

MSFC History Projects  
Walt Wiesman  
Conducted by A. Dunar and S. Waring  
4/18/89

WIESMAN: I would say it probably began with the education and experience evolving into respect for the specialist because I am reminded as you ask of the recent TV show, Day One. I read the book by Peter Whitten. Even generalistic groups had not the best understanding of the scientific aspect, of course they were very complex. He discussed even to an Oppenheimer[002] (of course they were different times) the accusations about communists leanings and all. The book fascinated me and then when the show came recently I really watched it. There were parallels to what I found in our ...[005]. ...In the public affairs office in Los Alamos, there was a sign on the wall, "God save us from the enemy without and the Hungarians within". It was a good book and the show was pretty accurate because Groves was the guy that got things done. Years ago, and there was a movie on that same thing, Brian Dolaby [12] who was a famous actor that portrayed Groves. I am a psudeo-historian especially of things that have happened during my lifetime and job related. The other fellow I want you to think about (that came to my mind in England), is a retired Air Force Colonel also later on, very prominent in the industrial division, James D. Murphy. Jim Murphy lives on Dunn Rd. Jim is also the provisional chairman of the newly formed Huntsville branch of the NASA alumni and still very active. Jim was one of those people that came out of a responsible Air Force position and received a pretty good ranking here. Initially

assigned as military and then transferring into civilian position. On the pure scientific side, you have talked to Stuhlinger already, Karl Heimberg, (but there are not really that many left now and we really never had any military people), [and] Lee James was just as much an engineer as he was the project manager. One good man that knew the group well enough, regardless of the Marshall Center is Major General John Zieret. John was the head of the Control office for Medaris and then grew into the Commanding Generalship of MICOM and who knows our team as well as anyone and probably, even though he was not involved in the Marshall Center, knew the personalities and all. Johnny was one of the sharpest minds and that is why Medaris insisted on having him. I think he even pulled him out of general staff college.

DUNAR: The parallel you made before with Los Alamos, were you drawing a parallel between Groves and Medaris?

WIESMAN: No, I look at it with a humorous twist saying, "My God, there was another group of immigrants even though in terms of political interest totally removed, but in style the way it had to be organized, doing the impossible. Then there too, the difficulties in terms of logistics they had to overcome. In spite of Groves enormous power and influence.

DUNAR: My impression of Medaris is that he was more polished than Grove.

WIESMAN: No, I believe even there that the time took care of that. Groves in 1942-43, came out of an army that didn't know about systems management. Medaris had been involved in some very delicate matters, including he was the chief investigator for the US Army/Korean ammunitions game in Korea. He was feared. After you got to know him he was like a pussycat, just like Jack Barkley his successor. He later on ran Norfolk. Jack and I became good friends.... Jack had the kind of quiet wisdom. One day I stormed into his office and said "General, I get this so-so ( I used plain army language) if its the last thing I do." He looked up and said "Walt, I never heard you speak this way. How old are you?" I said "Thirty-eight sir". He said "Look, since you and I know the gentlemen in question, let me give you some sound management advice, never get into a peeing contest with a skunk." Later on we had lunch one day at the old Carriage Inn, I told him and he said "I said that to you? Oh please forget about it!" I enjoyed especially when I mentioned our ten meter years before. To me this was a revelation and it taught me that there is enough of the resource and the determination if you want something done. It was the same army. I will never forget in 1956, I spoke to a group of an organization designation in the Pentagon. They were all working for the Ordnance Corp, but they were Air Force Officers. They knew enough about the Ordnance Corp. In the discussion someone said, "Walt, now that you guys have taken all our money..." I said, "Hold it Charlie you all know your way around the Ordnance and the Army. You realize to get one lousy two hundred mile missile project going and the next one, if this

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is what it takes, don't you think the system really stinks?" And boy they all looked at me and said "Man, you really got something." It was so amazing that the Army there too. I learned from Medaris and Barkley the relationship from the tactical requirements from the field forces to the interpretation to the initial design of a rocket. It was such an eye-opener to me, it was a system support. I will never forget, he was then a lieutenant General Adams, the field Commanding General of the old parachute corp. We had the 82nd and the 101st, and Adams was feared. We gave him presentations during the day, I was on one of the briefing teams. At night at a reception at the Officer's Club, he took me aside and said, "Mr. Weisman, when in hell did you find out there were foot soldiers in this world?" I said "Sir, Our Commanding General won't let us forget it!" Our pictures had an understanding in our heart of the presentation. What this meant in serving our real customer, not just going into scientific dreams. It was startling the impression we made on our prominent visitors, because we simply had been indoctrinated, so to speak. It made sense to us. We had Elliot, a full Colonel, was the first battalion commander for what became the Jupiter 1500 mile missile battalion stationed in Token, Italy[101]. Lyn and his first team started with us in 1956. This cohesiveness of thinking and understanding contributed so much to the accomplishment of the mission. We were on the same wave-length.

DUNAR: The more you describe it this sounds like the systems approach came in part from Medaris.

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WIESMAN: Yes, except we were probably much less formal in those days. It was much more like an intuitive thing and later on became structured and much more recognized in the literature and informality. But Medaris and with all of us (this was simply a matter of saying) if you want a job done, think.

DUNAR: Then did the more formal structure come after the link with NASA or is it still under ABMA?

WIESMAN: Maybe, and I am not evasive on it, it is just a thought I have. There too, the academic side, by the time of Marshall had caught up with much of it. The literature group, maybe the specialist in the management area, maybe even the curriculum group at the University, at master's level had adjusted by the time to include these items. So it became formalized maybe not through our direct action, but through the thinking and learning that these people had done.

DUNAR: So it was something in practice before but was now put down on paper?

WIESMAN: Just like we did in 1957, the first time here was by that time here, had become a formalized way. That is why we joke when the Civil Service Commission wouldn't recognize my job. It had not been done before.

DUNAR: I know we are jumping around, but I think we started in the middle. You mentioned a little bit about Fort Bliss and about

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some of the problems you had there. Could you tell a little more about that?

WIESMAN: In principal, there was the same extreme example in supply. Anything but, if you say here is the technical side versus the traditional way of doing things within the Army and even later on at NASA. There was a traditional way of doing things in Washington that came out of the old NACA (National Advisory Commission for Aeronautics) which was never known for speed. But in Fort Bliss and I believe even in our military there too, we already benefitted, when I got through with John Lockwood, we had much less bombs and supplies. But it became such a critical issue to talk about an effort on our part. Six of these other small German groups were pulled out of their technical jobs and they formed what later on (to me) became the Commodity Supply Planning. They became really a special team, not removed from the group, but they became a funnel for the procurment and supply, using the technical judgement before it would go to the military side for procurment and supply. It made all the difference.

DUNAR: Was that at Fort Bliss?

WIESMAN: Oh, yes, that early. This is why I was pulled when we made the transfer to Huntsville, I was a member of that group. Then our command officer, while these other five men went back to their jobs, I was pulled out and told to start this for Redstone. So we don't go through the same problem again. But supply was

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the biggest headache we had. Another problem was still (to some degree in Ft Bliss, but, was still stronger here) the idea of a personnel office fighting tooth and nail and not having any understanding of the work involved. It led around 1954 or 55, to a step where this regional director for the Civil Service Commission took an old DC 3 and eight of his staff members flew to Huntsville, because we had been fighting the personnel office so hard. They had been telling us we were just snowing them to get higher grades, so they could not possibly accept, [such information] just like my title, no there was no such title. We took Herman Smith, the Civil Service director and his staff members for a whole day. We showed them the jobs being done. They said "no, we have never had these kinds of jobs". It was the most unusual welding techniques that depended on the skill of the welder. In all the key areas, whether it was personnel, supply, there was this clear battle between the traditional way of doing things and the lack of understanding that this new work demanded better understanding, [and] was a complete break from tradition. It began in Ft. Bliss, but we were so small that it was, yes there were some of these aspects even in the great structure for contracts. But you see people were not in civil service then. We all had special one-year contracts at the time. Frankly, after that lousy war I was happy to be in Ft. Bliss. This is incredible, what we are talking about. ....(Remember the old structure of the military) if you envision maybe another number to it you would see another mission and all the other numbers are to support that mission. What has happened or not happened to bring the others up to speed to understand, this is bread and

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butter. I used to crack a joke after I had studied Redstone for about half a year, after we came here. I came to the conclusion that if they ever abolished the technical mission the staff would have paperwork for three more years they would never know the difference. They lived in a world of their own. I will never forget in this capacity as the head of the supply planning group, I walked into the S-4's office a Major Paul McClure, I said "Major sir, you are holding up our mission." He said, "Sir, I am the S-4." I said, "I am aware of this Major." He was convinced this was his privilege to hold up purchasing. No questions asked. We really had to work. He was the traditional man. He had served here during WW II and was one of the old Redstones and felt that was his privilege. The only change came with the [arrivall] of the first general officer to ever command Redstone, Thomas Vinson. Then did things change. Old Tom came from the traditional ordnance school and he was the first one that reached communication. I had an unusually project...my old commanding officer from Ft. Bliss days, Jim Hammil [303], a brilliant man, was the type of character when he served as ...[304] in the Pentagon as a full Colonel, he made his law degree on the side at Georgetown. Jim talked to Werhner von Braun and said "Walt at his age, if you can spare him, spare him a short time... I did three years on staff in the army...one each in supply, logistics and controller. I came back to von Braun's division in 1954 as operations chief. Man, did I know ends as to how the army operates. I was sent to schools and everything, that's how I met Jim Moquin in 1953. That was the greatest experience. That is why I

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became more than ever the middle man between these factions. I knew the post so well. This is how we got so much done and impressed Medaris. He looked at my background and said "Man, it looks like quotation in the army." This is how I understood so much about the army and got cooperation. A year in those fields is a good deal of time.

DUNAR: With your perspective, you might have insight into the nature of Von Braun and Eberhard Rees.

WIESMAN: Yes, this has even been written about. Werhner was the frequently generous man. Free-wheeling, making commitments. Eberhard was the taskmaster. He had to really put down restrictions. I think you will find a line in one of the Monograms I talked about by Bill Thompkins. Eberhard used to say, "We don't have time for management and all that crap!" In other words in his early days, he took management to be an absolute nuisance. He couldn't recognize it as a function. Then in public relations and speeches he would be furious. "Why waste this stuff." Werhner would say, "Eberhard, we need public money that requires public understanding and unless we who know what we are talking about do it." Von Braun was on the circuit very early and Eberhard.... But Phil Thompkins tells about some reference that von Braun or someone had been to a human relations course and Eberhard said, "What we need here is no Mr. Dithers!" Of course as he grew into the job, he became the Director, he had finally learned about it. Eberhard came out of the purely manufacturing, engineering school. He grew up in the foundry business. He grew

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up from the hard-nosed manufacturing side. That was even part of his job in Peenemeunde. I think it was a neatly understood arrangement. I don't think there was ever any problem between the two. Those two were very highly intelligent and they knew what they were doing with each other.

WARING: You mentioned how the some[256] Director often has to act with the public. Has the Huntsville Business community, particularly the Chamber of Commerce put together an active lobbying campaign? How does that relationship work?

WIESMAN: What has happened, especially since J.R. came, just like I sensed a new wind and very positive attitude, the same was obviously true for the community leaders. He did not just coach the old-timers to be gracious, he knew what he was doing. That created an immediate response. I assisted the Chamber in my capacity there and really we for the first time had a revival. Let me give you an idea of how we can have some of these things without mentioning personalities. Bill Lucas was so low key. He had his own choice as to who the chairman of the chamber committee should be. There was never a change, hardly a meeting. J.R. picked the man. It was such a different style from the beginning. Now, there are briefings by J. R. and other top people for the Chambers' Marshall Center Committee. They do more now than the Army did. Unless the Center Director gives the signal, (shows his character), very little happens.

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WARING: So there is an informal behind the scenes effort by the Center Director if he wants to influence the lobbying activities of the community?

WIESMAN: Sure, this is so important. Its not just because of the lobbying. For instance, for the people who work in the Chamber staff, specifically, those you may be approached by (economic prospects), even for them with some reasonable knowledge, to speak intelligently of the work being done out there. Not in detail, nobody expects them to speak at the Ph.d or the Master's level about that, but to know the implications of this work. There is so much happening now at the Marshall Center, going way beyond the old propulsion primary mission, highly the Hubble [293] telescope, all these things. This is where unless the Center Director is open, the Chamber cannot push itself. Then the Chamber took one step about two years ago that fits into your line of questioning. The Chamber now has a vice-president for government relations. There is a very close check on all legislation from local to national. Gene Anderson and only one assistant run this. They are the ones, for instance, people like Giles Memmechin [303] , he is officially now the Head of Protocol in the Public Affairs Office at Marshall. He is, among other things, the former assistant to our long-time now retired Congressman Bob Jones. So Giles knows his way around the governmental circles. It has culminated in the last three years, maybe because of J.R., maybe because the time was right, that all such players fall into place. An important step taken recently when you speak of lobbying is the creation of the NASA Alumni League.

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I am an active member of the Huntsville branch. This is the first time that on a very modest scale we have the equivalent to the Army association, the Navy League, the Air Force association, namely the political muscle without necessarily putting a Center Director on the spot. There is of course with the Chamber and all this links up. It is very important.

WARING: Did Thompson help create this NASA Alumni?

WIESMAN: No, this was started in Washington as a formal organization, but once again as is our want in Huntsville, we are far ahead in terms of having established our chapter. We now get a regular newsletter from the national group. It will be the political outlet... I was one of the founders here of the Army association in 1956 of the local Tennessee Valley chapter and it was so strong. NASA never had a political civilian arm to speak for the space exploration. Again, when you have Center Directors who play cool, then you don't do much. People lay low because you look at the old man and know what he wants.

DUNAR: You were involved in the Chamber very early in the early 1950's...

WIESMAN: I got involved as a citizen through my early Jaycee Presidency, but Guy Adam [344] the current president and general manager of the Chamber came here in 1960. I was still working for the army and went to NASA in 1962. Guy and I have worked on many projects so it was not illogical for me when I left the

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government to be involved, never full-time, in economic development because this is really for me a very deep personal conviction. If we want people to be independent we have to give them better opportunities. Not doled out. This is what brought me into economic development. I would say involved directly at least since 1965 even though I was still in government. For instance, we even cranked out joint publications for recording because we had so much to tell about the community. We did it on a share basis. But then in 1972, I got involved in a more formal way in the Chamber. Initially I was a member of the three man team. The late Tom Johnson from Decatur, T. Nelson, a retired industrial development vice-president for Alabama Power and I. We worked out a proposal for what led 6 months later to the formation of the European office of the Alabama Development office. That led me specifically into international work. Since I left the Chamber in a formal way late last year, I spent give or take on a part-time basis, fifteen years for the Chamber. For me its still a fascinating thing. I like the uncertainty, living in a world where we have to figure all the angles, to me its not a nuisance its a fact of life.

DUNAR: What was it like when you first arrived at Huntsville? The adjustments for your family?

WIESMAN: Our daughter was born in 1944 in Germany between air raids and relocations. Mike was born in 1948 in El Paso. When we came here Mike was two and Moki [384] was six and a half. I guess

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you could ask any of the remaining Germans and you would get a different story from everyone, depending on one's age and outlook in life. An impression is such a personal subjective thing. I never had the slightest problem. I may have mentioned to you when we met, when Huntsville spirit showed best. When I was elected two years after my arrival in Huntsville, president of the Jaycees, without being a U.S. citizen, that was a greater compliment to the community spirit than to me, in my opinion. When people ask me "how were you accepted", I tell them that story and they go "what". Just to think that among the some one hundred Jaycees then, 70% had been in the war and obviously not on my side, and I was elected two-to-one over a local attorney. That is the spirit. But not everyone will tell you this kind of constructive story. For instance, some of my colleagues talk to this day about the defense and fortress. I guess its personality when you see yourself handicapped or whatever. To give you an example of the other side, Magnus von Braun [408], Wehner's younger brother, within a year and three weeks after our arrival at Ft. Bliss, we participated without any handicap in every event of the Sun Carnival on New Year's Day in 1947. Its crazy how some of my former colleagues seem to remember only what they didn't like. My wife and I, Aika [418] was born in 1920, we had seen nothing but a dictatorship, our young mind we had nothing else to compare it with, no idea of other systems, economically politically, so this was our philosophy. We came here when I was 25, I came in 1947, she was not yet 24. We took to this country, to this philosophy, like the proverbial duck to water. This is what got us involved in civic work. I was a member of the

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Community Concert campaign even in El Paso, fifteen months after my arrival. Why? I grew up with music and theater. I asked in El Paso, "what do you do for music here?" They said you have to work for it. I said "Wait a minute I don't play an instrument", "No, you sell tickets without a budget." The tradition, not just with Hitler. The enormous federal and state budgets for the arts. Here, you worked your tail off. Did I learn about civic groups. You work for what you want. I grabbed my lessons in such a hurry by the time I came to Huntsville by age 30, I was seasoned in terms of this kind of work. Because I fully understood it. Some of my colleagues saw this world so different. Not in opposition to government or anything, it was in their nature I found out. This past Christmas (at a party) I was bombarded for three hours by men that remembered the most nit-picking ...stuff. Even the riffs under Rocky Petrone. Too me, I am not a blind enthusiastic, but I really do believe you only go around once in life, so what I am going to spend that short time on? This makes me so different, so you probably get an overly optimistic view. Maybe my whole background, since I did not come out of technology, is totally different. I came there as a troubleshooter. I found out from some of my bosses later what they saw in me, I wanted myself. Even in Peenemeunde, you know there is a saying, "He's too young to know what can't be done." Like moving that train away before the Russians came. Two hundred and forty women and children, 54 freight cars with equipment. I moved that train in February of 1945 into the second portion of Germany without orders! Von Braun authorized every-

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thing at his disposal, I moved it.

DUNAR: What was the story behind the train?

WIESMAN: The top civilians under von Braun had determined in December of 1944, it was so obvious that we had to make up our mind on which way to go. So the clear-cut signal without any compulsion was in the process, (all this happened after the August 1943 air raid, which split the Peenemeunde rocket team so much that I, for instance was the administrator of Peenemeunde 10. There were that many outlying stations away. Peenemeunde 1 was the home office. But we were totally on our own, so-to-speak, even though we were only about 30 miles, the second time about 45 miles away after the air raid. We were totally on our own. The technical boss had a mission and I had everything that was non-technical to get the job done, including relocating after the air-raids.) This decision to move west was ordered in major moves, where von Braun and whoever else picked people, (and I was one of them), getting a formal letter with the formal letterhead and seal that impresses everyone in old Germany, authorizing me to do anything, period. To move a secret project into a predetermined location. I organized this train. I had the material testing laboratory and the bell laboratory, today the mechanical lab, but bells were such critical issue in the V-2. There was no knowledge, in the main oxygen bell, no knowledge, no experience. This had to be done from missile to missile project. So the priorities were overwhelming. The two labs combined had a total work force of about 350 people. By that time we had about 240 women and chil-

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dren, farmed out somewhere else. Then I got the order to move out these two places. Everybody totally volunteered. No compulsion.

It is late January, early February 1945. Railroad cars, forget it. I had that order. I didn't tell anybody I had been discharged as a Sargent a year earlier, just keep it cool. First thing I did, I visited at three in the morning, an army major in the Army transportation system in Germany, got him out of bed, and showed him my order. He looked at me in disbelieve and said, "You realize there are no railroad cars?" I said, "Major, yes I realize it that is why I am coming to you." We talked. I told him what was involved. Within forty-eight hours the first railroad cars came. I drove directly from there (I had a driver), slept in the back of the car and drove to the regional office of the Female Labor Service (something like the CCC). I negotiated because the material testing people were in such a former female labor camp and then we needed the barracks for our precision machinery, wherever we would have to go. And I cold-bloodedly signed that this camp would be restored to its original condition after the war. So I called the office even before I started running ....[551].. the noise the switchboard was near the main entrance and I said, "What in the hell is going on?" Oh, they are loading barracks. I just signed the thing. I got Herr Claus, his widow still lives here. What gives here? He said "Oh, we trust you. When you left here yesterday, we started dismantling the camp!" We moved, it took five days over a relatively short distance in Germany, into Stimme [563] overnight

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and a major air raid in the big yard of the loiner [565] works, a synthetic gasoline factory. We ended up very near the Bavarian boarder, in Transylvania in a city called Saalfeld. In a small place south of that. That is where around April, Walt Stabler [575], U.S. army Major came and identified himself and had a list with my name. Walt was there within 36 hours of the first combat troops. My problem, the challenge, was that there was no uniform move of all of Peenemeunde, just as I had a train there were truck convoys, shiploads going out. The total work force was 5,000 without women and children. We were on our own period. My problem was I ended up in that place and the U.S. army was not allowed to tell me if the Russians were planted in another zone around June 20, 1945. I pestered the CIC man (the intelligence corp). He finally, 48 hours before the deadline, came to me and said, "There is a special train tomorrow, 100 pounds of personal belongings, we are pulling you out, if you want to." I said "Captain, what in the hell are we to put this equipment in? " We had a soccer completely surrounded with the barracks we had built. No secrets, but beautiful machinery around. He used that famous phrase that was unknown to me then, "Don't you realize we are all allies now?" We were pulled out and I did not dissolve that part of Peenemeunde until July 15. We had to go into emergency quarters in Studgard [617]. We had to start a kitchen again to feed the people and no place to go. Most of them farmed out to wherever they lived. I had enough money from Peenemeunde to at least feed the people and house them. There were no more wages to speak of. My portion of the war did not really end until about July 15, 1945. I did some interesting stunts in

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between. I would drive back into the zone with a Lieutenant Colonel reserved, some professor from the 70th division, the Tomahawk Division. GI jacket sitting in the back of this jeep. Cold-bloodedly driving into the ....[633]. It was fun! Today, I would know better! This is probably why I ended up in the states, as the only non-technical man. I was told later with this time of stuff, I was a troubleshooter. ...This is why my whole career has rotated so many times. In connection with my recent private work, I took a look at the publication that the Chamber of Commerce has turned out, very informal, but very precise, very lucid, about the ten largest private employers in Huntsville. Disregarding Army and NASA. There are close to 20,000 people, but very significantly to counter-act some common myth here, at least 50% if not up to 60% of the 20,000, do not work on missiles and space. When you begin to count Accustar, Dunlop, Avco, Avex in Research Park, and I split SCI and Intergraph, half-way down. I came up to close to 60% that do not rely on government contracts. The point I wanted to make was this: Even if you have union wages such as Accustar, Chrysler, still the overall income related to missiles and space in the both government and industry is a lot higher proportionately. So yes, the basic economy I don't argue with Giles and his people about this. But it is significant that our diversification has succeeded to quite a degree. Even Chrysler now and definitely Boeing are local capabilities, including their personal knowledge facilities and all are already benefiting from contracts that have nothing to do with local jobs. There are national shop con-

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tracts from their own corporation. This to me is a very important factor in the base that is growing here.

DUNAR: When do you see that diversification starting? That wasn't the case in the early 70's? Was it?

WIESMAN: I have pinpointed it in 1965, beginning of industrial diversification efforts with emphasis on companies not depending on missile and space contracts. The largest one initially coming with the great support of what may well be the best location consultant firm in the state, FANTUS. It was GTE way down at the river, but it is now SCI plant 13. Many of these industries depend on manufacturing waves and/or they were bought up. The likes of even AVCO, PPG on highway 72E. Very substantial companies came in this way in the late 60's as an answer partly to this lull when Boeing and IBM had major cutbacks in Huntsville, which shocked the community. If someone had paid attention, this would have been obvious, because they had finished their work. In contrast to what some people said, including our good former mayor said, "Why did this fellow Johnson in Washington, take our work away and give it to Houston?" No! The work had been completed, but the people did not pay attention to the time-tables. As a matter of fact the work partly went to another subsidiary of the Marshall Center, but to the Mishoud Assembly plant in New Orleans and to the Mississippi Test Facility. But this was such a shock. It was a very fascinating development that we never hide from people, we say it is a lesson in economic development, not to blame someone, but to say "maybe we didn't understand the

timetable and all. Maybe NASA did not have this feeling to convey to the leadership at times, that these contracts would be finished and then we did something un-American, we finished these contracts in time and within the budget!

WARING: So Huntsville paid the price for its success?

WIESMAN: What happened in the timetable of what was commonly called "the pilot-line for Saturn V". All the work that was scheduled for Huntsville had been successfully completed with Boeing (at that time had 5,000 people in Huntsville) we lost, eventually, (not all at one time) about 1,000 people.

DUNAR: The FAMTUS was a consulting group? Was it hired by the city?

WIESMAN: They were hired by the industrial expansion committee.

DUNAR: That was under the auspices of the city government or a private committee?

WIESMAN: No, HIC was always under contract to city and county to perform economic development.

DUNAR: Now, 1965 was actually a little early to anticipate some of the Saturn. NASA management was just starting to look at...

WIESMAN: Yes, the cutback did not come in '65. I grabbed this date because when you see the origin of these companies in Huntsville it stretches from about 67 into the early '70's. But the initial impetus was given as early as 1965.

DUNAR: What was that organization called in 1965?

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WIESMAN: I don't know. But FAMTUS, we are so high on their list to this day. They have lead many a company, at least in exploration to us, over the years. Companies pay them. The success story that we can show with these companies that joined us is very remarkable.

DUNAR: Did Marshall's official family play a role in this?

WIESMAN: No. This is why I feel like this could not happen again today, just in terms of "missing the boat", because today the Marshall Center as well as the MICOM center, rather the committees of the Chamber of Commerce are so up to date that they would be immediately aware. Maybe in those days the prominent people in Huntsville were not trained or experienced in really understanding a systems support, development of a project, and could not envision that this was a scheduled departure. They just wouldn't believe it.

WARING: What were some of the economic effects of the closing down of the Saturn operations?

WIESMAN: Let me correct this a bit. The Saturn operation as such did not close down. It was simply a shifting of responsibility for the same job into a production type facility at Mishoud. The project management, everything stayed here. I really have no idea, I have no knowledge of the impact in terms of dollars and cents. There are people that will tell you today, "it could have

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bought a house for a dollar!" We only know it was a considerable blow. Today, I feel the safeguards and the understanding of both sides is very clear. The chambers active coordination and planning with the Army and NASA, it almost couldn't happen.

DUNAR: You were very much involved in this, how did that relationship between the Chamber of Commerce and NASA develop? Or was there really any relationship?

WIESMAN: There has always been a relationship. But so much depended and still depends today, on the personality of the Director at the Marshall Center. Yes, there is a formal responsibility, but depending on how that person feels, you have an entirely wide open field of cooperation.

DUNAR: Could you take up through each Director and say a little about the nature of the relationship under each one of those directors?

WIESMAN: No, I don't think I know enough because when I left, which will be 19 years ago this September, von Braun had just departed for Washington and his long-time Deputy, Eberhard Rees took over as Director. I had so much private work lined up for me that I was really totally occupied, never worked full-time since then, ...with lecturing, consulting and I did not keep close tract. I only know that Rees was almost like a care-taker. Eberhard didn't stay but 3 or 4 years. Then they sent a man, and

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that is where the delicate area begins, Rocco Petrone. Rocco was, as the legend goes, sent here to clean up the Germans. Get them out, a very sad story. I was surprised. I knew Rocco, we had worked together as far back as 1954. He was the military assistant to the Director of the Missile Firing Laboratory to Kirk Davis when this still belonged to us. They later came to be the Kennedy Center. Rocco and I worked together. I have such an opened attitude, that when I heard he was coming I wrote him a letter and said "Hey, great! Let's visit." The feeling was really good. I never heard from him. I had no relationship except that I would visit occasionally at the Marshall Center. That led, (I don't know in detail) whether there were formal reductions in force. But then when Rocco left (I don't remember recalling how long he stayed...), Bill Lucas took over. Bill is a very capable man, both in his initial profession as well as a manager. He was so different in style and personality, compared either to von Braun or J.R. Thompson that this was a phase where there was a reluctance to be open internally. A lot was accomplished, but something was missing in the human element. I had never met J.R. before because I was already gone when he was active here. But when he came, and this is typical and I think it is important to identify the man's style and spirit. A friend of mine, Woody Besay, came here as a soldier. He called me one day...around Christmas, 3 years ago, and said "Walt, what is your advice of getting the old-timers together?" I said "Woody, who says?" He said "J.R." I said "That's important." I just ran this by a few people informally, like Eberhard Rees and everybody

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says "Who said so?" When they heard J.R. there was not a sign of opposition. So I suggested pick what would have been Werhner's birthday. This was like a reunion, the old-timers turned out and J.R. had an open invitation for Marshall employees to come into the huge assembly halls. There was back-slapping and hollering! I told him then, "J.R. in style your the closest thing to Werhner." He looked at me a minute (he's not bashful you know). He had two people, Woody and Nancy McQuire on his staff stay in touch with me ever since about these things. This to me was the most important factor that undoubtedly expostulated that this would be the same spirit internally, not just toward us. It was just obvious how he would operate. I called the new team TNT, "Tooley and Thompson". [894] ...this has been an evolutionary process in management styles which really in essence is personal styles. In this respect, I wanted to check after our first discussion, I had so many ideas popping through my mind. Did I mention at that time that Dan Sherman and I have been working on something? Dan is making a study, (or some people on his staff) about the style of the management out there. In addition to what I have given to Dan from my own records. I sent him early this week to Monograms that a friend of mine that is mentioned in these two publications, Phil Thompkins who was a summer consultant to me. He was, and still is, very highly regarded academic person in the field of organizational communication. Phil had such an interesting view of von Braun's management style that he wrote, ten years later a monogram ("Management for Communication"). In addition to all our technical work at NASA, it was probably in the nature of von Braun's personality and style that we would go

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into fields like organizational communication to such a degree that we became a national role-model for a while. It was not communication for the sake of technology, the human aspect. Organizational is really the more contemporary name for the employee or internal communication. Here we held a conference in 1967. ...[has a copy of agenda?] [930] that stated our national prominence for the Marshall Center. We had a program I called "Wall-to-Wall Organization Communication". We had the most comprehensive program that anyone in the nation had ever seen. This was such a new field.

WARING: Was this a formal program? Who operated it?

WIESMAN: Yes. I did. I was the internal communications coordinator from 1965-70.

WARING: What office were you working out of?

WIESMAN: I had purposely arranged for this function to be under the personnel function and not under public relations. The PR people generally have no feeling for the true human aspects of the business. They push the boss, they push the product. I consider this merely an advanced form of employee relation. I had the first program as far back as 1967 with General Medaris for the Army Ballistic Missile Agency, so I was no novice in the field. But this created such a stir and one of the most interesting detailed studies as a part of this, was Jerry ....[947]...this was his doctoral thesis. Jerry worked with me as a co-op PHD

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level on my staff for one year (this was his copy). One of the two lab was headed by Bill Lucas, you could sense a lot of his sense of style, the way he reacted to the study. (I mean this positively). The other lab director flatly refused to accept that "his people would have told Kendall these things in his interviews." Lucas looked at us at the first overall summary and said, "Jerry, did you present this to my top staff?" Lucas was enough of a scientist to accept findings that were substantive that were academically sound.

DUNAR: Who is Dan Sherman?

WIESMAN: He is in the Head of Management and Marketing. ....There is one man who has also done considerable work. He is a former Chief of Missile command, a retired Colonel, Arthur Lange. He approached me nearly 2 years ago for items, because he was working on a doctoral dissertation. He lives in Huntsville and I may have information. His specific dissertation theme was the style of the German team in terms of management.

WARING: When you were working with Organization communication, did you teach seminars to Marshall employees or was it more changing the lines of communication between units or both of those.

WIESMAN: When I speak of a comprehensive system, I can assure you it was just that. (Here, part of this paper is part of my own presentation , "A Government Agency looks at

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Communication")...There is even a 5-year program.

WARING: This describes what you were doing?

WIESMAN: Yes. People were so astonished when I said 5 years. They thought I was kidding. I had learned enough from my colleagues in the academic field since 1968 to understand that this is such a hodge-podge, a multi-disciplinary approach, far beyond the accepted communication arts and sciences in the traditional, graphic sense, from bulletin boards. This is the wildest mixture of the social sciences, the whole field of psychology. You have to understand the whole bag of these things, not be the master, but understand enough principles to be the advisor to management. I was in 1962 as President of the National Industrial Communication Counsel, what people called the bridge-builder, I was surprised that my colleagues on the practitioner side and the academic side, automatically assumed that they wouldn't understand each other. It was crazy for people in communication to feel like that. I started to build bridges. That's how my work at Perdue started. It was such an astonished way. [a professor] ..came to me after one of my presentation before a learned group and said "Young man, I had no idea someone was using this stuff we are teaching!" Because it was so new to openly admit, this was a can of worms, no open straight line. The uncertainty....is not something management wants to hear. This is why this died when I left. (This is off the record)..Harry Gorman, who was von Braun's administrative Deputy (and very powerful) didn't feel at ease with this. Imagine a man in administration not feeling at

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ease. I can understand an engineer who might say "this is an area without any answer", but Harry was not. I think if Werhner von Braun had not been behind all of this initially, I wonder if we could have done what we did.

WARING: Do you think there was a conflict between the German style of managing and the style of managing most Americans were comfortable with?

WIESMAN: In the area of technology, yes, but it was not German and American. It was simply the evolution of the systems approach and the slow break-down of the strict rigid organization chart and the approach to a project management. It was a coincidence because that sort of thing had been practiced by this whole team maybe without even having the terminology for it for so long. The working groups and all. You know the old line I used to play out frequently, "An Organization chart is like a bikini, what it reveals is interesting but what it conceals is vital!" This was such a wide open style and this is what the ....[073] in his papers that I talked about. Von Braun's style was not truly a German style, this was at the same time here becoming a topic in academic circles, not because of us. General Motors would not have thought about any kind of flexibility in management, you had your layer of 5,6,7 and that was it, that the way (they did) business.

WARING: So the Germans were just more comfortable with this style

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because they had been practicing it for a longer amount of time?

WIESMAN: Yes, it was a necessity to get things done this way. What I brought to it had nothing to do with German or American. I caught on for one reason (this goes back to my internship), I had never gone to college. I started as a management intern for the largest synthetic gasoline corporation in Germany. Before I was 16, I finished my 6th year level in high school...you (then) had a choice, you walked out or you go on for 9 years of University preparation. I learned, honestly at 17, for the first time without having any idea how to define it, what it means if the mission is not understood by the staff and the support functions. (096). I came as a soldier, as a trouble-shooter to the German missile center in 1943. You talk about the most advanced technical work expected under the most archaic army concept. Not because of General Dornberger, who was a highly enlightened general, as von Braun's boss. No, the warrant officers, the old Sargent's in that group!

WARING: They wanted clear hierarchy, clear lines?

WIESMAN: Let me give you this as one last example. An exact follow-up the moment I had come to this country, one of our major problems in Ft. Bliss from the very beginning was a totally inadequate supply system. The army expected us to do again, the advanced work with the most traditional supply concept. ....in San Beridino, John Ludwig, chief warrant officer, ...I took John by the hand for one week, and visited all the technical places,

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(modest as they were then). John was as smart as they come, he said " Why in the hell didn't anyone tell me?" When I showed him that the demands for the few new test stands required safety precautions in terms of tolerances and the kind of stainless steel piping. There was no ordnance or corp of Engineers in supply to cover this. But John hadn't been told about the mission. He brought his knowledge and wartime experience, but he just was not what we needed.

DUNAR: There was a gap then between the civilian understanding and the military understanding?

WIESMAN: This is how without knowing it how my interest began. I came to Huntsville in 1950 with our transfer, would you believe I faced this for the first time. Germany, Ft. Bliss and Huntsville. I was made the civilian ranked chief of a brand new branch in the General Supply operations that looked at commodity type planning. In other words, the old story about, (my God) in those days when you had sole source requirements, this was a crime against the nation! Like Wally Schirra said when he was up there and he was asked what his first thought was, "It ...[150] me to think that all this came from the lowest bidder!" But, I went through this again. I established what for all practical purposes, what was commodity-type planning as a base for future supply. I had six specialist that I had hired. One in the generally metals, one in common hardware, one chemical and these guys knew the technical operations sufficiently through training.

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They were not arguing. They knew when someone wanted to push an item too hard. What we would have to overcome with the supply officer, the military man. I don't blame him. This was so new. I did the same thing. I even pulled this stunt as far back as 1956, the deputy headquarter's commandant for the Army Ballistic Missile Agency, came to me and said, "Weren't you one of those guys who came to Peenemeunde as a soldier? " I said, "Yes John." He said, "Maybe I need your help." We had, let me give you an example, about sixty pretty highly educated men in the enlisted ranks, among them Phd.pfc Charles Lundquist! We, even on the military side went through the same problems that we had in Peenemunde. A commandant and a company commander who had little knowledge and said, "By God, these privileged characters. " The first thing I did [was] to arrange for the company commander and the first Sargent to be special guests at the next firing at the Cape. You talk about spirit from then on! I have been so involved to this day in terms of "wait a minute, who knows what and why and how was he/she told in order to get the job done?" It's unbelievable the gaps that exist. The worst case I went through was Kent University after the shooting. I had given a seminar three days before the shooting occurred. Phil Thompkins was teaching then at Kent, and Phil called me back and said "We are putting in a request for you to work at our expense as a consultant for 5 days to study internal communications." There wasn't anything to be studied, there weren't any. The President spoke only to his "cabinet", he called it. The four vice-presidents. Dean's didn't count. He was unbelievable. The dislike of this University though it was the largest employer in this large

county in Ohio, the dislike in public was unbelievable. ....I have learned all along how difficult it is to get a job done because the people who are not the highly specialized who are vital to get the job done, apparently are not informed. It is not a matter of ill-will, the man who understood this best in 1956 was Butch Medaris, officially Major General J.B. Medaris. He from the very beginning was the one who stimulated me to study this area and in 1957 organized the first such comprehensive program such as this one [216], but in 1957 the ABMA had the first total internal communication program for 5,000 employees. But the joke was, (this only proves what I am telling you), the civil service commission did not recognize my job. There was no such animal as an internal communication coordinator. I had done some work with the commission, so I called the regional director in Atlanta, personally, "I said Herman look, we screwed up here, we are doing some pioneering work. Have you ever looked at this in the form of an advanced employee-relations program?" He said "send me some papers on this." That job went through like nothing else. This was the first time the government had recognized there was such a function. In spite of all the protestations. Even to this day, I can track down things wherever you look. Von Braun understood this so well. Medaris put all the service and support functions on equal level with the scientific level. Oh they were fussing! Medaris said, "look you guys in 90 days you will understand why. Because what I expect of them is not to tell you what can't be done, you are setting the pace here and they with their knowledge and background will work to make your

job easier." It worked like a charm.

WARING: I read about there being lots of visitors to Marshall in the 1960's to study the Marshall organization in communication.

Were you involved in escorting visitors around then?

WIESMAN: They probably came more for the communication related to systems management. I had lots of visitors, but in a totally different area than this one. From industry, government, universities (from those I had a waiting list. Once Purdue had made it known I had a candidate, more universities called me because there was so little happening in the entire country in this field that this was an uplift in my time.)

DUNAR: Could you tell us a little more about the nature of the system developed under Medaris and von Braun? How the relationship between the military side and the scientific research side?

WIESMAN: I guess the rather unusual and very constructive and positive cooperation between the military forces and the scientific side was again based not so much on the traditional military concepts, but whether you look at a Werner Dornberger in Germany, who in his own right had a Phd in engineering and later on became a General. Whether you look at a H.N. "Loody" Toftoy (highly revered in Huntsville). Whether you looked at a Bush..[275] Medaris or a Jack Barkley (who succeeded Bush), these were very unusual officers. Anything but "General Bullmoose", very pol-

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ished. Their leadership talents showed a respect for the human side. They were pretty determined men. You didn't fool with Medaris, but the moment you closed the doors and he said "Walt sit down and have some coffee." He was outside stern (we used to call him "your majesty"). Their style and I would say their mutual respect between those men and von Braun was such (and Eberhard Rees) that the personalities on the military side was so unusual. You may recall the general assumption in the U.S. Army, that the top of West Point would go to the Corp of Engineers. Then the next level immediately the Ordnance Corp. It was sort of a philosophy. You had an unusual breed of people in the first place. I have gotten to know quite a few of the officers, many of whom are now retired. One of the top in rank, Charles Iffer..[310], 3-star General, retired. Charlie was in that first team in the Pentagon when we started out in Ft. Bliss. In other words, Charlie had a relationship in the Ordnance Corp and is among the few still living here in Huntsville. He retired as the head of the entire European NATO Logistics System as a Lt. General in Heilichburg [319]. All of these people I have met were just unusual enough that you could not just say, "Oh boy they're the grand war generals." This is why, maybe their mentality and understanding of the technical work made this work so much easier. Von Braun almost habitually, to have a very understanding military boss who knew the technology and covered his flank, (in Germany, politically). When von Braun was once put in jail by the Gestapo. I don't know if a study has been made about this relationship, but maybe my answers are oversimplified, but I

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think they have a lot of meaning. I've known all of these men well enough. I worked for some of them directly. Johnny Zere [340] at the time of the ABMA, was the brain and a full colonel. He was the head of the controller office, a new device that Medaris used for total organization. Joe Moquin was the ranking civilian in that office. Joe had come (I met Joe in 1953. He was an instructor at the Ordnance Management School). I was a student there for four weeks. Then in 1956, Joe had become the Director of that School and joined us in ABMA, (Medaris hired him) and later became the executive vice-president and now the Chairman of Teledyne-Brown. Medaris had another tremendous advantage. The high priority given the ABMA in late ('55 was officially inactivate in February of 1956) except the Chief of Ordnance himself and three other officers by name. He was authorized to pull out anyone out of the Ordnance Corp, both military and civilian. So we had from the beginning, the most unusual team. All geared to a "can-do". The significant item to me (maybe to my other colleagues who might not have observed it the way I did because of the nature of their work), at that point, we had worked for the U.S. Army for 10 solid years and you talk about starvation, budget fights (Looney Toftoy nearly got himself in the process. He was our boss, first in the Pentagon, and he was the patient father. But Medaris came in with a style. That man had a red telephone on his desk. There was no fake. This was THE hot line to the Secretary of the Army. He could circumvent all channels. Talk about power! One day he told me "Walt I haven't used it yet. Well, people know I have it and that helps. Besides you have to be smart enough not to call on too many IOU's

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from the old man!") It was such a change. I was 35-36 during those days. It was like a revelation in management styles and everything. That of course stirred up things like this, wide open! Medaris simply said "Do it".

WARING: Are there other people in town that we could talk to about Marshall's management style in the 1960's? To whom in particular should we talk to on that subject?

WIESMAN: I guess they would all be civilians. There is one man who is still. The first one would be Stuhlinger. There is going to be a great reluctance among my colleagues to speak. Probably honestly due to age and not being the most alert mentally anymore. You know I am the kid, I will be 70 next year and I am still deeply involved in things. But they haven't had that much work and if the mind goes then the body follows quickly. If he wants to talk there is a man Karl Hindburg is the rough and tumble manager, the Director of the Test Laboratory. Karl probably had the sight between the purely scientific technical (he's an engineer, not scientist). But he had to cope with the whole scope including unions and all. For that reason, I am thinking of the other directors, Holderman would not be the man to speak about these things. ....[giving names I can't understand 447] There would be a couple of good military officers who had very responsible civilian positions at Marshall. One is Lee James, a retired full colonel. He lives on Bannister. Lee at one time

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was even very highly placed in the Marshall Center Industrial  
Division. Lee and I worked together in 56 in an office in ABMA.