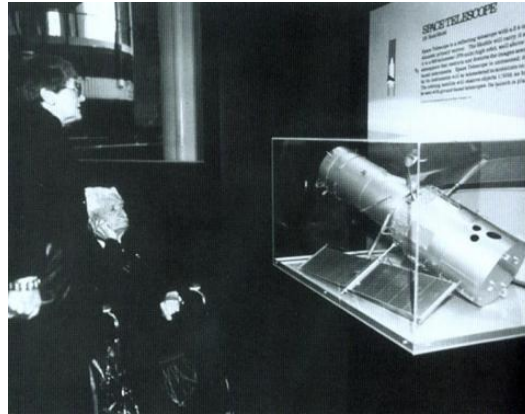




Hermann Oberth was born in a country once called Transylvania (think ... Dracula), known more commonly today as Romania.

His contribution to the world of science cannot be overstated since he is one of three men known as the Fathers of Rocketry and Astronautics. ([Robert Goddard](#) and [Konstantin Tsiolkovsky](#) are the other two).

It was scarlet fever which first caused Oberth to get interested in rocketry. More particularly, it was life in Italy, where he was recovering from a bad bout of scarlet fever, which put the young Oberth in touch with the book "[From the Earth to the Moon](#)," by Jules Verne. That book caused Hermann to start thinking about the reality of space travel.

What if Jules Verne was on to something? What if were possible for mankind to travel in some kind of a space vehicle and get from the Earth to the Moon? What kind of a rocket would it take to make that possible?

By the time he was 14 years old, Herman envisioned a vehicle which he called a "recoil rocket." It would be liquid-fueled and could propel itself through space. How would that work? [NASA tells us:](#)

By the age of 14, Oberth envisioned what he termed a "recoil rocket" that could propel itself through space by expelling exhaust gases from its base.

When he was 18, Hermann moved to Germany (in 1912). He spent most of his adult life in that country, beginning in the state of Bavaria where he studied medicine at the University of Munich.

During the First World War, he served with a medical unit. He realized, during that time, he was not cut-out to practice medicine. When he returned to the University, he changed his major to physics.

Because he knew of no one who could teach him about gravitational pull and the potential of liquid rocket fuel, he had to teach himself. He also tested his own theories since his professors were not really thinking about the subjects which fascinated Oberth.

As he studied math and physics, Hermann began to realize that rocket travel would have to use vehicles with multiple stages. He wrote these words:

If there is a small rocket on top of a big one, and if the big one is jettisoned and the small one is ignited, then their speeds are added.

When Hermann presented his research, supporting his doctoral thesis on rocketry (in 1922), his research was rejected. Believing it was better not to waste time pursuing academic credentials, he focused on becoming the best practical scientist he could be.

A year after his research was rebuffed, he published his first draft of "The Rocket into Planetary Space." When he published a more-detailed version, in 1929, he explained how rockets could be able to escape Earth's gravitational pull. This effort gained Oberth more widespread recognition.

Obtaining a patent for his rocket design, Oberth launched his first rocket on May 7, 1931 (near Berlin). Wernher von Braun - who later produced amazing rockets for Germany and America - became Oberth's assistant. Both men worked together on rocketry research, first for Germany and then for America.

Herr Oberth died in Nuremberg, Germany on the 29th of December, 1989. Aged 95 at the time of his death, he had lived long-enough to see his boyhood dreams come to fruition ... and then some.

This image depicts Oberth and his wife viewing a space display later in his life. Click on it for a better view.

Credits:

Image online, courtesy NASA.

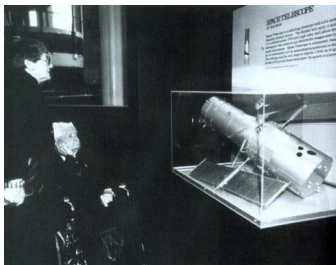
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Media Stream



Goddard - First Liquid Fuel Rocket
Photo of Dr Goodard online, courtesy GRIN (Great Images in NASA).
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