

Ehricke, Krafft Encyclopedia Article

Ehricke, Krafft

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Ehricke, Krafft

Aeronautical Engineer, Physicist, and Author 1917-1984

Krafft A. Ehricke was a rocket pioneer and visionary who made significant contributions to the technology and philosophical basis of space development. Ehricke was born in 1917 in Berlin, Germany. At the age of twelve he founded a rocket society, and he later studied celestial mechanics and nuclear physics at Berlin Technical University. During World War II, Ehricke became a key member of the Peenemuende rocket development team, specializing in the propulsion system for the V-2 rocket. At Peenemuende, he also worked on future space projects and developed theories on human space operations and nuclear propulsion.

After immigrating to the United States in 1947, Ehricke worked for the U.S. Army Ordnance Department, where he pursued the development of ballistic missiles and space vehicles. In the 1950s he joined the General Dynamics Astronautics Division, where he helped develop the Atlas rocket and the Centaur upper stage. Many early U.S. planetary probes were launched using the Centaur, which was the first liquid hydrogen-propelled vehicle. In the 1970s Ehricke led advanced studies at Rockwell International on the use of space for the benefit of humankind and refined ideas for interplanetary travel, manufacturing facilities in space, and mining on the Moon and the other planets. He is remembered for saying, "If God meant us to explore space, he would have given us a moon."

Ehricke died in 1984. He was survived by his wife and three daughters, who founded the nonprofit Krafft A. Ehricke Institute for Space Development in 1985.

See Also

Careers in Rocketry (Volume 1);; Moon (Volume 2);; Rockets (Volume 3);; Vehicles (Volume 4);; Von Braun, Wernher (Volume 3).

Bibliography

Ordway, Frederick I., and Mitchell R. Sharpe. *The Rocket Team*. New York: Crowell, 1979.