



NASA Apollo Series: Stages to Saturn, A Technological History of the Apollo/Saturn Launch Vehicles

Roger E. Bilstein

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Few of man's technological endeavors compare in scope of significance to the development of the Saturn family of launch vehicles.

It was as if the Wright Brothers had gone from building their original Wright Flyer in 1903 to developing a supersonic Concorde in 1913. Unimaginable; yet in 10 short years the builders of Saturn progressed from the small, single-engine rockets like Redstone to the giant vehicle with clustered engines that put man on the moon. Our Earth-to-orbit weight-lifting capability grew in that decade by 10 thousand times.

Saturn was an engineering masterpiece. The ultimate Saturn, taller than the Statue of Liberty, had a takeoff weight that exceeded that of 25 fully loaded jet airliners, and produced as much power as 85 Hoover Dams.

We may not soon again face a challenge to match the lunar landing, and it may be some time before we mount the kind of scientific and engineering effort that gave us Saturn. Whenever that next challenge comes, we have in the Apollo-Saturn program the basic blueprint for achieving success. It not only will point the way but will also give the confidence needed to undertake new and dramatic challenges.

Among the other lessons learned from the development of Saturn is the evidence of how much a free society can do and how far a dedicated people can go when they are properly challenged, led, motivated, and supported. This is our legacy from Saturn.

This book is a technological history. The narrative approach was largely predicated on questions that might well be asked by future generations: How were the Saturns made? How did they work? The bulk of the text is devoted to the theme of technological development.

For all the spectacular effects of the Saturn vehicle's awesome launch, most of the Saturn story deals with many years of unglamorous research, development, and test. It is a story of prior work: of nuts, bolts, and pyrotechnics-and that is the story told in these pages.

535 pages. Over 150 photos and illustrations. Contents hyperlinked for easy navigation.

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