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Vox Populi

Rocket City Astronomical Association

Space Enterprises, Inc.

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REACTION

vox populi

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The first edition of SPACE Journal brought the following reactions from readers.)

. . . You may not remember this little story, Professor Oberth, because it is so typical of you that it might have happened many times, but it is as fresh in my memory as if it had occurred yesterday.

It was early in 1943 at Peenemeunde, the German rocket development center on the banks of the Baltic Sea. We test-fired one of the first V2 rockets, and because the art of rocketry was still in its infancy in those days, there was no "pad safety" to hold us back from the launching site. When a missile was fired, we stood under some pine trees not more than 300 feet away from the firing platform, and we were happy to feel the dust and sand, and even the fringe of

the hot blast, right in our faces. The V2 missile went off fine that day, and our eyes followed it until it had disappeared in the deep-blue Baltic sky.

When I turned my eyes earthward again, I saw your face close to me. I had never seen you before, but immediately recognized you from photographs. You gazed at a distant point somewhere in the sky, but not at all in the direction in which the big rocket had just disappeared. I felt very happy to stand so close to such an extraordinary man and perhaps to listen to what he might say. But you did not care to talk. After a long silence, I finally said, "It must



certainly be a most gratifying experience for you, Professor Oberth, to see how beautifully your early dreams and concepts of large rockets have now come to life." But you neither answered nor changed your expression. I was convinced that I had said something very stupid, if not offensive.

After a long time, you slowly turned your head, and you kept turning until you looked far out in the opposite direction. After another long pause, you talked, selecting your words as carefully and slowly as only a deep-probing thinker does: "I have the greatest admiration for the engineers and technicians who built this rocket. But beyond that, it does not mean much. We have known before that a rocket will work within and beyond the atmosphere. This rocket is only the first little step toward a much greater project: the exploration of outer space. Out there, there are still so many things which we do not know and which are perhaps far beyond our imagination. There exploration is what really counts. We must not forget this goal in the enthusiasm that a mere technical success may give us."

After this, you continued to look silently into the depth of space which was far away from your eyes but so very close to your heart.

Huntsville, Ala. Ernst Stuhlinger

Dear Editor,

Vol. 1, No. 1, was handed to me for comment. . . . I have just finished reading it from cover to cover, something I very rarely find time to do with any journal. Please enter my subscription, effective with the first issue if possible. I fear you have established such a high level of achievement with this first issue that you will not be able to sustain it, but the best of luck to you in this endeavor.

Incidentally, regarding Dr. von Braun's contribution (Reaction, p. 39) in which he attributes the "Because it is there" remark to Sir Edmund Hillary; I have not checked any references on this but wasn't this re-

mark actually made by either Mallory or Irvine quite a few years before Hillary's time?

Yours sincerely,
Capt. Edwin R. Archibald USAF
Holloman AFB, New Mexico

Dear Editor,

I have just read your magazine SPACE Journal, and I like it very much. However, I wish to point out an error in the Reaction Department. In his first paragraph, Dr. von Braun refers to the answer "Because it is there" to the question of why anyone should want to climb Mt. Everest. However, this answer was not given by Sir Edmund Hillary, but by George Leigh-Mallory, who disappeared on Mt. Everest in 1924. On this, his third attempt to conquer Mt. Everest, he and his companion, Andrew Irvine, were last seen by N. E. Odell, high up the mountain. I'm sure that Sir Edmund was motivated by the drive to which Dr. von Braun refers, but he did not make the remark attributed to him.

Yours truly,
Eugene Edelstein

New York, N. Y.

Readers Archibald and Edelstein are correct in saying that the statement was first made by George Leigh-Mallory. Dr. von Braun is also correct in attributing the remark to Sir Edmund. In the film documenting the expedition, Sir Edmund used the phrase, giving Leigh-Mallory credit, and said that he was motivated by the same reason. Editor.

Dear Editor,

I want a one-year subscription to SPACE Journal. Start me with the winter issue. . . .

Each issue of SPACE Journal costs 50 cents and it is published quarterly. Why does it cost \$2.25 for a one-year subscription? Why the extra 25 cents?

Yours truly,
Leo Bigos

In the rush to get the first issue out, a good many things became confused—among them the price on the cover of the

second printing of the first edition. The correct price per copy is 50 cents; yearly subscription price is \$2.00. Growing pains of a fledgling publication were also the cause of this delayed second edition. The schedule is now stabilized. Editor.

Dear Editor,

I am enrolled in a teacher training program at the local university and am now studying the development of a unit in the upper elementary level. With the emphasis placed on man and science in the world today, we have chosen the *Study of Man* as the theme of our initial unit development; its relation to his environment; its effects at different altitudes and depths; and the compensations that are necessary to enable him to go beyond the stratosphere (and into space, if ever).

Do you have any pamphlets or information that we could have in relation to our topic? A bibliography and a list of sources of information would also help greatly.

Ewa, Oahu, Hawaii Masako Kiyabu
A list is on the way. Editor.

Dear Editor,

You've started a publication which is most welcome, and I can't conceive of a better group to handle it. The SPACE Journal certainly needed to counteract some of the poorly written "space articles" now appearing in almost every newspaper and magazine on the newsstands.

But my first reaction, when I saw your first issue at the local magazine shop, was disgust. It's not bad enough that we're behind the Russians on this thing, I thought—now here's another sensation-happy publisher trying to make a fast buck on it. . . .

So I bothered to pick up your first issue and glance down the list of contributors on the cover. Well, it looked rather good—so then, finally, I searched inside for the small print telling who *did* publish this magazine. And I bought it.

Consequently, my first suggestion would be that you incorporate some of that small print somewhere on the front cover, giving due credit to the Rocket City Astronomical Association of Huntsville, Alabama.

Secondly, I would suggest that you skip the poetry. . . . But the most serious request I have to make is that you omit any science fiction, at least until the magazine reaches a sufficient size to spare a few pages on a short story. Instead, I would much rather have some good biographical studies of such men as Newton, Copernicus, and Fermi, as well as Goddard and Lowell—or even H. G. Wells or Daedalus. . . .

Chicago, Illinois Joe Gibson
Thanks for the ideas, Joe. And as a start, see the current issue for an article on Prof. Goddard. Editor.

Dear Editor,

I have read several articles in your first issue of SPACE Journal, and find myself particularly intrigued with Dr. von Braun's "Where Are We Going?" and Mr. Whipple's "Why Conquer Space." I find that the inspiration expressed by these could use some backing in SPACE Journal in other forms than technical articles. . . .

I call to mind particularly the appeal to youth. And I can say from my own experience that my present interest in astronomy has its foundations not only in the popular books so readily available on the subject, but also in an active participation in some astronomical experiment. I am sure that had I not observed an eclipse of the moon in 1943 or 1944, or looked at the sky with binoculars and later a telescope (homemade), I would not have shown much enthusiasm for the stars. For many people the reading of books and articles is adequate, but I feel that experiencing the feel of looking through a telescope on a cold night or developing the first negative of an attempted moon photograph adds an essential ingredient to the flourishing of an interest.

Somehow, I feel that such an ingredient should be put into SPACE Journal. As an example you might supply information on the frequencies and nature of the signals to be used by the various satellites' transmitters so that amateurs with limited equipment can enjoy some of this "active participation." That the Russian Sputnik had one signal so conveniently located in the

spectrum as to be available to inexpensive short wave receivers was well suited to this. The satellite could be easily heard and, for example, its pulse rate established (counting pulses) and its signal strength could be graphed. And though no useful data may be recorded in such a fashion, what is there lost, if this helps boost someone's interest in the conquest of space?

I do not particularly have in mind that another Moonwatch be established. Just something that can put the amateur in direct contact with the activities, not through reading alone, but by "active participation." What would be lost?

Berkeley, Calif. William E. Kunkel

Absolutely nothing would be lost, and it is one of the aims of the SPACE Journal to stimulate just such interest among amateurs. We plan to do just that in forthcoming issues. Editor.

Dear Editor,

It is with considerable enthusiasm that I discovered your journal, not in the sedate and musty atmosphere of the public library of Los Angeles, but deep in the skidrow section of Main Street. There in a book-stall famous for its girly magazines, foreign car publications, art studies, and pin-ups, my eye fell on your exciting effort to interpret space technology for the world.

Particularly of interest are the philosophical remarks or intellectual justification for your activity. This I believe is important for Americans, as we do not often understand anything which is devoid of economic motive. Thus far there has been no mention of oil wells, uranium deposits, or diamond mines on Mars. . . . Just the pure possibility of discovery. I approve of this. The technical side of this is of interest to me as I have a small part in the technics of space travel: I work for a company that manufactures vibrotoms, the vibrating wire type of transducer which measures pressures with great accuracy. . . .

Let me compliment your staff on its rare human approach to one of the greatest technological efforts of all time. Dr. von

Braun, for a European, has considerable insight into the thinking of Texas. Evidently they, too, have been conditioned by "space" limitations.

Yours sincerely,
V. E. Jenkins

Tustin, Calif.

Los Angeles, it appears, possesses one of the more discriminating skidrows in the country. SPACE Journal, it also appears, enjoys even a wider audience than we had at first supposed. While the first issue contained no "mention of oil wells, uranium deposits, or diamond mines on Mars," succeeding issues will include articles on all phases of the many facets of space exploration. . . including the commercial possibilities of establishing industry on Mars, if such be feasible. SPACE Journal is concerned with all problems and possibilities involved in space travel, and in the future it will print articles accordingly. Editor.

THE ROCKET CITY ASTRONOMICAL ASSOCIATION

re-elected four officers and three board members to their posts for 1958. Re-elected were: Dr. Wernher von Braun, who on January 29 received the Space Flight Plaque of the American Astronomical Society, president; Mr. Conrad Swanson, vice president; Mr. George Farrell, secretary; and Mr. Quincy Love, treasurer.

Also re-elected as board members of the association were Mr. Wilhelm Angele, Mr. B. Spencer Isbell, and Mr. Gerhard Heller. Associate board members elected were Miss Susanne Hilten and Mr. Hartmut Schilling to fill the positions vacated by Mr. Gerd Schilling and Mr. Gerald Swanson.