

Ball Aerospace Team Shares Prestigious SPIE George W. Goddard Award

BOULDER, Colo., May 5, 2017 — The New Horizons Optical Instrumentation Team (NHOIT), responsible for obtaining the first-ever high-resolution color images and composition data of Pluto and its moons, is the 2017 recipient of the prestigious George W. Goddard Award from SPIE, the International Society for Optics and Photonics. Ball engineers worked with the Southwest Research Institute (SwRI) to design and develop the ‘Ralph’ instrument that provided color and composition maps on NASA’s historic ten-year, three billion-mile mission to Pluto.

The George W. Goddard Award is given annually by SPIE in recognition of exceptional achievement in optical or photonic technology or instrumentation for Earth, planetary, or astronomical science, reconnaissance or surveillance from airborne or space platforms. The Goddard Award is reserved for the invention and development of a new process or technique, technology, instrumentation or system.

“The Goddard Award represents remarkable collaboration and an integrated team effort by the Southwest Research Institute, Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center, Ball Aerospace and other industry partners whose dedication and ingenuity provided the scientific returns that have completely altered what we know about the Pluto system,” said Rob Strain, president, Ball Aerospace. “We thank SPIE, one of the premier associations in our industry, for this recognition.”

Ball built the Ralph instrument, a key instrument of the seven aboard the New Horizons spacecraft, in collaboration with the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC) in Greenbelt, Maryland, under contract to SwRI in Boulder, Colorado. Equipped with powerful visible imagers and an infrared spectrometer, Ralph’s resolution is almost ten times better than the human eye, and uses less than half the power of a nightlight.

Ralph is paired with the mission’s ultraviolet spectrometer called ‘Alice’ (the two are named for the colorful Kramden characters from the 1950s television show “The Honeymooners”) and ‘LORRI’, the Long Range Reconnaissance Imager. The Alice and LORRI instrument teams, led by SwRI and The Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory (APL), respectively, also shared the Goddard Award. The overall instrumentation suite was managed by SwRI; APL built and operates the New Horizons spacecraft and built and operates the mission for NASA’s Science Mission Directorate.

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Forward-Looking Statements

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