

and Lewis Carroll explained the science. . . . Magnificent, majestic Jupiter, king of Olympus, sultan of the solar system, grand Poo-bah of the planets, at last revealed its true Day-Glo colors, . . . Jupiter—the psychedelic planet.⁴⁷

Enthusiasts were ecstatic about the achievements of the Voyager spacecraft. Few in the lay public who saw the pictures remained unmoved by them as the returns came in from Jupiter—and then from Saturn. As the ten-year voyages continued, however, most people forgot about Voyager as other news eclipsed the long periods of travel between planetary encounters. As the Voyager reached Saturn in November 1980 and August 1981 and beamed back breathtaking pictures in color of that planet's rings, space exploration once again commanded the public's attention. The rings of Saturn provoked awe and wonder. The response was not enough, however, to generate support for the revival of a manned planetary program or even an expanded non-manned space exploration program.⁴⁸ If support were forthcoming in the future, the RTG program, whose devices were a necessity for such ventures, was determined to be ready at the launch pads.

A Program Needing Missions

As the last space launchings carrying RTGs took place in mid-1977, the RTG program received some mention in the nation's newspapers for its contributions. The *New York Times* said that the Voyager launching to Jupiter, Saturn and beyond "is the latest adventure for a little-noted power technology that has made possible much of the last decade's dramatic extension of knowledge of the solar system." Citing information obtained in a telephone interview with Bernard Rock, at the time assistant director for space application for ERDA's Division of Nuclear Research and Applications, the *Times* said:

According to Mr. Rock, development of even larger future nuclear power systems for space is supported by a \$30 million annual research program. Among its plans is the use of advanced selenide thermoelectric units along with plutonium 238 heat sources aboard a spacecraft that is to carry an orbiter and a probe to Jupiter. Launching is scheduled for 1982.⁴⁹