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The Father of Astronautics

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the father of astronautics

By Ralph E. Jennings



Dr. Hermann Oberth in 1923 the year his famous book, 'A Rocket To The Interplanetary Spaces' was published. This first book of astronautics is still amazingly accurate from both a technical and theoretical viewpoint.

To Hermann Oberth, pioneer of modern astronautics and renowned physicist, this first issue of the SPACE JOURNAL of the Rocket City Astronomical Association is respectfully dedicated.

The first man to give direct scholarly treatment to space flight, Prof. Oberth was also a pioneer in rocket theory and practical experimentation. In recognition of his long and unselfish labors in the advancement of the science of space flight, the American Rocket Society in 1956 presented to Prof. Oberth the G. Edward Pendray Award. The citation read in part: "The intellectual forces set in motion by Prof. Oberth are largely

responsible for the present high state of rocketry, missile technology, and astronomical research."

Prof. Oberth was born in Hermannstadt, Transylvania in 1894 and attended schools in Schaessburg, Transylvania until he was ready to enter the University in Munich in 1913. He also studied at Goettingen and Heidelberg, and in 1923 he became a professor of mathematics and physics.

He experimented with gasoline and liquid air for rocket propulsion in 1928-30 while working as an advisor to a motion picture company. Later he pursued rocket research at Vienna Technical University and Dresden. In 1941, he joined the Peenemuende group headed by Dr. Wernher von Braun. Following the war, he conducted rocket investigations privately and was employed by the Italian Navy from 1950 to 1952 in similar work.

Prof. Oberth came to Redstone Arsenal in 1955 as a consulting engineer and later transferred to the Army Ballistic Missile

Agency at Redstone as Chief of the Special Fields Section of the Research Projects Office, the position he now holds.

His publications include "Die Rakete zu den Planetenraeumen" (A Rocket to the Interplanetary Spaces) 1923; "Wege zur Raumschiffahrt" (Means for Astronautics) 1929; "Forschung und Jenseits" (Investigation and the Life to Come) 1930; "Menschen im Weltraum" (Men Into Space) 1954. The later work has been published in English by Harper & Brothers.

He is a member of the Association of German Inventers and received the Diesel Medal from that Society in 1954. He was the inspiration for the Hermann Oberth Medal, awarded yearly by the German Society for Space Research. In 1930, he received the REP-Hirsch Award from the Astronomical Society of France. He was the recipient in 1955 of the Space Flight Award of the American Astronautical Society.



This old photo shows Dr. Oberth with some experimental rocket equipment he designed and tested in 1918.