

THE FIRST LAUNCH (or the third launch)

We had test fired the vehicle at Huntsville, dismantled it, and then shipped it by barge to Cape Canaveral. The missile (Redstone 1) was erected on Pad 4 near the Lighthouse. The pad was about 200 feet from the Blockhouse which was very crude and was shared with other contractors to launch their vehicles . There was a tunnel that connected the Pad with the Blockhouse used to install control cables and the ground support equipment required to monitor and launch the vehicle. The tunnel had manhole covers about every 50 feet to ease the installation of the ground support equipment. They were approximately 2 feet in diameter and very heavy. Finally, we were ready to launch---- what an exciting moment in history. Liftoff was beautiful, however, the tunnel hatch beneath the vehicle was not properly sealed and popped open. The manhole covers began to fly open, one by one, first from the pad and then towards the Blockhouse. The openings for the control cables that entered the control room were too large and were stuffed with cotton and packing material to reduce noise and heat from the tunnel. There was debris all over the control room, but fortunately, the relief of pressure caused by the open manhole covers was such that no harm was done.----- a successful launch (?), since most of the flight objectives were met.