George Carruthers

1939-

George Carruthers is an American engineer and scientist who gained international recognition for the development of ultraviolet imaging systems. After receiving his doctorate in Aeronautical and Astronomical Engineering from the University of Illinois in 1964, Dr. Carruthers joined the Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) in Washington, DC, as a research physicist. In 1966 he became a research assistant at the NRL's E.O. Hulburt Center for Space Research where he began to investigate ways to create and use images which would further our understanding of the deep space environment. His work, which focused specifically on devices which could capture images at ultraviolet wavelengths, led to his invention of an "Image Converter for Detecting Electromagnetic Radiation Especially in Short Wave Lengths" in 1969. Dr. Carruthers went on to invent the first moon-based observatory, the Far Ultraviolet Camera/Spectrograph, which was deployed on the lunar surface during the Apollo 16 mission in 1972. Carruthers' designed and built several other space-borne imaging systems, including those that first detected molecular hydrogen in space, made the first UV image of a comet, and the first UV image of a meteor entering the Earth's atmosphere. A passionate educator, Dr. Carruthers has been active in outreach programs seeking to bring science to youth around the country. He was named Black Engineer of the Year in 1987, awarded the Exceptional Achievement Scientific Award from NASA in 1972, and inducted into National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2003.