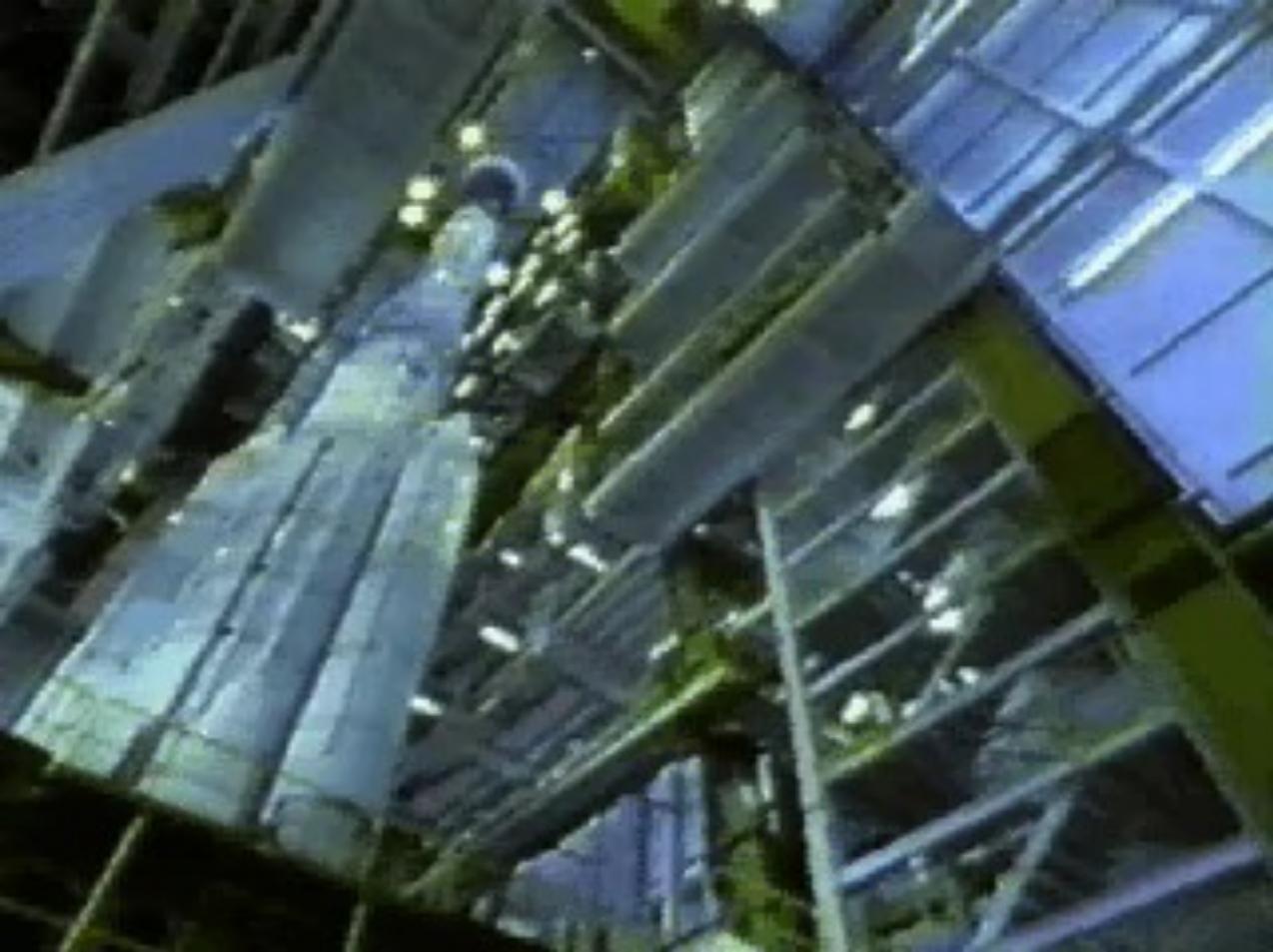




# TOPEX-POSEIDON

Memories from its founding fathers





## A SIMPLE SENTENCE

"30 YEARS AGO, THE US-FRENCH TOPEX-POSEIDON OCEANOGRAPHIC SATELLITE WAS LAUNCHED BY A EUROPEAN ARIANE 42P ROCKET"

# LET'S GIVE TOGETHER A HARD-LOOK AT THIS SENTENCE

Stan Wilson



30 years  
ago...

Bill Townsend



the US-  
French  
Topex-  
Poseidon...

Philippe Escudier



[a joint  
NASA-  
CNES]

Bill Patzert



...oceanog  
raphic  
satellite  
was  
launched...

Stan and I



...by a  
European  
Ariane 42P  
rocket

**VIRTUALLY EVERY WORD IN THAT SHORT SENTENCE IS HIDING SEVERAL MYSTERIES AND MIRACLES!**

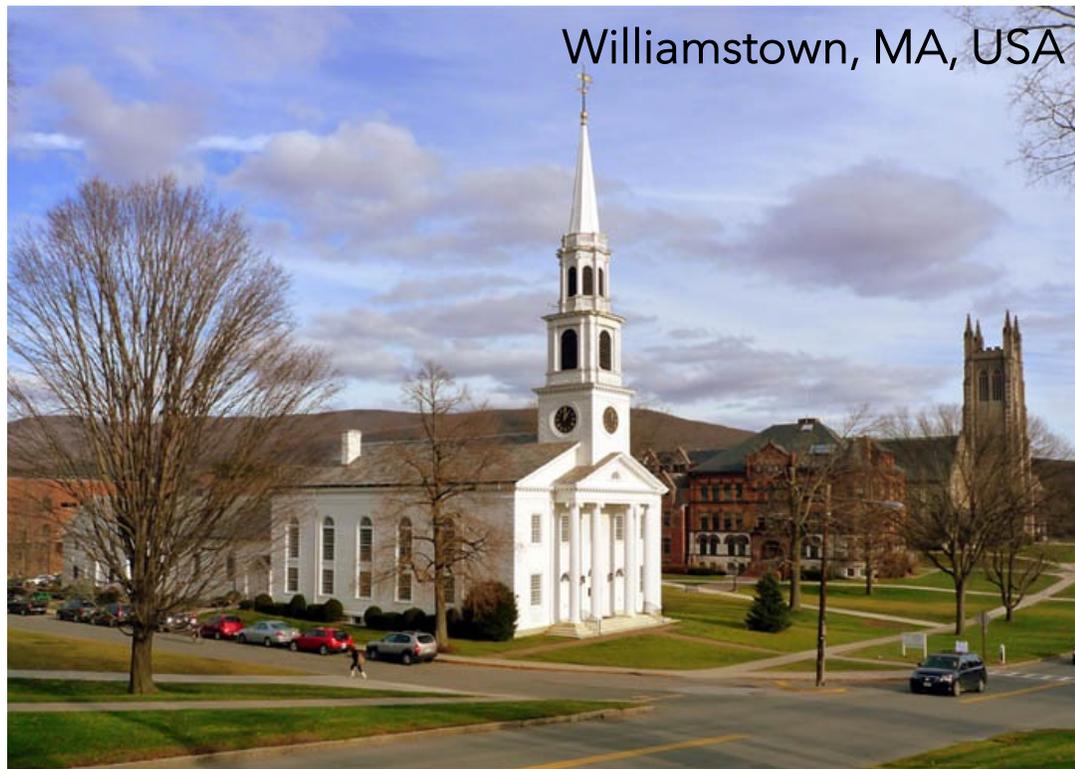
# TOPEX-POSÉIDON, THE ANCESTOR OF A LARGE FAMILY



We'll talk to it with Alain Ratier

# LET'S START FROM THE BEGINNING: 30 YEARS AGO ?

Stan Wilson



In fact, the story started more than 40 years ago, didn't it?



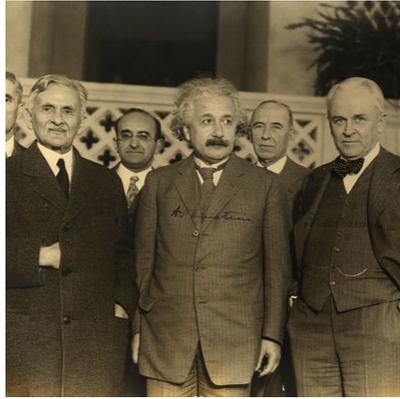
# ... AND IT WENT ON IN WASHINGTON AND PASADENA

Joseph Henry Bldg., Washington DC,  
26 January 1983



Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena  
CA, 5-7 July 1983





# THE US-FRENCH TOPEX-POSEIDON?

## An ugly project name

- Stan and I (picture) tried to find a better name for the “joint” project at the Athenaeum in Pasadena
- After having considered **TOPIDON, POSEIDEX** and other options, we decided to postpone that discussion to a later stage - and needless to say, the name was never changed

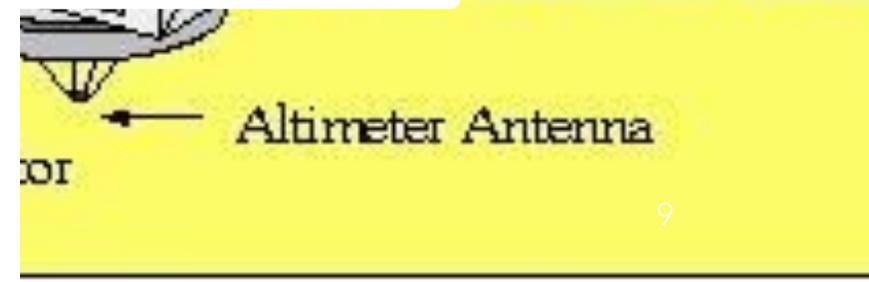
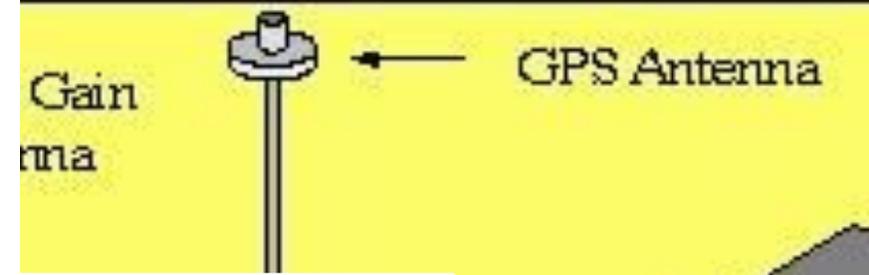
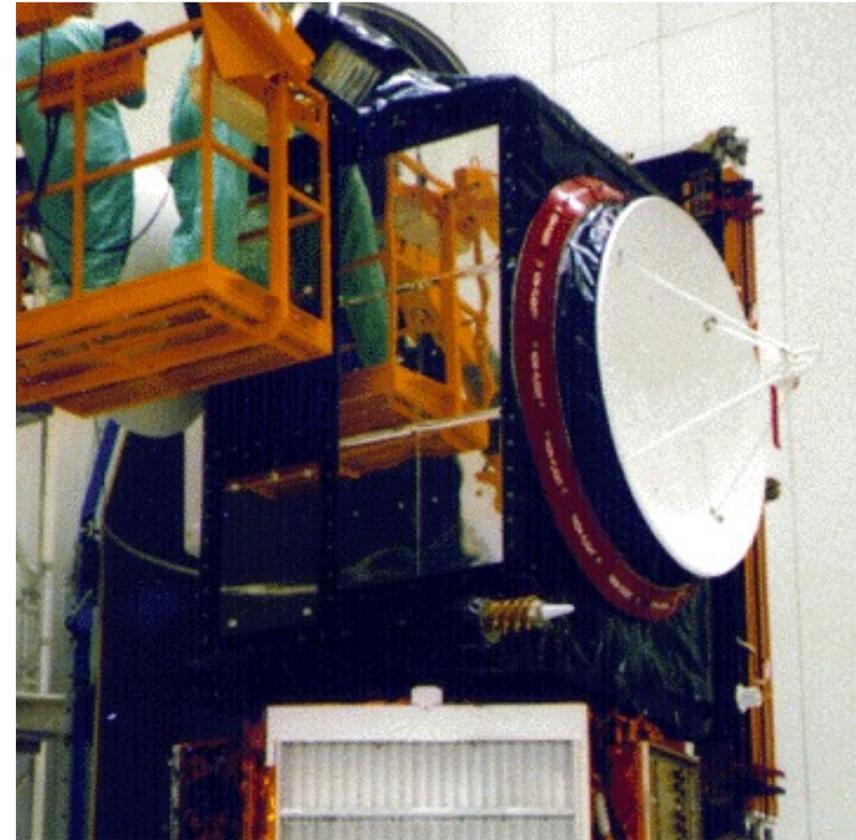
## Bill Townsend

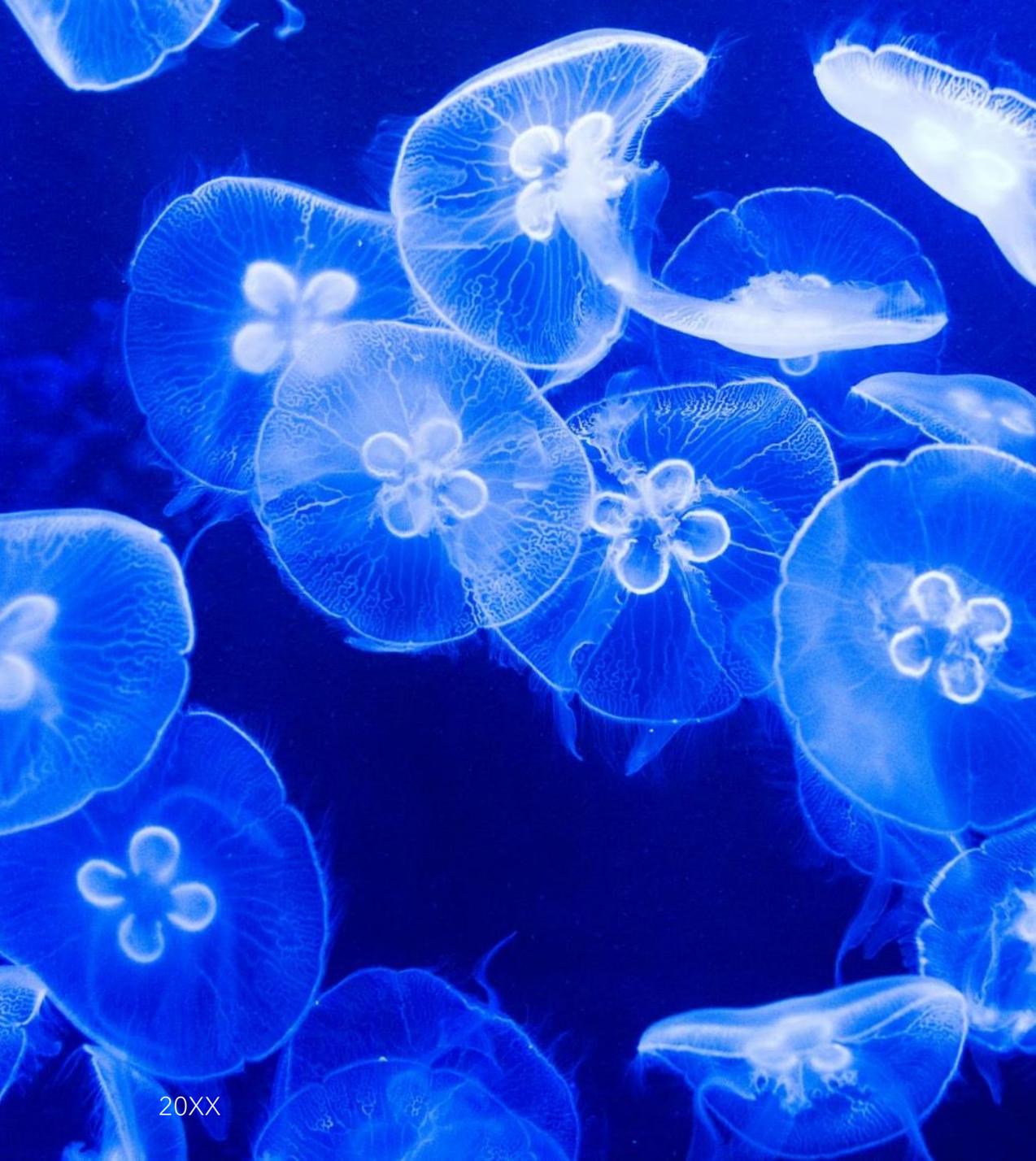
- Could you tell us more about the “black box approach”?
- How was U.S.-French collaboration seen in the US at various technical, management, political, etc. levels?
- How important was the NASA-CNES MoU (Memorandum of Understanding ) that was signed, from which our relationships were cast in stone, with the establishment of a Joint Steering Group, etc.

Philippe Escudier

## HOW ABOUT NASA-CNES TECHNICAL COOPERATION?

- How did the technical collaboration evolve from the “black box approach” to a more open and trustful relationship?
- How about the sharing of the same antenna by the two altimeters?





## Bill Patzert

### AN OCEANOGRAPHIC SATELLITE?

- How did you appreciate the collaborative work with the French scientists, much less numerous and less well-prepared than the US community?
- What is your recollection of the Joint Announcement of Opportunity – “a once-in-a-decade opportunity” – that you and I wrote and released?
- How confident were you about the satellite performance in terms of accuracy and precision?



# A EUROPEAN ARIANE 42P ROCKET?

Stan Wilson

## A European rocket

- How could you persuade the US government authorities to accept the launch of a US satellite - pursuing national interests - by a European rocket?

Jean-Louis Fellous

## An Ariane 42P

- The not well-known history behind Ariane 42P



## Alain Ratier

### TOPEX-POSEIDON, THE ANCESTOR OF A LARGE FAMILY

- Could you tell us the story - not really a wide, quiet river - which led step by step from TOPEX-Poséidon to Jason(-1), Jason-2/OSTM, Jason-3, and Sentinel-6A Michael Freilich, SWOT to be launched in a month or so, and Sentinel-6B to be launched in 2026?

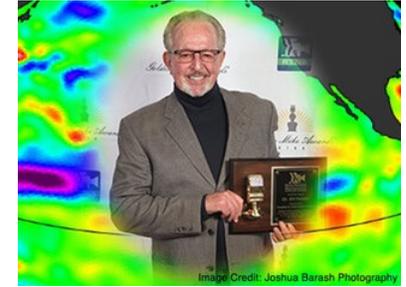
A FEW SHORT,  
FUNNY STORIES...



**Stan Wilson**



**Bill Townsend**



**Bill Patzert**



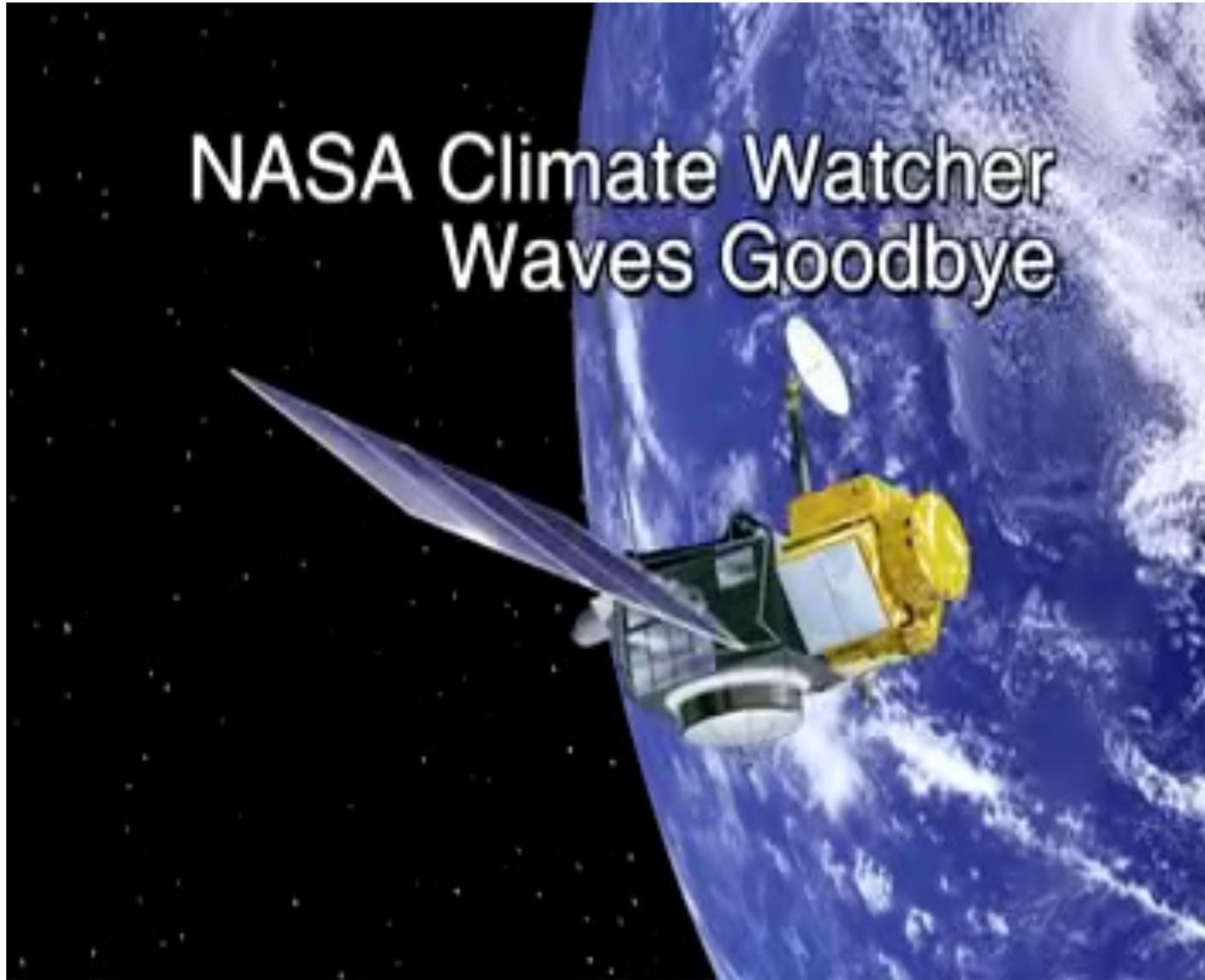
**Philippe Escudier**



**Alain Ratier**



**Jean-Louis Fellous**





*"When the most important times are occurring, we don't even recognize them or notice. We are just busy living our lives. Only looking back do we know what was a great moment in our lives."*

**Federico Fellini (1920-1993)**

THANK YOU!

... and see you  
all in 2032 in  
Venice, for the  
40<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
of TOPEX-  
Poséidon

