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GETTING READY FOR SPACE HISTORY

–An interview with a Swiss who will do just that

An exciting event for your editor took place in London a few weeks ago when he was priviliged to meed Claude Nicolier, the Swiss astronaut who will be one of the first Eruopeans to fly in the United States space shuttle in 1980.

Mr. Nicolier was in London to help launch a new scale model of the shuttle being produced by Airfix.
M.T.

RESEARCH CAREER

After graduating in physics at Lausanne University, he entered upon a research career at the Astronomical Institute of Lausanne and Geneva Observatory, where he contributed to an observation and research programme for photometric classification of super-giant stars.

Having qualified as a professional pilot, he interrupted his research work for three years (1973-1976) and worked as an airline pilot on DC-9 aircraft for Swissair. During this period, he terminated his studies in astronomy and astrophysics which he had started before joining Swissair, and was awarded a degree by Geneva University in these subjects.

In 1976, he resumed his activities as research scientist and is at present a visiting scientist at ESTEC, Noordwijk, Netherlands. In this capacity, he took part in the ASSESS-II mission – airborne simulation of a Spacelab mission – in May 1977 as experiment operator.

He is still a pilot in the Swiss Air Force, on a part-time basis, flying Hawker Hunters. Married with a three and a half year old daughter, M. Nicolier lives in Holland. He will be spending extended training periods in the United States to prepare for his historic flight.

FLYING BRICKYARD

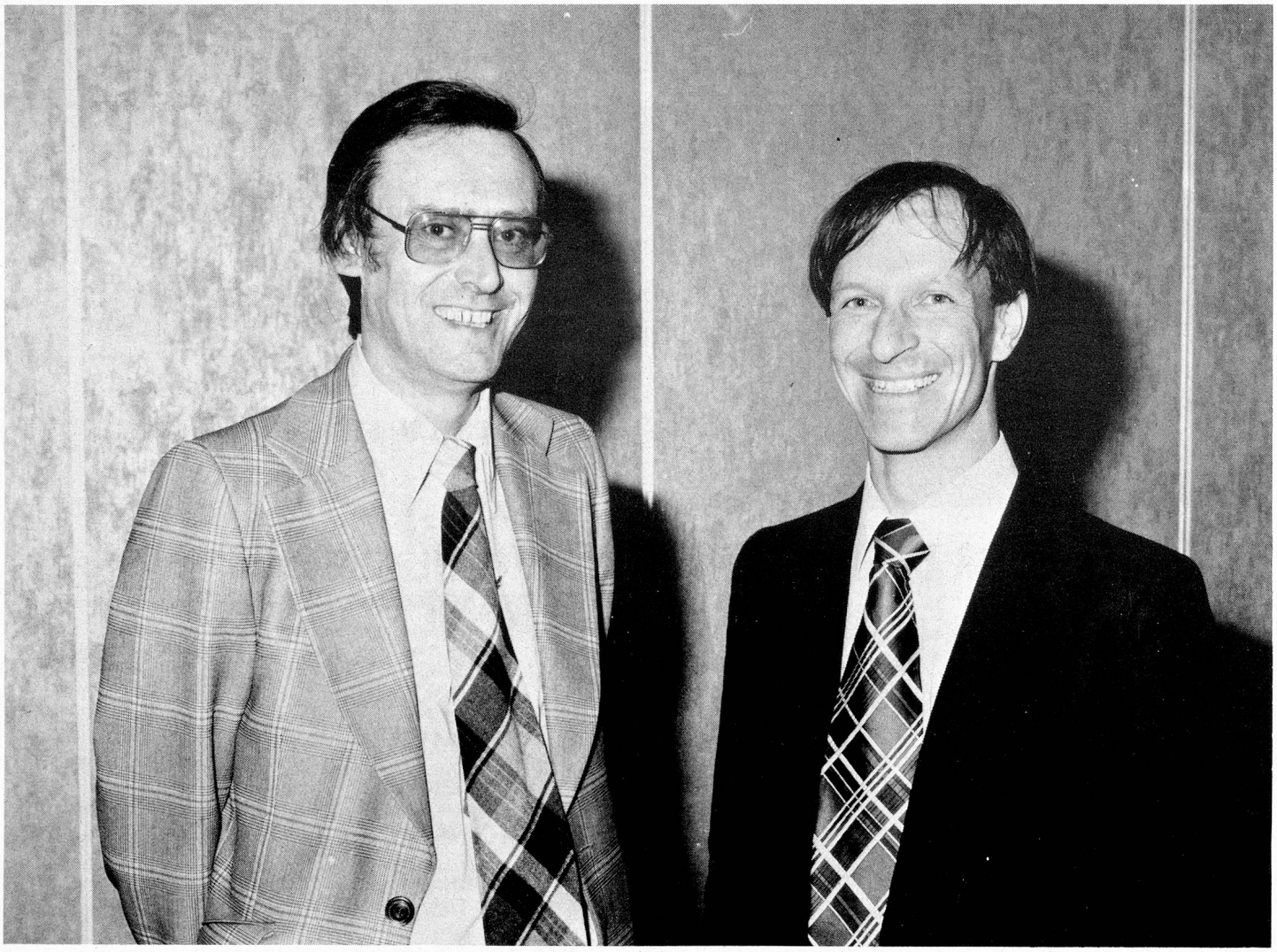
The Shuttle – known as the flying brickyard because of the 32,000 silica covered ceramic bricks built into the exposed surfaces to deal with temperatures up to 2,300 degrees F – is due to fly "in business" in May 1980.

That year will also see the first Spacelab mission, which will include European as well as American technicians.

Shuttle is designed to deposit scientific payloads in space, then return to earth to pick up a new load – at a cost to the customer of about 337 dollars (about £170) a pound "delivered". (Each Shuttle flight will cost between 18 million to 23 million dollars – and NASA will recoup these costs from governments and private firms). By 1985, Shuttle will be averaging one flight a week.

A CHRISTMAS THOUGHT

Airfix's Shuttle has 92 parts and is made up of the delta-shaped orbiter vehicle, two booster rockets and the huge fuel tank. The kit is the only one on the market in full space flight configuration.
W.G.S.



Claude Nicollier, likely to be one of the first Europeans into space with the spacelab mission in 1980 talks with George Sommer, at a London press show to launch the new Airfix 1/144th scale model kit of Space Shuttle. Picture by courtesy of Airfix.