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INFINITY Science Center Announces Multi-Phase Plans to Relocate, Restore and Display Last Remaining Piece of Apollo Flight Hardware

Saturn V first stage booster to be transported to INFINITY for new Apollo program exhibit

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Pearlington, MS) April 12, 2016 – The state of Mississippi is getting a new front door. Next month, guests to INFINITY Science Center, a not-for-profit 501(c)3 located in southeast Mississippi along the Gulf Coast, will be greeted by five towering F-1 rocket engines affixed to the last remaining piece of Apollo space flight hardware. The Saturn V first stage rocket booster that was slated for the cancelled Apollo 19 mission, on which INFINITY board member and retired astronaut Fred Haise would have commanded, will be moved from its current location at NASA's Michoud Assembly Facility (MAF) in New Orleans and is scheduled to arrive at INFINITY in mid-May.

The move is the first phase of a multi-phase project to relocate, restore and display the booster in an effort to tell the Apollo story, including Mississippi's role in the space program, from start to finish. The center has recently partnered with Black Diamond Construction, LLC, locally-based out of Kiln, Ms, for the transport of the booster.

INFINITY, which serves as NASA Stennis Space Center's official visitor center, boasts 72,000 square feet of space, EARTH science, engineering and technology content. The center features over 50 years of NASA history on display and serves approximately 65,000 guests each year. The new Saturn V exhibit will expand upon those offerings, and seek to celebrate the accomplishments of the men, women and machines that carried the Apollo space program from south Mississippi to the moon.

"There's a saying that if you wanted to get to the moon, you had to go through south Mississippi first," said John Wilson, executive director for INFINITY Science Center. "Our goal with this Saturn V first stage exhibit is to educate our guests on our region's critical role in space exploration and bring to life the ingenuity of the men and women who built, transported, tested and flew the machines that took us to worlds beyond our own."

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Mississippi-native and retired Apollo astronaut Fred Haise is best known for serving as the Lunar Module Pilot for the ill-fated Apollo 13 mission, which was launched from Kennedy Space Center on April 11, 1970. After Apollo 13, Haise served as backup commander for Apollo 16 and was slated to be Flight Commander for Apollo 19, the mission that would have flown using the Saturn V booster. However, NASA cancelled Apollo missions 18 and 19, and Haise never returned to the moon. Today, Haise serves on the INFINITY Science Center board of directors and is the center's biggest champion for realizing its vision of encouraging and inspiring tomorrow's thinkers.

The Saturn V was a three-stage American rocket used by NASA to support the Apollo program and later Skylab, the first American space station. The first stage, known as the S-IC, is 138 feet long and 33 feet in diameter. The stage could produce more than 7.5 million pounds of thrust from five massive F-1 engines, four mounted on a steerable outer ring and a fifth engine rigidly fastened in the center. The liquid oxygen and kerosene combined and burned in the engines for 2.5 minutes, then, at an altitude of about 38 miles, the empty stage separated from the rest of the ascending rocket and burned up as it returned to Earth.

Between December 1968 and December 1972, nine manned missions to the moon took place. By 1975, NASA had cancelled the program, with three Apollo missions never having left the ground. This booster, which was intended for the cancelled Apollo 19 mission, has been kept in outside storage for more than 45 years.

Funding for the move, the first phase of the project, was provided in part by the state of Mississippi, which will cover the minimum costs to move the booster, however additional funds will continue to be raised to build a permanent exhibit space at INFINITY along I-10 where the booster will be placed.

The move, which is scheduled for mid-May, will take approximately 6-8 days to complete and will require extensive collaboration with multiple agencies. It will be first loaded onto a barge at Michoud Assembly Facility's docks and then travel through a canal system eventually into the Pearl River, where it will then travel 40 miles by water to NASA's Stennis Space Center in Mississippi – the same route much of the Apollo hardware took more than 45 years ago. Once at Stennis, the booster will be unloaded from the barge where it will then travel by road and along Interstate 10 before arriving at INFINITY.

Located in southern Mississippi off Interstate 10 and just minutes from NASA's Stennis Space Center, INFINITY Science Center is a non-profit science museum offering a blend of space, Earth science, engineering and technology content. It also serves as the official NASA visitor center for Stennis Space Center. INFINITY is "Where Fun Meets Fascinating" and the visitor experience encompasses the mix of exhibit space and hands-on experiential programming that seeks to inspire guests and spark imaginations. For more information, visit www.VisitInfinity.com or call (228) 533-9205.

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