

Massive rocket booster arrives at Mississippi space museum

June 21 2016, by Rebecca Santana



People watch as the Saturn V rocket arrives at the Infinity Science Center in Pearlington, Miss., Tuesday, June 21, 2016. (Tim Isbell/The Sun Herald via AP)

A massive rocket booster that never made it to space instead made its way Tuesday to Mississippi's Infinity Science Center after a carefully orchestrated days-long move over land and water from New Orleans.

The rocket booster was part of the Saturn V rocket used to support the

Apollo moon program. This particular piece of equipment was intended for the Apollo 19 moon trip that was canceled.

Instead it sat at NASA's Michoud Assembly Facility in New Orleans—where it was constructed—for years.

To get to Mississippi, the rocket booster traveled about 40 miles by waterway and 10 miles by road. It was loaded onto a barge in New Orleans and traveled via canal to the Pearl River, where it was floated to the Stennis Space Center and then transported by road to the science center nearby.

The road move required closing off parts of Interstate 10 as the booster rocket crept along at three miles per hour on modular trailers made up of about 300 tires.

"It has now safely arrived," said John Wilson, the center's executive director.

It is the same route that such equipment would have taken back during the height of the Apollo program when the rocket boosters were manufactured at Michoud and then taken to Stennis for testing, Wilson said.



Crews guide a Saturn V rocket south on Highway 607 Monday night, June 20, 2016, near Pearlington, Miss. Eventually, the rocket made it to Infinity Science Center. (Tim Isbell/The Sun Herald via AP)

Fred Haise, a retired astronaut who was on the ill-fated Apollo 13 moon mission, was supposed to pilot the Apollo 19 mission that would have used the rocket booster transported Tuesday. Instead the 82-year-old watched as it was inched into place at the science center.

He said sitting on top of a massive booster rocket when it was launching astronauts into space was "rough."

"It jerked you around in the cabin a lot," he said. But he could not hear the roar of the five F-1 engines and their seven ½ million pounds of thrust. He said the cockpit where the astronauts were located was situated far from the engines and the higher the craft got, the less air there was the carry the sound.

The booster rocket is intended to become part of a larger exhibit at the southern Mississippi-based center designed to educate visitors about the Apollo program and the state's role in it. Wilson said the Apollo program "inspired Americans," and showed that through hard work people can achieve difficult goals.

He hopes the exhibit will inspire kids today to take up similarly hard tasks.



The Saturn V rocket arrives at the parking lot of Infinity Science Center in Pearlington, Miss., Tuesday, June 21, 2016. (Tim Isbell/The Sun Herald via AP)



The Saturn V rocket is transported near Pearlinton, Miss., Monday night, June 20, 2016, on the way to the Infinity Science Center, where it will be restored and displayed. (Tim Isbell/The Sun Herald via AP)

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Citation: Massive rocket booster arrives at Mississippi space museum (2016, June 21) retrieved 1 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-06-massive-rocket-booster-mississippi-space.html>

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