**Delegation:** Robert Lauder – NASA PR Director

**Name:** Veraj Paruthi

**School:** Mentor College

The Apollo program has invoked the interest of the entire United States population. Whether it be the youth or the elderly, everyone is intrigued to stay awake and watch late night launches or hear updates regarding the program. However, how has the program gotten so popular and created such a large public movement? This popularity has been gained not only through the feats accomplished by the astronauts but through my team’s PR work. As NASA’s PR Director I truly have a passion for the Apollo program and put heart and soul into my work. Born in 1930, in Houston Texas, I have always been fond of space travel and what exists beyond our blue sky. I received my education at the University of Houston and majored in journalism and business. After graduating in 1952, I worked as a public relations officer at Houston Airlines, then American Airlines, until I was offered a position at NASA in 1960. Working my way up the ranks I finally got promoted to become the Public Relations Director for NASA in 1968. My highlight during my time at NASA is the increased funding I got for programs after the success of the Apollo 12 mission. Throughout my 9 years of work with NASA I have developed many skills along the way. My time spent at NASA has truly developed my ability to think quickly as well as my ability to problem solve. If ever a problem arises it is my duty to address and inform the media as soon as possible, all while ensuring NASA’s reputable and highly regarded imagine is not tarnished. If there is one trait I believe has gotten me to where I am, it would have to be my public speaking. Conveying and communicating one’s thoughts is essential, especially as a PR director as I represent NASA publically.

My role during the Apollo 13 mission is to relay information to the media and the public. In Apollo 11 and 12 I dealt with constant questions from the media and the public. As a result, to address all questions and concerns during the Apollo 13 mission, it is imperative that I have close communication with all members at mission control, especially the flight directors as they have the closest relations with the Apollo astronauts and have the most up to date information at any given time. In addition, working with the backup crew is imperative as they are in the best position to understand what the astronauts are truly going through. Should anything unfortunate happen during the Apollo 13 mission, my role as PR director becomes increasingly more difficult. NASA, a government organization, is obliged to release all information whether it be negative or positive. Negative publicity is just not acceptable as it will ruin NASA’s image in the public eye and could result in reduced funding for many years to come. Along with dealing with the media’s scrutiny, my other duties and roles include but are not limited to, organizing press conferences, speeches during press releases, promotional pictures, and television interviews, and videos, and ensuring that NASA is constantly perceived positively in the media and public eye. Along with keeping close relations between NASA and the media, I have to also ensure that the families of the astronauts are well informed about all events occurring during the mission, after all, it is their loved ones, who are risking their lives to travel into outer space. Achieving all these goals during the Apollo 13 mission will be difficult, however, if there is anyone qualified to achieve these goals, it is me, Robert Lauder.

Versatility is important when working with NASA as one has no idea if the situation is going to go according to plan or not. As a result, the ability to adapt is an important part in ensuring my success as PR Director. If everything goes according to plan during the Apollo 13 mission, this will serve as tremendous publicity for the Apollo Programs as well as NASA. This means that we could request greater amounts of funding in future years as well as gain public support for future missions. However, if things go southwards and the Apollo 13 mission does not go according to plan, I will do my best to inform the media of the outcome, while trying to ensure that NASA’s reputation is not negatively affected.

In addition, dealing with the families of the astronauts would be just as, if not more important than dealing with the media. If the astronauts lose their lives their family should be financially reimbursed, even though we are well aware that no amount of money can get back the life of a loved one. However, in the lead up to the mission, I need to be prepared and have speeches ready for all possible outcomes, though I hope to only have to report on the successes of the mission.

All in all, through the work of hundreds of individuals, NASA is a program that collectively brings the American population together for a movement that is truly empowering and supports scientific research. It is my honour to be a part of NASA, and specifically, the Apollo 13 team, and I hope that NASA continues to innovate, empower and support scientific research, and truly push the limits of mankind even further.