth be known as the H. Allen Smith Jet Propulsion Laboratory, an honor that the retiring California congressman for whom it has been renamed humbly describes as "beyond my remotest dream . . . one I never would have believed possible."

The folks at JPL—or HASJPL, as it will officially be known after 4 January—never imagined that it was possible either. And by all indications, they are not nearly as delighted with the change as is Representative Smith, a 16-year Republican House veteran whose district encompasses the Pasadena laboratory. While most officials at Caltech and JPL have restricted themselves to a curt "no comment," random inquiries to laboratory staff elicit reactions ranging up the scale from neutrality to outrage. "An insult to technology" is the way one engineer put it. Students at Caltech, for their part, got up a petition protesting the change and suggesting that, if JPL had to be named for someone at all, Congress would do better to start with the astronauts who "have given their lives to man's effort to explore space."

With news of these reactions filtering back to Washington, Smith's new honor is rapidly turning to ashes, and a staff aide says he's very embarrassed by the whole affair. "It wasn't his idea," said Alice Anderson, who wrote the congressman's press release announcing the laboratory's new name. "He isn't that kind of man."

Underlying the objections to renaming JPL is the impression that Smith's contribution to the aeronautical and space sciences is not of the magnitude that ordinarily merits enshrinement in a leading center of interplanetary research. A lawyer and former FBI agent, the congressman's closest association

with aerospace came in the late 1940's when he served as the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation's manager of security. During his years in the House, Smith distinguished himself as a quiet, unwavering conservative dedicated to economy in government. To that end, he voted against the supersonic transport and on at least three occasions opposed the space authorization bill, the ultimate wellspring of JPL's money.

It turns out, however, that the chief qualification for memorialization in a federal building is death or retirement after long service in government, and not what one has done for the occupants inside. It may also help to have a friend on the House Public Works Committee, which has jurisdiction over federal buildings, and which last year decided that it had fallen behind in its duty of honoring departing, or departed, colleagues.

The instrument for remedying this oversight was a little-discussed bill authorizing construction of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Civic Center in Washington, D.C. The committee merely attached riders to the bill naming federal buildings from Vermont to Hawaii after 34 former senators, representatives, judges, bureaucrats, and one Hawaiian prince—Jonah Kuhio Kalanianaʻole, who served as a territorial delegate to Congress around the turn of the century.

Buildings to be so honored, a committee staff member explained, were selected by asking the General Services Administration (the federal landlord) which government edifices in each honoree's home town or district were not already designated as memorials. The Jet Propulsion Laboratory was the only one in Smith's district, the staff member said. (Except for a building temporarily housing an office of the U.S. Geological Survey in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, the rest were ordinary

office buildings and courthouses.)

No one asked JPL, Caltech, or the space agency what they thought of the idea, but the committee did check with the chairman of the House Science and Astronautics Committee, George P. Miller (D-Calif.), and he approved. Actually, Miller was not in a position to object gracefully. He, too, is retiring, and the Public Works Committee decided to affix *his* name to the federal building in Oakland, California.

Committee staffers profess not to have heard the complaints from Pasadena, and anyway, said one, the decision is irrevocable: "It's a law and the President signed it."

To try to smooth things over, Smith sent off a "Dear Bill and Harold" letter on 13 November to William Pickering, the director of JPL, and Harold Brown, the president of Caltech, explaining that the name change was as big a surprise to him as it was to them. Smith also pointed out that "there are many laws on the federal books which are not enforced" and said he was sure that no federal agency would try to enforce the use of his name if the laboratory really objected. Last week Smith was still waiting for a reply.

Meanwhile, JPL has done nothing in the way of ordering new stationery or changing its telephone listing, and a close reading of the law suggests it really might not have to do anything to comply. The law, PL 92-520, merely says that any future reference to the laboratory "shall be held as a reference to" the H. Allen Smith Jet Propulsion Laboratory. But there is no explicit requirement that the laboratory advertise itself as such.

In the end, the solution may be for JPL to acknowledge its new name with a small sign behind a fast-growing evergreen and let time take its course.

—ROBERT GILLETTE