THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES IN THE REGIONS...

A MONTHLY CALENDAR OF EVENTS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

From the SS to Citizenship to the Moon: von Braun's Odyssey

On April 14, 1955, Wernher von Braun swore that "I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen. . ." With those words the former Nazi and SS officer became an American citizen.

The naturalization records for the U. S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama in Birmingham are filled with similar documents for Arthur Rudolph, Karl Sendler, Herbert Reinhold Bergeler, Magnus von Braun, Alfred Johannes Finzel, and countless other Germans–all former Nazis and all members of the government's *Project Paperclip*. The documents list their occupations as scientist, development engineer, research engineer, etc., and all were residents of Huntsville, Alabama.

When the documents were created in the 1950s, no one could have guessed that the German scientists applying for citizenship would contribute to the technology that enabled the first man to walk on the moon.

At the end of World War II, the government sought the research expertise of selected German scientists and engineers. Von Braun himself led the Third Reich's V-2 missile project. These top German

rocket specialists came to the United States in an initiative known as *Project Paperclip*. The project name came from paperclips used to mark the files of those selected. Ultimately, Dr. Wernher von Braun became director of NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama, designing the Saturn V launch vehicle that played a crucial role in the moon mission.

Years later, in 1969, he received a letter from a railroad clerk in York, Pennsylvania, who wrote that "I was a soldier in the U. S. Army (Staff-Sergeant) who, during one summer evening in 1945 . . . acted as messenger in carrying the "official written orders" by jeep . . . to Witzenhausen, Germany, where you were housed and waiting. I arrived at Witzenhausen around 11 o'clock at night and you gave me a small bed to sleep on that night in the same house where you were staying, and the next day you rode with me in my jeep and I gave the "official" papers for you to come to America..." In von Braun's reply he said that "Of course I do recall very vividly the incident that you mentioned. As you suggested, it was a vital step on my road to this country back in 1945. As you know, I have spent a major portion of my adult life in this country; and I have been a proud citizen of the United States for many years."

New opportunities abound to study the life and work of Wernher von Braun, the preeminent rocket engineer of the 20th century.

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Braun, 1955.

Records of the U. S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama (Birmingham), RG 21; NARA Southeast Region

Elmer E. Wilson to Wernher von Braun, 1969.

Records of the Marshall Space Flight Center at NASA, RG 255; NARA Southeast Region

NARA WestCoast January 2008

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		Astrogeologist Dr. Eug Shoemaker of the US logical Survey (USGS) scale model of the Ap lunar lander resting o recreation of the Moo surface created from taken by the Ranger s	Geo- with a ollo on a n's images	3	4	5
		lite. Shoemaker was pal scientist for the Ra mission and the USG Branch of Astrogeolog duced maps of the ma the Apollo program. RG 57; NARA Pacific Region, Laguna Nigu	princi- anger 9 S gy pro- oon for iel	Seattle, WA Brick Wall Discussion Workshop Genealogists 206-336-5115	San Bruno, CA 11 Chinese/Asian 11 Immigrant Research & Records Lecture/General Public 650-238-3482 San Bruno, CA Immigration and Nationality Research and Records Lecture/General Public 650-238-3485	Seattle, WA Overview of National Archives Records and Research Workshop General Public 206-336-5115
13	Seattle, WA A Conversation with Marian Smith, USCIS Historian Lecture/General Public 206-336-5115	15	16	17	Anchorage, AK U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services Ceremony, 10:30 A.M. Alaska Public Lands Information Center Exhibit/General Public 907-261-7820	19
20	21	22	Denver, CO Martin Luther 23 King Day 8 A.M 5 P.M. Exhibit/General Public 303-407-5749 Seattle, WA Finding Your Irish Ancestors Workshop Genealogists	24	25	26
27	28	29	206-336-5115	31		
NARA's Pacific Region	Laguna Niguel 949 laguna.archives@na San Bruno 650-238 sanbruno.archives@	ra.gov Mou -3501 Denv	RA's Rocky Intain Region Ver 303-407-5740 Ver.archives@nara.gc	NARA's I Alaska R	egion seattle.arc Anchorag	6-336-5115 hives@nara.gov e 907-261-7800 hives@nara.gov

New York, NY **Mickey Mouse Goes To Court** 10/9/07-3/30/08

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New York, NY New York: An American Capital 12/14/06-6/1/08

From NARA's Holdings: New York Photographs 10/1/05-6/1/08

New York, NY **Camp Kilmer: Entertaining the Troops!** 11/14/07 - 6/1/08



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Midwest January 2008

Exhibit: Independence, MO **Fashion Court** 1/17/08-2/7/08

Weston, MO **Civil Rights**, **Civil Liberties** 1/22/08-2/10/08

Parkville, MO **Far Greater Evil** 1/22/08-2/10/08

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
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