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Peenemünde Interviews Project: Karl Heimbürg 11/9/1989 (Tape 2 of 3) A

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WEBVTT

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<i>KARL HEIMBURG</i>: —to drill the finer holes. And then he said— Okay, let's develop the finer drill.

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<i>KARL HEIMBURG</i>: You could not convince him that with the drill you can go only to a certain dimension and later on it doesn't function anymore. Nope.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Mhmm

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<i>KARL HEIMBURG</i>: That's a matter of development, you can develop that. You could never convince him.

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<i>KARL HEIMBERG</i>: And this was a difficulty, let's say on the, in the side of the development. He, no matter what problem came up you could solve that. [[laughter]]

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: He, [[assuming?]], had very little practical experience.

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<i>KARL HEIMBURG</i>: This is exactly it— he didn't have practical experience.

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<i>KARL HEIMBERG</i>: That does not deduct from Oberth at all, when I say that. Oberth still is the man who really was a pioneer, or THE pioneer.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Mhmm

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<i>KARL HEIMBERG</i>: That doesn't deduct— this was strickly a—

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Mhm.

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<i>KARL HEIMBURG</i>: —something which wasn't this. - [[laughter]] - And this is a difficulty which von Braun had with him: he could not convince him, this or this you cannot do.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Yeah, I gather, I mean I've read Oberth's—

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: I read a biography in German that was written about Oberth, and had met the man who wrote it at Oberth's house and museum in Feucht, and uh—

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: you get the impression from that that Oberth felt that somehow von Braun had at one time—

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<i>KARL HEIMBURG</i>: Had pushed him aside — But it's not true, it's not true.

<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: —had pushed him aside, yeah, which isn't true.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: But um, I think later on in the United States period, von Braun made a big effort to try to mollify Oberth and, you know—

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<i>KARL HEIMBURG</i>: Yeah.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: —show him respect for-for that. But Oberth arrived in Peenemünde and criticized everything and didn't know much about what was really going on.

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<i>KARL HEIMBURG</i>: You know, after von Braun had heard that Oberth was not well-off at Feucht—

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: mhhhm

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<i>KARL HEIMBURG</i>: —he got him here. That was von Braun who got him here strictly so that he would have an income—

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: mmhmm

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<i>KARL HEIMBURG</i>: —which he didn't have in Feucht.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: So he was here for— couple of years, I don't know how long.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Two or three years in the late '50s.

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<i>KARL HEIMBURG</i>: Right Right Right. But von Braun was the one who did that.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: I, umm— it's a good place to ask you something that I had forgotten to ask you, which was

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Did you remember— did you know anything about the rocketry and space flight business before this time?

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Had you paid much attention to what was going on in the late '20s, with Oberth?

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<i>KARL HEIMBURG</i>: None whatsoever. None whatsoever.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: mmmhmm

<i>KARL HEIMBURG</i>: The first time I heard about rockets, when I arrived in Peenemünde.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: mmhmm

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Ah, so that you, when you were— This was about the time when you got, 1928/29, about the time you started at—

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<i>KARL HEIMBURG</i>: started

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: —at the Technische Hochschule. You just sort of ignored the business about Max Valier's rocket cars, and—

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<i>KARL HEIMBURG</i>: Right, right, right, right.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Did you note that—

<i>KARL HEIMBURG</i>: Something about that—

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: —did you note that it was in the papers, and just ignored it?

<i>KARL HEIMBURG</i>: No, no.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: You didn't even pay attention?

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<i>KARL HEIMBURG</i>: I didn't pay attention.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: mmhmm

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Umm

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: so when you came to Peenemünde then, uh, did the whole thing strike you as really unusual, radical, different?

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<i>KARL HEIMBURG</i>: Definitely, definitely. Unusual and radical. And therefore your interest was immediately in it.

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<i>KARL HEIMBERG</i>: And you could see too, uh, you have enormous possibilities with it, for space flight.

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<i>KARL HEIMBERG</i>: And you let your thoughts spin about that too.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: mmhmm.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Did anyone talk to you about space flight? Did you discuss it privately at that time?

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<i>KARL HEIMBURG</i>: We did talk privately.

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<i>KARL HEIMBERG</i>: You know, we had the company, and under each other, there were some who were a little bit more interested.

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<i>KARL HEIMBERG</i>: But what-what else can you do with it?

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Mhmm.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Did the projects office discuss satellite projects? Or was that, at all, or just...

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: not when you were there anyway.

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<i>KARL HEIMBURG</i>: We did not discuss it officially, but under each other, yes, there were discussions.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Mhmm.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Uh, okay.

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<i>KARL HEIMBURG</i>: But always with the same idea, let's solve our problems which we have right now first.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Right, this is very abstract when you're- people are pressing you, do this, do that.

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<i>KARL HEIMBURG</i>: Yeah, yeah.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Um, before I return to test stand, also I just want to ask you—

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: a lot of people have spoken about a particular, special atmosphere at Peenemünde, in terms of the attitude of people and so forth.

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: Did you see that? That it was an unusual organization or

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<i>MICHAEL NEUFELD</i>: an unusually fertile area where the people were extremely enthusiastic about what they were doing?



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