

• Jay Foster 9-2-98

(This tape is almost inaudible because of background noise)

Q (Conversation about Stuhlinger's book)

A (Conversation about a book that was done for von Braun's 60th birthday ~~and published out at Redstone~~)

Q Are you going to recant on the incidences that you wrote?

A Oh, I don't know if I can remember them precisely, but I have gotten this list of things that I could talk about if you are willing to sit through all of these.

Q (Conversation about Mike ~~Right~~ <sup>wright</sup>)

A At the time that he was ~~building~~ that, I was president of the NASA Alumni, and he came to me and I gave him a number of names of people who are active in the Alumni League, and then he contacted them and interviewed them. Then I went in and spent a couple of hours with him, more or less, just like this, with him recording.

Q He did a good job in my judgement. You would know better.

A Yes, I think he did a good job. I read through that. You know, a lot of people do a lot of things, but there is also in one way -- people who write about von Braun, I have been somewhat disappointed in in the past, but I think that is a good article. Usually they are so surface and they don't really get the essence of the man, in a way. I think the one that really disappointed me -- and I am a big fan -- is Space by Michner. I was a little disappointed in Michner's treatment of space; even though, I had been one of the people he interviewed. He came here, and Michner was here a couple of days, and interviewed a number of people out there. I was still working there. Somehow, it didn't ring true. I read most of (Unintelligible), and I really have been a big fan. Maybe this was just as much fluff as in the other books, but I didn't know the inside story.

Q It was done as a novel, wasn't it?

A Right.

Q (Inaudible)

A Right.

Q Now, it's part fact and part fiction (Inaudible) historical fact.

A Right. He created this one character that kind of was always present no matter what happened. That was a little too much.

Q I think he was (Inaudible).

A That's probably true. He wrote several books after that. I don't know if we will sell copies by doing all of this, but should I start?

Q Yes, please do.

A You have probably heard this one because it has been around the Horn a bit, but I was personally present when in my office

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one day Eberhart Rees and Dr. Seamans came into my office. I happened to have an office on the ninth floor looking south out over the test area, and I wasn't really a part of this conversation. Eberhart was showing Dr. Seamans something about the test stand and they were talking about the test stand. Dr. Seamans asked Eberhart, "Eberhart, you have always been so informative with the (Inaudible). Have you always called Dr. von Braun 'Dr. von Braun'?" And Eberhart looked at Dr. Seamans in the eye and he said, "No, I used to call him Herr Dr. von Braun."

Q No, I hadn't heard that.

A You know, Seamans was the deputy administrator at the time. He was the number two man in NASA. Robert Seamans.

Q Didn't the team members refer to him as "Professor"?

A Yes.

Q As an honorary title?

A That's right. But that was more in the earlier days. I think they became more Americanized later. Also, in some of the earlier days, some team members tended to talk in German, but he was very insistent that everybody speak English. "You have to learn English and talk it all the time." He did have all of the German team in the early days all in the senior positions and all the Americans, in a way, were underlings. If they started talking German, the Americans didn't know what they were talking about, and that really would have been bad for the world. He was very insistent that everybody speak English all the time. That was smart on his part. He was just very frank. He was never vindictive. He didn't like to punish people. That was not his way. His way was if something went wrong, some problem occurred, he would move heaven and earth to find out the fault, and once you find out the fault then you go correct the cause. You don't go shoot the guy or provide some (Unintelligible) who caused this problem. Based on that, everybody was very willing to tell everything and really tell him the story, which wasn't necessarily true in some of the later center directors. I don't

want to say anything negative about Lucas, but Bill was very vindictive in a way. Bill was a great center director -- in some ways better than von Braun in the sense of bringing work in to the center -- but he was a little tough to work for.

Q Others have told me that.

A I liked Bill and he was great, but on this one point, which I think tended to make people a little reluctant to tell what really happened --

Q Manuscript (Inaudible) -- some worker came forward and said he thought he left a screwdriver or wrench or something in there. Further postmortems showed that it was the probable cause. Von Braun sent a bottle of champagne to the worker or something like

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(Cont'd. from p. 2)

that --

A -- for speaking up.

Q Yes. That's a very object lesson.

A Unlike the press, you have got to be truthful in that business, otherwise you may never correct problems. (Inaudible) In Werner's day, that was really a hallmark, everybody was willing to tell everything they knew about a subject.

(Inaudible) Have I told you the deicing story with Ed O'Conner and von Braun?

Q Would you repeat that for me? I brought my notes.

A We were going to Washington and we were on the Queenair. Ed O'Conner was the pilot and Harry Gorman and I and a couple of other people (Inaudible) -- he got sick. The net result was that Ed O'Conner (Inaudible) to deice. We got about ready to go over the final set of mountains going into D.C. when he hit the (Inaudible) light pole and he had to make a decision. We discussed it a bit around the (Inaudible). Do we have to go on or do we stop here and refill the glycol? He finally made the decision to go on, that he thought that he could get over the mountains. When we got to Washington National we spent the night, and the next morning we met von Braun for breakfast. We were going to brief von Braun to do testimony. He was getting ready to go to (Unintelligible) testimony. We were briefing him and getting him ready for his testimony, but in the process we talked about the night before. His eyes just glazed over. He was really upset. He said, "(Inaudible) on that flight." And then he regaled us with a number of stories about the early barnstorming days in Germany, when ice were really a problem before they figured out how to get rid of the ice.

Q He was flying himself?

A Right.

Q Any particular incident of extreme danger that you recall?

A No, I don't recall.

Q He certainly took a (Inaudible) to icing?

A That's right. That reminds me of another story. We had another tickler. It's a two-part story and it was one trip. This is in the middle of the Apollo program. I don't know exactly what the timing must have been -- probably in '68 time frame. He wanted to make a trip to review all of the West Coast contractors. He accumulated a Gulfstream load of people who had been brought back. There were 12 of us. We started out by flying to Seattle and then we worked our way south down the West Coast contractors. The first part of my story has to do with the flight to Seattle. The Gulfstream didn't have enough fuel to make that trip without a stop, so he had made arrangements to go into a SAC base to refuel. In the process of coming down to land at this SAC base, we passed Mt. Rushmore. He decided to buzz

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Mt. Rushmore. He was flying. He never talked to ground control. He always let the higher pilot do that because of his accent. We all got used to that accent, but he never wanted to do that so he let them talk. He flew a lot. Whenever he was in the airplane, he flew. Anyway, he decided to buzz Mt. Rushmore, and we went down very close to Mt. Rushmore. He banked that plane up on its side so that the passengers on the port side of the airplane had a good view of Mt. Rushmore. I never remember what Mt. Rushmore looked like, this was August, what I remember is all the tourists at Mt. Rushmore looking up at this crazy airplane that was on its side.

Q I guess he got lower than ~~(Inaudible)?~~ allowed?

A Well, he was -- I wouldn't want to say that, but he was getting pretty close. We also had along at that time a new chief pilot at NASA headquarters, and he was a little nervous about a non-full time pilot flying an airplane. So he went along on this trip as kind of a stick pilot and double checked to see whether he was comfortable with center director von Braun flying the plane. In that process he -- at the end of this trip, he said Werner could fly. He was convinced that Werner was a great pilot by the end of that trip. We did get to Boeing in Seattle, and we

went through the battery of Boeing's activities on Apollo, which of course at that time was (Unintelligible) Saturn V. Boeing at that time was in the stage of design of the 747. They had a simulator system for the 747, and of course they invited Werner into to fly this simulator. He crashed an airplane. This was when Boeing was building their first 747. The 747 was not flying yet. This was in the '67 to '68 time frame.

Q Right.

A They let him fly the simulator and he crashed it. He ran into the tower.

Q What was his reaction to that?

A Well, you know, "what are you going to do, some days you lose."

Q I am not sure I got the date of that icing story.

A That was during Apollo. It would have to be in that '67 to '68 time frame. Those years are getting a little cloudy back there. That's a long time ago. There is still one more incident on that same trip. We stopped off at McDonnell Douglas and

Aerojet and all the different places that we had to stop, but our last stop on this trip was at Camp Pendleton. The purpose of that was we were going to ride from Mt. Pendleton up to Mt. Palomar (Inaudible due to noise). We brought the Gulfstream into Camp Pendleton, and the Marines had provided us with a bus, and they were going to drive us up Mt. Palomar. (Interruption)

Q Was this for the observatory?

A Yes. We were in the phase of the design of Skylab, and

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(2nd story)

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Skylab was going to be an observatory in space. The closest thing to it on earth was Mt. Palomar. Von Braun just wanted to get the background, get a (Unintelligible) Mt. Palomar a little better and understand some of the history and compare notes on what he thought Skylab would be able to do versus what Mt. Palomar could do. So that's why we went. In the process we had this bus. Camp Pendleton had provided a pickup truck to take gas tanks in case we ran out of gas. It was kind of an old bus. About half or two-thirds of the way up the mountain going to the observatory, sure enough the bus conked out. So then the question was what are we going to do? Are we going to call in for another bus and wait around for another hour or something? Von Braun said, "Well, we don't want to waste all that time, let's climb into the pickup truck." So we all climbed into the pickup truck and sat on the gas cans. We continued our way up to Mt. Palomar. This was a very interesting trip. I don't know much about astronomy, but it was interesting. With the von Braun people, we had the red carpet. There was a gentleman there, and I don't remember his name, who was the original designer of Mt. Palomar. He still was there as kind of the head of operations, keeping everything working. He conducted the tour for us during the daylight hours and told us all about how everything works. I don't know if you recall -- I certainly didn't know it at the time -- Mt. Palomar was basically completed prior to WWII but without putting the optics in, without there being optics in the telescope. They didn't actually get a chance to actually install the mirrors into the telescope until after the War. This guy told us all about this and the history and everything, and then they had catered in dinner as it was getting dark. After dinner, a gentleman by the name of Jeffrey Greenstein, who was an astronomer from some West Coast university -- I don't recall the university -- and he was an expert in white dwarf stars. After dinner and when it was full dark, we spent a couple of hours looking through the Mt. Palomar telescope at white dwarfs. Professor Greenstein told us all about those stars. A white dwarf is just the last stage of a star, a dying phase. We got a lesson in white dwarfs. This was after midnight or thereabouts, 12:30 or 1 o'clock, when we were breaking up and we were going to go back to Camp Pendleton and spend the night at VOQ. Of course, the bus was broken down, so they brought up several station wagons. On the way down the mountain -- I was in the same station wagon with von Braun, and on the way back down the mountain, he said that he had gotten all stirred up with the lesson. Once we got back to Camp Pendleton, he felt like giving everybody an astronomy lesson. Of course, nobody would refuse that. When we got back to Camp Pendleton -- and this was 1 or 1:30 in the morning -- we all went to von Braun's room and he

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lectured us some more. He really did. Everyone was sitting there and he was really warmed up. That was the group that was on that airplane. I am sure somewhere out there there is a record. \_\_\_\_\_ Blue was on that airplane, and I don't remember who else.

Q I bet that was really wonderful.

A Of course, it was at the end of the trip and we basically didn't go to sleep. We went to the mess hall to have breakfast, and it was Friday, and after that we went to the Gulfstream, flew back to Huntsville, and slept on the airplane. We all stayed up all night. So we had astronomy, the design and construction of Palomar, white dwarfs, (Unintelligible) and just a general astronomy lesson.

Q (Conversation)

A He was really enthusiastic about almost anything he got to talking about. He was very enthusiastic.

Q I do believe (Inaudible) and just his knowledge about stars was only one facet.

A That's right. Do you know of Willis Shapley? He was in NASA headquarters. Willis Shapley was the administrator of (Unintelligible). He was like Gary Norman of the Senate. He's still really active in the NASA Alumni League. We have a quarterly (Inaudible). The chapters of the Alumni League of all the centers and NASA headquarters get together quarterly. They give us two hours. Shapley usually attends those meetings. He was an administrative assistant (Inaudible) time frame, and when we were up there in the 69-70 time frame, he was still in the (Inaudible). He was kind of a chief administrator of the Agency, personnel-type. (Unintelligible) Von Braun remembered that his father was a great astronomer. I don't remember the details of this, but in this astronomy lecture, we got to know about Shapley's father. I don't know what his first name is, but it's "Dr. Shapley."

Q Leave it to Dr. von Braun to know that.

A That's right. (Break) -- and the point Hans Maus, do you remember him?

Q Yes, I do.

A And he called the thing a "Lunar Program Planning Office." I worked for Hans Maus down in the manufacturing, so when Maus was selected by von Braun to be in this staff -- (Inaudible) -- back in Germany and here in the Redstone days, von Braun had put that planning (Unintelligible) on the manufacturing plant. Then manufacturing would really lay out everybody's schedule, (Inaudible), because you would say, "Here it is today. (Inaudible) and the next day, and then you would get from here to there." Well, manufacturing says, "(Unintelligible)."

Q (Interruption)

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A We relied on manufacturing. Hans Maus laid out the schedule and so forth, how long it takes to assemble a vehicle, and then from assembly -- the structure to the air frame. What do you need to go to there? When do you need drawings? And if you have any of your drawings, you back it all up. So the manufacturing back in those early days, did all of that, and I had worked with Maus for several years at that point. (Inaudible)

Q That's what I understand.

A Somehow, I became Maus' chief planner. I had a planning group and a production engineering group in the manufacturing plant at that time. When Kennedy made his announcement, I was on the West Coast on travel, really, by the time I got back, von Braun had selected Maus to head up his (Unintelligible). And Maus had asked me come with him to help organize. I didn't work report directly to von Braun at the beginning of '61.

(Inaudible) through the Washington years. Right after the first lunar landing, Maus retired. (Inaudible) and then (Inaudible).

Q Someone has given me his name as someone I ought to talk to (possibly Jim Sheppard). He's still --

A Yes, he's still around here. Unlike me who is still hanging doing work -- I am working for very competitive people doing consulting -- Jim when he left, just quit. He's still active in (Inaudible). He and his wife are into crafts, and then they travel around the country to market their crafts in a motor home and that type of thing. He's done quite a bit of that. I saw him on the tube just a few weeks ago, something to do with Christmas Charities, and his sister was on there.

Q That office, again, that Maus headed up was called what?

A Initially it was called a "Lunar Program Planning Office." Subsequently, after several years, it was named the "Central Planning Office," when we got a little bit away from the lunar program context.

Q Everyone could see the huge difference between (Inaudible) and the Soviet Union failing was, aside from the launch team, sheer (Inaudible) undertaking and training.

A That's right. As a matter of fact, it was directly von Braun. That office -- we were the very first office to somehow force the scheduling (Inaudible). The launch vehicle and spacecraft were both launched in the same day. That was being done by the space master which was out of Langley and later became JFC. There wasn't a real good cooperation and interface set up yet, and they were doing their planning, and they were going to launch these various command modules and so forth, IB's and 5's, and you are going to launch an interface. Nobody ever integrated that before to get those together. This office put it together for the first time.

Q That wasn't von Braun's expression: (Inaudible)?

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A You have probably seen this picture around. There was a long, narrow picture that had -- about this long and so high -- the earth here and they had the moon in different positions and they showed the vehicle taking off and the various staging. And then it showed it circumnavigating the moon and landing. Then the second picture showed the (Inaudible) back to the earth. That picture was put out by this office, and that was the first time it was all really integrated, all the steps. There had to be a lot of engineering in this office, but it wasn't all the engineering by any means. (Inaudible) the picture together. (tape pauses)(Inaudible) It used to bother back in those days when somebody (Inaudible) wanted to know about this job or that job or this promotion just because of what they were not necessarily on credentials.

Q Right, EEO was not intended to do that.

A Right. (Inaudible) was going to be a lake dweller and a boating enthusiast for a while, and he bought a place a couple of doors away from me at the lake. (Unintelligible) weekends for two or three years. Then he decided that he wasn't really that much interested in being a full time boater.

Q More of an urban dweller?

A Right. (Conversation) (Referring to Medaris) I didn't get to see him much in those days. I later got to meet him in a couple of instances after he left the Army. That's another whole story. Do you remember Jackson Balch? Captain Balch?

Q I sure do.

A Well, Jackson Balch and I got to be pretty good friends. When Jackson Balch (Inaudible). Jack was a little bit of a wild hair, politically. This was when (Unintelligible) was here -- no, this was when Eberhart was here. Eberhart wanted to keep track of Jack, so for about a year or year and a half Eberhart's last (Inaudible), he decided that Jack needed to be chaperoned a little. I turned out to be the chaperon. Jack Balch did not go to Washington unless I went along. One time I got this call from Jack and he wanted to go to Washington and he wanted to see the (Inaudible) folks, because they were doing some kind of (Inaudible). He said that he would like to meet me in Atlanta. (Conversation) So we met in Atlanta and we rented a car. We drove from Atlanta to somewhere up in North Carolina where Medaris was an investor in a resort, golf course and that kind of thing. It turned out we met Medaris for lunch and also Col. Napper. Do you remember Snapper Napper?

Q Yes.

A He went along with us and the three of us were in this (Inaudible). Then we stopped for lunch, and after lunch we got in the car again and drove to the next airport. There we got a plane into DC and we went about our business. What it turned out

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was Balch, through some subterfuge and all, had gotten somebody in Congress to put an amendment on the NASA appropriation bill that year to set aside 10 million dollars worth of civil service salary money to use at the Mississippi Test Facility for construction of facilities. It had the NASA superstructure all up in arms. They didn't like earmarking in the first place, and to cut salary money out for facilities -- this was after Hurricane Camille, and Balch wanted to build these facilities in order to attract other Federal agencies to come in to work at that facility, to help rebuild the Gulf Coast. It turned out that Balch wanted Medaris to call all of his friends in the Congress to vote for this 10 million dollar set aside deal. (Inaudible) to scratch everybody's back the other way around, Medaris had this scheme -- he had a bill in the Congress to set aside 35 acres of KSC property, of Kennedy Space Center property, to build a chapel for the astronauts. Medaris wanted Balch (Inaudible).

Q Now, Medaris was into his priesthood at that time?

A Oh, yes, he had his clerical collar. He drank the wine, though. We ate at the club (Inaudible).

Q Ceremonial wine, I assume.

A Yes, we had ceremonial wine. He had a real scraggly-looking beard and a reverse black collar on. We had a nice conversation back and forth. The history of this thing is that Balch's bill passed over (Inaudible) dead body in a way. (Inaudible) But Medaris' 35-acre set aside never passed. There is no chapel for the astronauts down at Kennedy at this point. That was the purpose of that luncheon. Since I was still Balch's chaperon in those days, I got the job from Eberhart at the time, but when Balch started spending this 10 million, I had to keep a very tight rein on how Balch spent it and make sure that how he spent it was in accordance with what the bill (Inaudible). I had to keep on track and on the straight and narrow.

Q He was a local guy, wasn't he?

A Yes. He had all kinds of relatives around here. His grandfather was a native of Huntsville. His grandfather or father was some kind of a military person. Balch himself was actually born in Australia as an Army brat. This is getting a way from the von Braun story, but I was kind of Balch's chaperon up until the time Eberhart left and Rockwell walked in. Not very long after that, a few days or maybe a couple of weeks after Rockwell get here, I got summoned to Rockwell's office. He was sitting there at the big table there, the director's conference, and I walked in there. (Inaudible) Rockwell was at the center of the table and Balch at the other side. When I walked in, Rockwell said, "Sit down." He looked at Balch and he started drawing with his fingers a square. He looked at Balch and he

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said, "You know how to work in this environment. You know what the bureaucracy can do. I have got other assignments for James. I don't want him kept following you around (Inaudible). Why don't you do what you are supposed to do and you and I will get along fine. Don't get out of this square --" Then Rockwell got up in Balch's face and said, " -- or I'll fire your ass." Rockwell didn't mince words. He was tough.

Q What did Balch say?

A He left the room. A couple of months later he retired from NASA; he didn't hang around with that hanging over his head. He got a political job after that working for the governor of Mississippi on his cabinet as Director of Parks and Recreation for the state. He held that job for four, five, six years and actually died in that job. (Conversation)

I mentioned about Dalos, the birthplace of Apollo. I have that on my list because shortly before the first lunar landing, von Braun went to Dalos to see the birthplace of Apollo and to make that connection with history. (To tape side B.)

(Gap in conversation: prior to this, there are several stories that seem to be in your notes but not on tape.)

See typed insert

Q You were going from where to where?

A From Washington National to San Francisco. As we started to land, the airplane had a problem, the nose wheel wouldn't come down. So we had to go into full emergency procedures. What that consisted of was taking sharp things out of your pocket, like your keys and knives and anything like that, and you had to take your shoes off and put them into these blankets. The stewardess came down and you had to put everything into these blankets. Then you had to put your head down between your knees for the actual landing, because --

Q This was a commercial flight?

A Yes, this was a commercial flight on a 707. I take it back, the nose wheel did come down, but it lost hydraulic so they couldn't control or steer it, so we had to go into full approach with your head down between your knees. In a way, there was no incident. We rolled down and it just took a long time, because he didn't want to try and turn anything. Then they sent one of those airport crawlers to come pick you up and take the airplane back. They let us off. It was quite a scene and quite a sight to try to find your shoes and your personal effects back from all these blankets. I mean, this was a mess.

Q Dr. von Braun was on this?

A He and I were the only two from Washington on this particular trip. We were going off to the West Coast. We went to Ames and JPL on that trip. (Conversation) I think it was on the same trip on the way back. I think we came back from LA to Washington, and we got on the airplane and as government

Insert / Jay Foster v.B interview (these parts not on tape)

"Maria was such a private person. In Hsv she could not be a private person, could not be anonymous. She liked Washington, because she could be anonymous."

"Von Braun could talk to anybody, anytime, anywhere, about anything. He was so gregarious."

One of their dau's participated in the Kent State protest. She was a student there at that time. v.B was very worried over that.

Jay came to RSA in '55 as a G.I. He left & came back in '57 w/ a master's degree.

Greek isle of Dalos -- birthplace of Apollo -- v.B went there before Apollo 11, to make historical connection w/ "the gods." Came back to MSFC & talked w/ the employees abt. his trip there and all.

He also talked abt King Henry the Navigator (Spaniard??) & the parallels w/ Apollo effort.

Jay: "I really loved that man."

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Time of  
Celebrity  
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employees you get to fly coach. The pilots recognized him and insisted he came up into first class. So we had a nice, free first class trip coming back to Washington National.

Q Was that during his years in Washington?

A Right, that was part of the Washington years. The Washington years were kind of tough. The bureaucracy was tough. He was asked to come up there by Tom Paine. It was great with Tom Paine there. He was a great Werner supporter. We had to put together this long-range plan for the agency, and this major input for this long-range plan was a conference that Tom Paine had set up. It turned out to be a long weekend. It was like five days. It took place at Wallops. He had all the long-range thinkers in the agency to give their view of the future. Tom Paine in his wisdom picked Arthur Clarke, a science fiction writer, to be kind of the key-note speaker to kick this thing off. Werner and I talked about it. Clarke, in that environment, was very subdued. He was fiction and here were all these guys that really were doing it. Clarke was rather quiet, although he gave us a talk and everything. Through all the discussions and everything, he just hung back and listened. Von Braun's part of the presentation was he had this nuclear propulsion idea. He had a deal whereby you would have this thing going on a trip to Mars; you would have a big vehicle, and on the back end of the vehicle, you would have a pressure plate. Then out of the center of this plate, you would spit like aspirin-sized nuclear matter, and then you would have maybe two or three lazars that were aimed at this thing so that as some specific distance from this pressure plate, these lasers would cause this little atomic bomb to explode, you know, this aspirin-sized one. Then this pressure would hit the plate and you would be flying forward with these little constant explosions. That was his contribution at that time for the future and using this nuclear propulsion device. Anyway, they put together a plane resulting from this meeting that was a very tightly help pocket-sized book of the long-range plan. Tom Paine took that package over to the Nixon White House to try to sell this long-range plan and make the space program bigger and better, and it didn't work. Nixon was up to his but in alligators with Watergate and all that. So the word came back that we were just supposed to continue on like we were, maintain, keep it on an even keel. While I never got any directive from Tom Paine, it was just a matter of a few weeks after that meeting with Nixon that Tom Paine decided to leave the agency. He went to GE to become the head of nuclear power plants at GE when he left. As an aside here, six or eight years ago Reagan appointed Tom Paine to head up some long-range planning with a bunch of industrial leaders. He worked for six or eight months and put together a plan and it's been published and it's 90 percent the

Was this  
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same as this plan presented to Nixon back in the late 70s. It was his plan before and it was still his plan.

Anyway, Tom Paine left and the George Lowe became acting administrator of NASA for an extended period kind of like Carolyn Col Griner. It must have been for months or a year. Then he brought in Dr. Fletcher as the next permanent administrator, but there was this extended interim where George Lowe was the acting director. Werner and Lowe had problems. I don't know that it was necessarily personal, but I don't think Lowe ever forgave Werner for the Nazi connection.

Q Lowe was Jewish?

A Yes. He's not living anymore. I think that was it to a degree. The second facet was, while Lowe came into the agency originally at Lewis, Lowe didn't move to Houston. He was the spacecraft project manager. So he had that "Houston slant." I think with the combination of the Jewish question and the JFC slant, somehow that never really worked too well. I think it was in that time frame that von Braun decided to leave NASA and go to Fairchild.

\* Wash. T.S.

Q I am trying to recall what Jim Daniels take was on Lowe, and I think he said that it was his feeling that Lowe -- and Lowe may have even intimated this, if not said it -- was prepared not to like von Braun until he met him. Then after he got to know him better, he personally developed respect for him, but still in the back of his mind --

A Also, the fact that clearly after this Tom Paine/Nixon meeting, if they were going to keep it on a low keel, you don't go off on all these big plans. Lowe had to mandate in effect being only an acting administrator to try to keep the place going level, so why do you need this von Braun tiger team of long-range planners? Werner very quickly came to the conclusion that the long-range plan was in place, it was being there, and the government and the country and the world could attack that at whatever pace the politicians decided they wanted to attack it; therefore, you didn't really need any long-range planning for the immediate future, because here's this 20-year plan and it might take you 50 years or whatever. So that's when Werner decided to go to Fairchild. Fairchild had that program with India at the time to put up a communication satellite over India and beam educational TV into the Indian countryside. Fairchild gave him the task of being the liaison interface with India. Werner's last years were spent a lot of time traveling to India and working with Mrs. Ghandi at the time.

Fairchild

Q That may be where Margaret made her Indian contacts?

A I don't know how she -- Werner had a lot of Indian interface during his last years.

Q He had been quoting the idea about satellite education into

remote villages in India and elsewhere for a long, long time.

A Even to the point where Mrs. Gandhi tried to get bicycle-generated television sets into these little remote villages that didn't have electricity so you could put a television set up in the village square somewhere (Conversation) Werner tried to help educate the people through out the countryside and work back and forth with the Indian government in those last years. He also was on the board of directors of some Decatur bank, and he came down here one time and -- I happened to go to Washington and we got on the same airplane. Of course, he was no longer a government employee so he could be up in first class and I was back in -- he invited me to come and sit with him, so I did. I am sitting there and pretty soon the stewardess saw us and recognized that I was not a first-class passenger. She wouldn't let me sit there and insisted that I go back to my seat. Werner got up and came in the back and sat with me the whole trip to Washington just to visit. He was with Fairchild. This was probably in the 73-74 time frame, and he died in 75.

\* Fairchild

Q The business with the Indian satellite education program, did that come to pass?

A Yes.

Q That was implemented and he was part of that?

A I am not sure he was still alive when that satellite actually flew. That satellite was flown -- it had two engines. It was flown over the US for a year and then they had to do something with the communication over here. Then they dog-legged it over India. (Conversation)

Q You think that may have come after his death?

A I think so. He did a lot of that liaison in the last couple of years. He left NASA around the 71 time frame, so there were three or four years when he could work that interface. He already knew when he left Huntsville that he had cancer. I found that out later. And it got progressively worse, obviously.

Q So when he went to NASA headquarters, he was aware of that?

A From his perspective, one of the big reasons he wanted to leave Marshall was he wanted time to think and dream about the future, and it's really hard to find time to do that when you are running a multi-thousand man organization, 2 or 3 billion dollar-a-year budget and this type of thing with all these people wanting to see you and spend time with you and get on your calendar. So his driving influence, other than the fact, of course, that Tom Paine really wanted him to go up there, was to really be able to dream about the future and think about the future and have more free time. He didn't get a lot of free time, but that was the thing that he wanted to do when he went up there. He did get some more time in this planning environment. As I indicated, we made trips around to all the NASA centers at

Going to Wash.

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least twice that I recall to get with each center director and his key staff members on how they saw the future, to help synthesize an agency-wide plan, taking the best ideas from all the different centers. He did a similar thing with a number of industry people, too. I remember we had the head of the Maritime administration over one day for lunch to get the Maritime administration on how they saw the future. Werner was at that time thinking very much of satellite navigation for ships, which of course today is common place with that satellite up there, the positioning system. This was kind of just in the thinking stages in those days. Werner was talking to them about how space could really help the maritime world. I remember having the senior vice-president of IBM come talk to us one time about how he saw the future for computers and how that interfaced with space and this. So we had kind of a -- we kind of laid out a fairly significant list of industry leaders to talk to and how space might impinge on all these different disciplines around the country. Because Werner wasn't about to just sit around. He was dynamic; he wanted to go do something. In a way for me it was a big education, too, getting to listen in on all these different discussions with people around the country and go to all the NASA centers with guys like Bill Pickering. (Conversation) We went to visit Pickering at JPL one time. He was a long-time director of JPL. It turned out that JPL was kind of on a hill. There was a fairly steep drop, and then there is an 8- or 10-lane highway, one of those big major ones. Then there is another mountain on the opposite side, and Pickering's residence is high up on the other side. Pickering invited us to his house for dinner one night around the pool. He had his key staff members and maybe 20 or 25 people. It turned out that Pickering had this telescope out by his pool, and he could see in his office window from the pool. In his office he had a telescope that he could look up at his wife and who was swimming in his pool when he was at work.

Q He was one of the three guys holding an Explorer I.

A In big scale on the wall in the main lobby. (Conversation) This is a kind of minor one, but people used to give von Braun lots of things. Somebody gave him (Inaudible). He couldn't keep things and had to turn everything over to the Smithsonian or whatever. Somebody gave him this picture of an Indian chief and he was real severe looking. Of course, he was nicely framed and in a fairly large frame. Von Braun gave that to Maus to hang in our planning office because we were in charge of the budget. As part of the planning, we had our fingers in how Marshall split its budget, and von Braun wanted Maus to look like that and keep the pennies pinched pretty tightly on how he spread that money around and think how that Indian looks and how he's really holding on to things.

Wash.  
4/5.

The  
Team

y Foster

Q Before I forget, you mentioned Arthur Clark. Are you aware of whether Clark and von Braun hit it off well?

A I don't really know that. On that weekend when Clark -- there's a picture and there's about 20 or 25 of us. They made a photograph of us there, I guess, on the last day at lunch or whatever before we were getting ready to break up. Then they made enough copies of this print for all. Then at that last lunch they passed these prints around and everybody signed them. Each attendee has one with 25 original signatures. Neil Armstrong was there and ----- Myers and Dr. Noggle. I have that on my wall.

Q Was it Fletcher or Lowe still acting administrator when Dr. von Braun left?

A I think Fletcher came. I think the decision had been made. Von Braun talked to me about his decision to leave, and based on his decision, I called Eberhart down here and asked if Eberhart had the latch string out and if I could come back. Eberhart said he would have to think about it awhile. Then it was probably a couple of weeks later, we had made a trip -- the industry leaders -- to an aircraft engine manufacturer on Long Island. Werner was still doing his thing; he hadn't actually left. Eberhart called me and told me about the job and the assignment and that I could come back. It was just shortly that Werner actually left. There was some short period of overlap between Fletcher coming and Werner actually leaving. There's kind of a funny story, it's not very complimentary to Fletcher. Fletcher came from the University of Utah. When he first came to NASA, he had to learn his way around. Of course, NASA's budget was in the billions, and Fletcher could never say "billions." Everything was millions. It was the hardest thing to get Fletcher -- it took a long time before Fletcher could say billions with a straight face.

Q How long were you in Washington with the agency?

A About a year and a half. I went up there when Werner went up there. I ended up actually leaving a week or so before he did. He obviously was leaving, but when Eberhart called me back and he outlined an assignment he would like me to take and he was interested in getting me back, of course (Inaudible). After Werner left and I left, it was not very long after that that Fletcher and Lowe, who was still a deputy, decided to break up the office, just abolish the office, the long-range planning group. Of course, then everybody had to scatter. (Conversation about Frank Williams, retirement, selling external tanks, Jerry McCall successor) Tom Shaner is recently retired and spent most of his career after the von Braun days in engineering in a purely technical job. He was a very young man back in the days that I was von Braun's assistant. At that time, I was relatively senior

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Interview  
Tom Shaner?!

and Tom Shanen was relatively junior at that time. Werner decided that he needed a "horse holder," so we brought Tom into the office, and Tom really did go around with Werner and carry his bags and miscellaneous stuff. When Werner moved to Washington, Werner had this Mercedes Benz convertible, one of those fancy two-seaters. Tom got the job of driving to Washington. They loaded it down and Werner and his wife flew and Tom Shanen got to drive that fancy little car up there. He might have some things to say, too, about his relationship for about a year or so with Werner in that regard. This was about the year before Werner went up there. But he helped carry his furniture up there and drove that car. He had some fairly intimate relationships with Werner in a short period of time.

(Conversation)

Boating

This is kind of a funny story. This was related to me by Frank Williams, who was present when this story happened. While we were in Washington, Werner had some vacation time and he was going to go out into the Chesapeake Bay. They were going to go fishing in Chesapeake Bay and he rented some kind of a boat. For some reason -- I have always regretted it -- I had some commitment and I didn't take this trip with him. They went out there fishing with Frank Williams and a couple of other people from the office, the planning office. They dropped anchor and Werner forgot to tie the end of the anchor and the anchor and the rope just went. (Conversation about Frank Williams, living in Slidell.)

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Von Braun was always asked to speak a lot, and when he was here, he had a few others that would make a speech for him when he couldn't do one. When he was in Washington, particularly in the Tom Paine era, Tom Paine put out an edict of who could and who couldn't speak for von Braun. I thought that was a kind of interesting list. Astronauts could speak for von Braun or Leonard Jastrow, director of Goddard Institute of Space Science, could speak. He was a high-level, scientific guy. I was always very impressed with him when I heard him speak. (Conversation)

Wash. Yrs.

One other thing which was rather frustrating to him, very frustrating to him, when he was the center director, he could go out and say anything he wanted to say. After all, that is the role of the center to propose things. But when he got to Washington, they put constraints on him. He had to speak the party line. He was the number three man in the agency in those days, and they put constraints on him. The administrators staff wanted to review his speeches. Well, Werner never liked to repeat a speech verbatim. He liked to ad lib a lot. So this made his speeches more stilted, too, when he was up there. It was a shame to see that.

Q Getting back to this authorized substitute speaker list, was

it only any astronaut and Dr. Jastrow?

A That was it.

Q (Conversation -- Jim Daniels about Jewish <sup>clique</sup> ~~click~~ and Abe Silverstein and NASA and some of them having the knife out for <sup>Scheer</sup> von Braun. Julian ~~shear~~ actively disliked von Braun and would not pass along speaking requests for von Braun and would take some of them himself)

Politician

A He had frustrations over his speeches being constrained and that he couldn't get very far away from the prepared text. When he was here, he was pretty free wheeling. He had a very good friend in Congress, Tiger Teague. Tiger was from Texas, which I am sure in a way was responsible for Johnson being where it is, but at the same time Teague and Werner were big buddies. They used to go fishing together. They would go up to Canada and go fishing. Werner got his oar in the water when Tiger Teague was chairing the House Authorization Committee on space, which was really good. He was a real good friend back in those days.

Q What state was he from?

A Texas. Hometown was College Station.

Q That illustrated how he recognized the political aspects and that that was a big part of his job.

Politician

A Oh, yes. He had to -- every year, I guess, for a large number of years, he had to testify before Congress and Senate.

In those days -- I don't know whether they still do that or not -- in Apollo, Congressmen really looked forward to having Werner testify. I got involved in some degree in helping prepare some of that testimony. I don't know if you remember Ray Kline? Ray was heavily involved in testimony and writing his very important speeches. If von Braun was going to talk to a Rotary Club or some civic group somewhere, Public Affairs could write his speech, but if he were going to testify where it really counted, before Dale Myers or in Congress or something, Ray Kline got to write the speech. It was a very clear distinction. Jim Webb actually stole Kline away from us. Remember that

\_\_\_\_\_ with some discussion when the press got all excited here locally. You may have written some of those articles about the center maybe moving to California?

Q I did, in fact, if Alabama didn't shape up in the civil rights area.

A Yes. What happened was subsequent to that the locals wanted Jim Webb to come back and apologize and set the record straight or something like that, and Jim Webb absolutely wasn't about to apologize, that wasn't in his makeup. But what he did do was ask Werner if Werner had somebody who was really up on the local situation and could help him prepare his next speech. He did agree to come back down here and he was going to give another speech without any apology or anything, and he wanted to have

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somebody local who could help him avoid any land mines, so to speak. Werner nominated Ray Kline. Kline went up there and spent a couple of weeks with Webb and with Webb's speech writers working on that thing. Then Kline actually flew back down here on the same airplane with Webb when he came back to deliver that speech. This apparently got Webb and Kline sufficiently to know each other that it was shortly after that exercise that Webb called Werner and asked him if he could steal Kline. So Kline went up to Washington about a year or so before Werner went to Washington. So Kline was up there on the administrative side of NASA headquarters. When Werner and I and Frank Williams went up there, we managed to steal Kline to join Werner's long-range planning office. When Werner left and I left and they broke up the office, Kline went back to whatever he was doing. He ultimately became the associate administrator for management of the agency.

Q (Conversation)

A Ray played a key role in all von Braun's important speeches when he was here the last several years he was here. Kline is an outstanding individual. When he was associate administrator for management at NASA headquarters, it turns out that all of the federal agencies have some kind of a group that gets together periodically consisting of the heads of administration from all federal agencies, DOD and Interior and what have you. Somehow through that process, Ray became chairman of that management group, and he was the chairman of that management group at the time that Jimmie Carter was having all kinds of problems with GSA. There were a bunch of senior officials in GSA that were under indictment for absconding with materials and stuff.

(Conversation continues)

The conference on the year 2000 was in the spring of 70, a 5-day conference at Wallops.

I think I have covered all these things except for this one point here. Von Braun was scheduled to go to the LBJ ranch for dinner one week after the Kennedy assassination. Of course, that was cancelled. Von Braun was working at the highest levels of the government and LBJ was vice-president. Von Braun had been there a couple of times previously working that interface. This was when he was still here. That's the last thing I have here.

Q Before the assassination, von Braun was to go to the LBJ ranch?

A Yes. I don't know what would have happened if he would have been able to go there, what effect that would have had on history.

Q I that was never rescheduled?

A No, never rescheduled.

Q And he had not been to that ranch before?

"Bohemian Grove"?

JFK death

assassination

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A He had been to the ranch before. I don't know what may or may not have happened, but he had been there before.

Q Now, as a houseguest?

A Well, I don't know whether he spent the night or not. I can't answer that.

Q As a part of a meeting or group?

A Yes, probably by group. That's my list.