

Introduction to Wernher von Braun Weekly Notes

Until their re-discovery in late 2007 at the Southeastern District Office of the National Archives in Morrow, Georgia, the "Von Braun's Weekly Notes" were presumed to no longer exist. The notes were assembled each week throughout the 1960s by the laboratory directors and managers at the Marshall Space Flight Center (MSFC) and provided to Dr. Wernher von Braun, the first Director of the Marshall Center.

The notes cover von Braun's tenure in Huntsville from the early 1960s into the 1970s and have been recognized by many historians as a valuable source of information relating to the Saturn/Apollo era at Marshall and throughout NASA. They were used to track both programmatic and institutional issues and events at the Center. Over the years, many NASA and space historians have located scattered copies of the notes and made reference to them in their work. It is believed that the collection in Atlanta represents a complete set of the notes. During the Saturn era, Marshall line managers solicited weekly notes from each of their subordinate organizations. As the notes passed through the chain of command at Marshall, additions or deletions were made based upon the importance of the issue. Each Monday, von Braun reviewed the notes and made his own notations in the margins. The notes, with von Braun's comments, were then filtered back to the organization deemed responsible for responding to von Braun's inquiry. The notes have attracted attention from space historians as well as historians of organizational communications and management.

An inquiry from the Exploration Launch Vehicle Program Office prompted the renewed search to find the notes. MSFC records management personnel working with National Archives personnel in Georgia were responsible for relocating the notes.

As part of a trip to the National Archives in 2008, Mike Wright, the historian at the Marshall Center, confirmed the identify of the notes and electronically scanned approximately 2,000 pages of the estimated 15,000 pages in the collection. The historian plans to return to the archives in early 2009 with a team of technicians who will scan the remaining portion of the notes and return the electronic copies to the Marshall Center historical archives.

The weekly notes are reproduced in the context they were created. This means that, in many cases, the notes do not include the first names of the individuals that are included in the entries, explanations of abbreviations, or definitions of terms. In this regard, the reader may find it useful to refer to *Stages to Saturn, a Technological History of Apollo/Saturn* published by NASA in 1980 and written and researched by space historian Roger Bilstein for the Marshall Center. You may access *Stages to Saturn* by clicking on the following link: <http://history.nasa.gov/SP-4206/sp4206.htm>

Each page of the notes has been assigned a unique number. These numbers do not appear on the paper copies of the Weekly Notes that are permanently on file at the the Southeastern District Office of the National Archives in Morrow, Georgia.