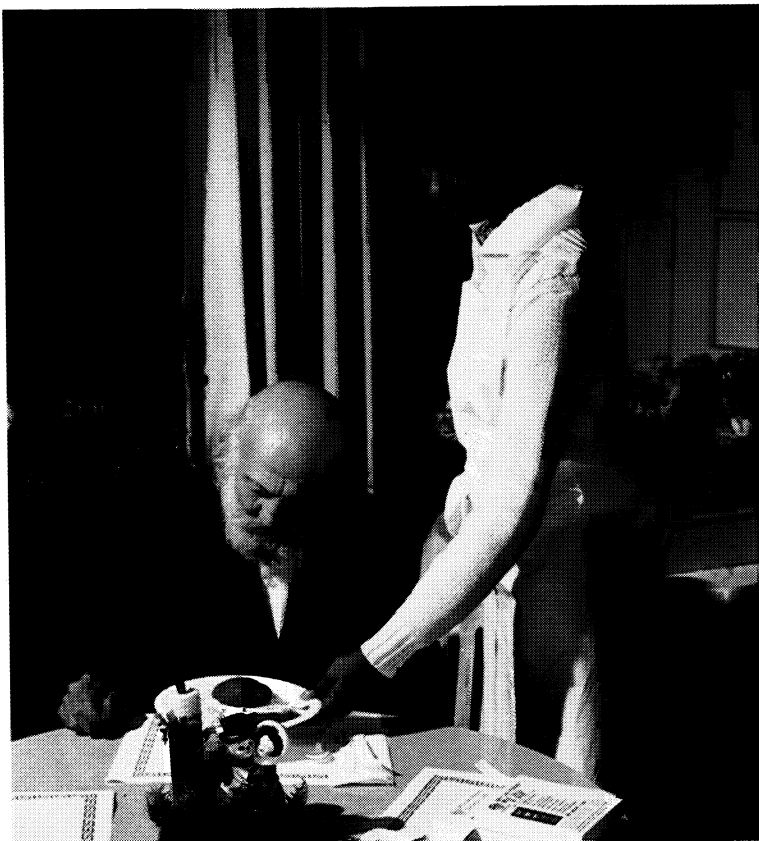




### Meals for the Elderly

Meals for spacecraft crews must be tasty and nutritionally balanced yet light in weight, compactly packaged, storable without refrigeration and easy to prepare, due to the dictates of spacecraft design. These requirements prompted NASA research in food technology that spawned several types of space meal systems. Among them are various compressed and freeze-dried foods—developed by the Army's Natick Laboratory under contract to Johnson Space Center—which served as the basis for a 1975-77 demonstration project managed by Johnson and called Meal System for the Elderly. The aim of that multi-agency cooperative project was to make the simple but nutritious space meals available to handicapped and otherwise homebound senior adults unable to take advantage of existing meal programs sponsored by federal, state and private organizations.

As a spinoff of Meal System for the Elderly, commercial food processing firms are now producing astronaut-type meals for public distribution. An example is Sky-Lab Foods, Inc., Elmsford, New York, formed in 1978 to market food packages modeled on the NASA meal system. The company offers a broad





variety of freeze-dried foods, which are reconstituted by addition of water, and "retort pouch" meals which need no reconstitution, only heating; the retort pouch is an innovative flexible package that combines the advantages of the metal can and the boil-in bag. These foods retain their natural flavors, minerals and vitamins, can be stored for long periods without refrigeration, and are lightweight for easy transportability.

Sky-Lab Foods markets its products to public and private agencies serving the elderly, handicapped and disadvantaged. Typical of the company's customers are a number of senior citizen service centers in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, whose activities are funded by the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging. The woman and man pictured on the opposite page are dining on Sky-Lab meals provided by the Spring Garden Senior Citizen Center. In the top photo, staff members of the Council of Spanish Speaking Organizations are examining Sky-Lab menus. The Council serves meals at its church-based facility, distributes packages for home use (above) and delivers meals to homebound clients (right).