



April 23, 1966 – A-2 Test Stand –7:33 a.m.

It only lasted 15 seconds, but the first test of a Saturn V second stage at NASA's new test facility sent a clear signal – the Space Age had arrived in south Mississippi.

NASA announced plans to build the then-Mississippi Test Facility on Oct. 25, 1961. Four-plus years of frantic construction ensued, as thousands of contractors swarmed into south Mississippi lowlands to battle mosquitos, indigent wildlife and hurricanes.

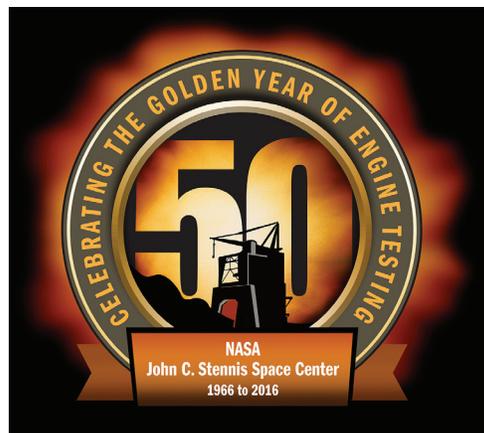
They succeeded in building the large test stands and support facilities needed to test the Saturn stages that carried humans to the moon during the Apollo Program. Those stands are recognized as historic landmarks today, and the south Mississippi facility has grown into the nation's largest rocket engine test site.

In the ensuing years, Stennis Space Center has tested various NASA engines, including those used to power 135 Space Shuttle Program

missions. It now is testing engines that will help power the core stage of NASA's Space Launch System, designed to carry humans to such destinations as an asteroid and Mars. NASA also is partnering with the Department of Defense and commercial companies to test the engines for their various space endeavors.

No one could have foreseen such a future 50 years ago, as the countdown sounded and a loud "crack" stirred the morning air. No one

could have imagined the adventures that lay ahead. Yet, at 50 years and counting, no one can deny – all roads to deep space still lead through Mississippi.



GOLDEN YEAR OF ENGINE TESTING

1960s

April 23, 1966

First Saturn V rocket booster (S-II-T) tested at Mississippi Test Facility, now Stennis Space Center.

July 16, 1969

Apollo 11 launches for first manned landing on the moon powered by booster stages tested and proven flightworthy at Mississippi Test Facility.

1970s

October 30, 1970

The final test for the Apollo Program at Mississippi Test Facility, the second-stage S-II-15, was successfully tested for its full duration of 6 minutes and 13 seconds.

June 12, 1975

First space shuttle main engine tested at National Space Technology Laboratories to achieve ignition.

1980s

February 25, 1988

National Space Technology Laboratories conducts 1,000th test firing of space shuttle main engine.

January 18, 1989

Construction begins at Stennis on the Component Test Facility to test turbopump machinery for rocket propulsion systems.

1990s

July 27, 1998

Activation of the E-1 Component Test Facility, a world class high-pressure component cryogenic facility, is initiated at Stennis.

August 8, 1998

All four large test positions at Stennis are occupied for the first time in center's history.

2000s

January 21, 2004

NASA marks a milestone as the space shuttle main engine achieves 1 million seconds of test and flight operations during a test firing at Stennis.

July 29, 2009

NASA conducts the last scheduled test of a space shuttle main engine on the A-2 Test Stand at Stennis.

2010s

January 9, 2015

NASA conducts the first test of a RS-25 rocket engine on the A-1 Test Stand at Stennis.

November 4, 2015

A big step on the Journey to Mars was achieved when the first RS-25 flight engine for NASA's Space Launch System was placed on the A-1 Test Stand at Stennis Space Center.



Saturn S-II Test



Early Space Shuttle Main Engine Test



E-1 Test Facility



Final Space Shuttle Main Engine Test



RS-25 Engine Install