western Australia, where a different word was used with the same meaning.) The population of the new settlement steadily grew and reached 3000 in 1950. A post office, a hospital, churches, pools, and several shops were opened. The town soon boasted a movie theater and telephone exchange, and even ice cream became available.

Building the Woomera missile test range was not without controversy. Pacifists and communists tried to interfere with the construction, as their counterparts invariably did with defense initiatives in other countries of the free world, thus serving willingly or unwittingly as a Soviet fifth column. The security problems were further exacerbated by the tight American restrictions in 1948–1949 on providing classified information to Australia. The reasons for this “embargo” included the seemingly blind policies of the Australian left-wing Labor Party government to the menace of communism in Asia and an “unsatisfactory security situation” inside the government with leaks of classified information to Moscow linked to an uncovered Soviet spy network. The situation improved with time, especially after a new government under Robert Menzies came to power in 1949, and more efficient security procedures were introduced in defense research and development in 1950.

The first tests at the new range began in 1947 with experiments with bombs, not missiles. The first missile test took place on 22 March 1949, when a British
Blazing the Trail
The Early History of Spacecraft and Rocketry

Mike Gruntman

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ISBN 156347705X; 978-1563477058
505 pages with 340 figures
Index: 2750+ entries, including 650 individuals

This book presents the fascinating story of the events that paved the way to space. It introduces the reader to the history of early rocketry and the subsequent developments which led into the space age. People of various nations and from various lands contributed to the breakthrough to space, and the book takes the reader to far away places on five continents.

This world-encompassing view of the realization of the space age reflects the author’s truly unique personal experience, a life journey from a child growing on the Tyuratam launch base in the 1950s and early 1960s, to an accomplished space physicist and engineer to the founding director of a major U.S. nationally recognized program in space engineering in the heart of the American space industry.

Most publications on the topic either target narrow aspects of rocket and spacecraft history or are popular books that scratch the surface, with minimal and sometimes inaccurate technical details.

This book bridges the gap. It is a one-stop source of numerous technical details usually unavailable in popular publications. The details are not overbearing and anyone interested in rocketry and space exploration will navigate through the book without difficulty. The book also includes many quotes to give readers a flavor of how the participants viewed the developments. There are 340 figures and photographs, many appearing for the first time.

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