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Tribute to Wernher von Braun, born 100 years ago (3B)

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A BACKGROUND OF MEMORIES OF WORKING WITH DR. WERNHER VON BRAUN AND  
MEMBERS OF THE PEENEMUNDE GROUP

**Abstract**

In this paper I recall some of my experiences in having had the great opportunity to work with Wernher von Braun beginning in September, 1951. At that time, through an extraordinary set of circumstances, I reported to the U.S. Army, 9330 Technical Service Unit, at Redstone Arsenal near Huntsville, Alabama. Among the Army personnel in the 9330 TSU were a group of a hundred or so early Korean War U. S. Army draftees, such as myself, who as "Army Special Professional Personnel" were brought, along with a number of Army reserve officers who were called back to duty, to work on the highly classified development of the Redstone missile at the Arsenal's Army Ordnance Guided Missile Center (OMGC) Development Operations Division of which Dr. von Braun was the Technical Director, under the Army command structure. This organization subsequently became the Army Ballistic Missiles Agency (ABMA) in 1956. My assignment, as Corporal, was assistant technical editor and engineering liaison in the office directly next to Dr. von Braun. Here I worked with him and many of his German scientific and engineering associates on a daily basis in preparing Redstone progress reports and other documents to ensure the technical and editorial integrity of material reporting on the highly classified Redstone development program. Years later, in 1971, as the Chairman of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) History Committee, I had another opportunity to assist Dr. von Braun in helping organize "Rocketry in the 50's", the session he chaired on October 28, 1971 at the AIAA Annual Convention in Washington, D.C. Dr. von Braun died on June 16, 1977, in Alexandria, Virginia. At his memorial service at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC, I mourned the loss of this great human being, among a number of the original Peenemunde group that attended the service. It brought back such memories to see Dr. Ernest Stuhlinger and Eberhard Rees and have them greet me as "Corporal James." Memories of those days, working with such a visionary and enthusiastic person, as Dr. von Braun, and with his associates, have remained with me as life-long examples and have enriched every subsequent position I have held in my career.