

Tools for Groundbreaking of NASA Facilities on Display



NASA leadership and local VIPs gathered in the Dr. Edward Sharp Alcove of Honor for the unveiling of the "Dedication Tools" display. Dr. Whitlow is at the podium. Credit: NASA/Marvin Smith

Local dignitaries, former center directors, center leadership, media and others gathered at Glenn's Employee Center on January 23 to commemorate an historic event and celebrate another. They were invited for the unveiling of a display in the Dr. Sharp Alcove of Honor containing the nickel-plated pick and a shovel used in the groundbreaking ceremonies for both the NACA Aircraft Engine Research Laboratory (January 23) in 1941 and NACA Plum Brook Reactor Research Facility in 1956. While clearing the contents of a building scheduled for demolition last year, Scott Marabito, CHI/Facilities Division, discovered the wooden crate that stored the tools for over half a century. Center Director Dr. Woodrow Whitlow Jr. commended Marabito, Glenn History Officer Kevin Coleman and others for their efforts in the recovery and display of the tools that he said "still represent the groundbreaking work and research being conducted in world-class facilities by the center's talented workforce."

Original shovel used for Glenn groundbreaking found

By Kevin Kelley

WESTSHORE

Have you even been cleaning out a closet or box in the basement and discovered something important that you thought had been lost long ago?

Well, Scott Marabito had that experience on a Sunday last July.

The contractor at NASA's Glenn Research Center and a team of workers were clearing out a storage barn scheduled for demolition.

Marabito had no idea that the contents of one crate dated back to the very beginning of what is now known as the Glenn Research Center.

"At first when I saw the crate, I didn't think anything of it because you couldn't read what was on it," said Marabito, who has been a Glenn contractor for 25 years. "It was covered with dust."

But previously opened crates had contained glass display cases. And this one had steel bands sealing it.

Although dirt prevented him from reading it, the crate was labeled "Dedication Tools."

The crate, it turned out, contained a pick and shovel used for the 1941 groundbreaking ceremony that established the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA) Aircraft Engine Research Laboratory, the forerunner to the Glenn Research Center.

"As soon as I saw the shovel, of course, I told the guys, 'This is something we don't want to throw away,'" said Marabito, an employee of Call Henry Inc.

The team was on a tight schedule to clear the storage barn, so Marabito put the crate in his truck and took it home overnight for safe keeping.

examine the tools.

"It was quite a shock and quite a find for the center as a whole to uncover something that was in storage for nobody knows how long," Coleman said.

The pick and shovel, Coleman later discovered, were also used at a groundbreaking ceremony at the NACA Plum Brook Reactor Research Facility near Sandusky in 1956.

The pick and shovel are on display at Edward R. Sharp Employee Building on the Glenn campus. That's because Sharp, the center's first director who oversaw its development, was the only official present at both the 1941 and 1956 groundbreakings.



Above: A photograph of the January 23, 1941 groundbreaking ceremony at the then NACA Aircraft Engine Research Laboratory. Edward R. Sharp is third from the left. (Photo credit: NASA) Right: The pick and shovel from the groundbreaking ceremony now on display at the Edward R. Sharp Employee Building at the Glenn Research Center. (West Life photo by Kevin Kelley)

"My concern was that if I left it anywhere around there, it would hit the dumpster," Marabito said.

The first thing the next morning, Marabito called Kevin Coleman, director of Glenn's history office.

The two carried it into Coleman's office to better

On Jan. 23, Glenn officials unveiled a revamped alcove honoring Sharp with the pick and shovel added.

Glenn Director Woodrow Whitlow was joined by his two predecessors, Donald J. Campbell and Julian Earls, at the ceremony that took place exactly 67 years to the day of the original groundbreaking.

A master plan for Glenn, approved in September, calls for construction of some new facilities over the next 20 years. Might the pick and shovel be taken out of their display case for yet another groundbreaking ceremony?

"It's an interesting concept. We haven't really thought about it," said Coleman, a

North Olmsted resident. "That's something that we should probably consider."

