

Rewards of the JOB

Double honours for the ever-enthusiastic Director of the Oberth Museum in Bavaria.

by Frank H. Winter

Karlheinz Rohrwild, Director of the Hermann Oberth Museum in Feucht, Bavaria, Germany, was recently double-honoured for his outstanding work over 40 years for the Museum that is dedicated to the life and achievements of Hermann Oberth (1894-1989), world famous as one of the founders of astronautics.

Born in 1965 in Nürnberg near Feucht and starting as a volunteer for the Museum, then later becoming its leader in 1994 and officially the Director in 1996, Rohrwild was bestowed with the Ehrenzeichen des Bayerischen Ministerpräsidenten



ABOVE
Karlheinz Rohrwild, left, receiving one of his honours from Markus Söder, Ministerpräsident of Bavaria.

BELOW
Exterior of the Oberth Museum in Feucht.

für im Ehrenamt (Badge of Honour of the Bavarian Prime Minister) for his considerable accomplishments. At the same time, he was also awarded the Werhner von Braun Medaille (Wernher von Braun Medal) by the Internationalen Förderkreis für Raumfahrt – Hermann Oberth – Wernher von Braun (IFR, or International Association for the Promotion of Spaceflight – Hermann Oberth – Wernher von Braun).

OF HIGHEST MERIT

The IFR became a member organization of the International Astronautical Federation (IAF) in 1971 and was established to pass on the ideas and visions of the astronautical pioneers Hermann Oberth, Wernher von Braun and Eugen Sänger, in order to “generally promote the dissemination and public acceptance of spaceflight”. Their von Braun Medal is one their highest medals of merit to contributors towards these goals. Besides holding annual astronautical conferences designed for the general public and presenting top level experts from all fields of astronautics, the IFR also pays attention to activities for youth and provides, for example, support to model rocket sports clubs, besides the cultivation space flight presented in museums and its promotion of the maintenance of and care of historical documentation concerning spaceflight.

From 1983 to 1986, Rohrwild served an apprenticeship as a machine fitter with the firm of MAN AG, a corporation based in Munich producing commercial trucks, buses, and diesel engines. From 1991 to 1993 he studied mechanical

engineering at the Technical University at Munich. Yet, Rohrwild already had become fascinated and highly knowledgeable about astronomy as well as astronautics and from 1978 to 1982 he undertook volunteer work at the Nuremberg Observatory, conducting guided tours to the planetarium. This led to volunteer work at the Herman Oberth Museum the following year at the age of 18.

At the same time he came to revere Oberth and thoroughly immersed himself in learning details of his life and accomplishments and those of other pioneers of the period from the time Oberth's ground-breaking book, *Die Rakete zu den Ramuschiffahrt* (The Rocket into Planetary Space) appeared in 1923 and played a major role in leading to the Space Age. The Museum is directly adjacent to the Oberth home at Feucht which is about 20 km southeast of Nürnberg.

In the meantime, Rohrwild advanced in his career and is presently the Managing Partner of the Dorfner Group, a building services company with its headquarters in Nürnberg; he is the grandson of the Company's founder. Yet, his “second and simultaneous career” has always been with the Oberth Museum.

EXPLAINING THE DETAIL

Rohrwild went far beyond initial clerical duties at the Museum and also in 1983 he participated in his first International Astronautical Congress that was then held in Budapest. Moreover, he attended – and has continued to attend and participate – in the History sessions of the Congresses. Later, from 1993, he began presenting his own papers that have generally covered, with rich details, aspects of Oberth's work



ABOVE
A small selection of the memorabilia celebrating the work of one of Germany's great astronautical pioneers.

BELOW
Oberth (left) is presented with the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany by Wernher von Braun, 1961.

and other 1920s/1930s rocket pioneers, besides the early prominent German space group called the Verien für Raumchiffahrt (Society for Space Travel), founded in 1927.

Following the IAF Congress, in 1984, Rohrwild became responsible for exhibits in the Museum. As part of his avocation and representing the Museum, he has been of invaluable assistance in numerous book and film projects by others on the history of early rocketry and spaceflight. In addition, he spearheaded a number of museum events, notably the celebration of the centenary of the birth of Oberth in 1994 and the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Oberth Museum in 1996 – it was founded in 1971 – that featured their first “*Tag der Raumfahrtgeschichte*” (“Day of Space History”) in which papers were presented. This event was so popular it became an Oberth Museum tradition; the 20th “*Tag der Raumfahrtgeschichte*” was presented in 2019.

Apart from these, Karlheinz has generously and highly enthusiastically provided assistance for space exhibitions in other museums throughout Germany. Since 1986, he has been a member of the Permanent Committee on History of the International Academy of Astronautics, a Fellow of the British Interplanetary Society since 1991 (a member since 1986), a member of the IAA (International Astronautical Association) Committee on History of Astronautics, and of the Nürnberger Astronomischen Arbeitsgemeinschaft (Nürnberg Astronomical Working Group) besides other groups. In addition, he is the deputy head of the “History of Space” section of the Deutschen Gesellschaft für Luft-und Raumfahrt (German Aerospace Society) and similar posts.

For a glimpse of the Hermann Oberth Museum, consult “Monument to a Space Pioneer” in *Spaceflight*, Vol 40, No 1, pp. 32-33. Later in 1998, the writer and two other friends and colleagues were treated by Karlheinz to a “grand tour” of several key historical rocket sites in Germany that included, among other places, Peenemünde, Nordhausen, Kummersdorf, and concluding with the Hermann Oberth Museum. Therefore, the writer hopes to cover this “grand tour” in another, future article for *SpaceFlight*. ■



BELOW LEFT: DIETHE / ABOVE VIA FRANK H. WINTER

RIGHT: NASA / ABOVE RIGHT: VIA DAVID BAKER

