

Snoopy in Space



In the late 60s, following the tragic fire that killed the three crew members of Apollo 1, NASA administrators were searching for a way to bring heightened awareness to the importance of the thousands of team members who worked behind the scenes to send a relatively few men into space. It was decided to have the astronauts themselves present a special commendation pin to those they desired to recognize and honor.

Al Chop, Director of Public Relations for the Manned Spacecraft Center, is the one who came up with the idea to make Charles Schultz's beloved beagle Snoopy as the "face" of the award. The cartoonist happily agreed after being told that Snoopy would one day make it to the moon. He drew the image of Snoopy in a space suit complete with helmet, scarf and gear box and offered its use to NASA at no cost. It was from this picture the silver pin was cast. Adding to its appeal, it is said that the pins, before they are awarded, are first sent into space and returned. In 1969, NASA kept their promise to Schultz, naming the lunar module of the Apollo 10 mission after the cartoon character. Snoopy did indeed get to the moon.

The first Silver Snoopy awards were presented in 1968 to some of the team members who worked on the LTA-8 project, a precursor to the lunar module. Among them was Oliver Henry Wall, uncle to my brother-in-law. Wall worked at the Kennedy Space Center for thirty years on both the Apollo and Shuttle programs. His pin was presented to him by astronaut Dick Scobee. The accompanying award certificate reads, "In appreciation for professionalism, dedication and outstanding support that greatly enhanced space flight safety and mission success."

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