

## **West Virginia Rocket Event: October Sky Festival, October 4 2008**

*Historic West Virginia Town Gears Up for the "October Sky Festival" Featuring Hometown Hero Homer Hickam, NASA Shuttle Astronaut Tom Jones October 4, 2008*

**Sept. 16, 2008** - [PRLog](#) -- COALWOOD, W. Va. –

Best-selling author Homer Hickam and three other members of the original "Rocket Boys" made famous by his memoirs and the movie titled October Sky will gather again Saturday, Oct. 4th 2008 for the tenth annual October Sky Festival in the picturesque town of Coalwood, West Virginia. Among the participants will be many of the real people featured in Hickam's "Coalwood" series which includes Rocket Boys/October Sky, The Coalwood Way, Sky of Stone, and We Are Not Afraid.

This year's festival will feature a guest appearance by NASA shuttle astronaut and three-time spacewalker Dr. Tom Jones who will sign copies of his book Sky Walking. He will also pose for pictures and even help launch rockets with students from around the country at Cape Coalwood, the original area where Hickam and his boyhood friends sent their missiles skyward. In more than eleven years with NASA, Jones flew on four space shuttle missions into Earth orbit. On his last flight, he led three spacewalks to install the American Destiny laboratory, considered the centerpiece of the International Space Station.

In total, Dr. Jones has spent fifty-three days working and living in space. A frequent commentator on space subjects for FOX NEWS, Jones also co-authored with Michael Benson The Complete Idiot's Guide to NASA, (Alpha, 2002).

Sky Walking: An Astronaut's Memoir, (Smithsonian Books-Collins, 2006) was named one of its "Five Best" books on space by the Wall Street Journal.

His newest title is Hell Hawks! The Untold Story of the American Fliers Who Savaged Hitler's Wehrmacht (with Robert F. Dorr; Zenith, 2008).

Attending the festival will also be Grace Corrigan, mother of Challenger teacherastronaut Christa McAuliffe, and Dreama Denver, widow of actor Bob Denver of the television shows "Gilligan's Island" and "Dobie Gillis" fame.

Mrs. Denver will have her husband's delightful memoir Gilligan, Maynard, and Me available for autographs. Other local and national authors will be attending with their books about Coalwood and the people of Appalachia.

Coalwood is located near Bluefield in the rugged mountains of southern West Virginia. Its people look forward to being hosts every year to thousands of guests from across the USA.

Many of the structures from 1950's era Coalwood which were pivotal to Rocket Boys/October Sky are still standing, including the miner's clubhouse, Hickam's boyhood home, the company offices, and the machine shop where Hickam, his fellow members of the Big Creek Missile Agency, and company machinists built their highly-advanced rockets which captured a gold medal in the 1960 National Science Fair.

Fans attending this year's tenth annual October Sky Festival will enjoy:

- Rocket launches at nearby "Cape Coalwood" by students from across the U.S. inspired by the book and movie.
- Guided trolley tours of Coalwood Main, the rocket launch site at Cape Coalwood and more.
- Live music from performers from across West Virginia
- Authentic classic coal mining museum displays.
- A parade and lots of children's activities in and around Cassell Park, the Coalwood Rocket Boys playground which features a replica of a NASA shuttle.

There will be food and a festive family atmosphere all day near the height of fall foliage in West Virginia.

Hickam currently lives in Huntsville Alabama "Rocket City USA" with wife Linda. Besides Rocket Boys, he is the author of nine other books, including the "Josh Thurlow" series of WWII adventures, the "Coalwood" series, and Back to the Moon.

His latest novel, Red Helmet., will be available at the festival. Red Helmet is a beautifully-told love story set in the modern day West Virginia coalfields.

Hickam is also working with New York producers on a big new Broadway musical based on Rocket Boys.

More information is available about The 2008 October Sky Festival Saturday October 4th in Coalwood WV at <http://www.homerhickam.com/coalwood>.

To arrange interviews with Homer Hickam, Rocket Boys Roy Lee Cooke, Billy Rose, and O'Dell Carroll, NASA shuttle astronaut Tom Jones, or Dreama Denver, contact Burke Allen at Allen Media Strategies in Washington DC at (703) 589-8960 or <http://www.allenmediastrategies.com>.

A TV "B" roll package can also be requested. Because of Coalwood's mountainous location, cell phone use is limited on site; advance phone line requests for live radio broadcasts on the day of the event is recommended.

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