

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

PRESS CONFERENCE MERCURY ASTRONAUT TEAM

Thursday, 9 April 1959
2:00 p.m.

The press conference was called to order at 2:00 p.m.,
Mr. Walter T. Bonney presiding.

PRESENT:

WALTER T. BONNEY, Presiding.
DR. T. KEITH GLENNAN
DR. W. R. LOVELACE, II
BRIG. GENERAL DONALD D. FLICKINGER
CAPTAIN NORMAN BARR, U.S.N.
ROBERT R. GILRUTH
CHARLES J. DONLAN

ASTRONAUTS:

LT. MALCOLM S. CARPENTER, U.S. Navy.
CAPTAIN LEROY G. COOPER, JR., U.S. Air Force.
LT. COL. JOHN H. GLENN, JR., U. S. Marine Corps.
CAPTAIN VIRGIL I. GRISSOM, U.S. Air Force.
LT. COMMANDER WALTER M. SCHIRRA, U.S. Navy.
LT. COMMANDER ALAN B. SHEPARD, U. S. Navy.
CAPTAIN DONALD K. SLAYTON, U. S. Air Force.

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MERCURY ASTRONAUT TEAM

MR. BONNEY: Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention, please.

The rules for this briefing are very simple. In about sixty seconds we will give you the announcement that you have all been waiting for: the names of the seven volunteers who will become the Mercury Astronaut Team.

Following the distribution of the kit -- and this will be done as speedily as possible -- those of you who have P.M. deadline problems had better dash for your phones. We will have about a ten or twelve minute break during which the gentlemen will be available for picture taking. There will be no talk, however. Then we will reconvene, hoping that the P.M. boys have done their file and come back and start the presentation and the "Q" and "A".

VOICE: One question. What time are you going to start?

MR. BONNEY: In about thirty seconds.

QUESTION: About what time will you start the "Q" and "A"?

MR. BONNEY: About twelve minutes after the distribution of the press kits. There will be a presentation by the several gentlemen involved, followed by the "Q" and "A".

It is now 2:00 o'clock. Please distribute the press kits.

Gentlemen, these are the Astronaut volunteers. Take your pictures as you will, gentlemen.

(There was a short recess for picture taking.)

MR. BONNEY: Ladies and gentlemen, it is my very real pleasure to introduce to you the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Dr. T. Keith Glennan.

DR. GLENNAN: Ladies and gentlemen: Today we are introducing to you and to the world these seven men who have been selected to begin training for orbital space flight.

These men, the nation's Project Mercury Astronauts, are here after a long and perhaps unprecedented series of evaluations which told our medical consultants and scientists of their superb adaptability to their coming flight.

Which of these men will be first to orbit the earth, I cannot tell you. He won't know himself until the day of the flight.

The Astronaut training program will last probably two years. During this time our urgent goal is to subject these gentlemen to every stress, each unusual environment they will experience in that flight.

Before the first flight we will have developed our Mercury space ship to the point where it will be as reliable as man can devise. We expect it to be as reliable as any experimental aircraft.

It is my pleasure to introduce to you and I consider it a very real honor, gentlemen, from your right, Malcolm S. Carpenter; Leroy G. Cooper; John R. Glenn, Jr.; Virgil I. Grissom; Walter M. Schirra, Jr.; Alan B. Shepard, Jr.; and Donald K. Slayton, are the nation's Mercury Astronauts.

(Applause.)

MR. BONNEY: There will be other opportunities for picture taking later in the afternoon. Now if we can move on, I would like to introduce five gentlemen who have had a very important part in the selection process and in the planning to date. I introduce them not in the order they will be speaking to you but in the way it is written down for me here.

Dr. Randolph Lovelace, Chairman of the NASA Life Sciences Committee.

Brigadier General Donald Flickinger of the Air Force,

and Captain Norman Barr, of the Navy. They have had the responsibility for the selection primarily in the aero-medical field.

Also, Robert Gilruth, Director of Project Mercury and of the Space Task Group that is working on this project.

Charley Donlan, his assistant.

Now, I would would like to call upon Bob Gilruth to say a few words.

MR. GILRUTH: Ladies and gentlemen: I am delighted to be here on this occasion. I am sure you are all familiar with the objectives of Project Mercury. I don't intend to make any speech whatsoever about it because I know you are all here primarily to meet our Astronauts.

Thank you very much.

MR. BONNEY: Now I would like to call on Dr. Lovelace, who will tell you a little bit about the physical examinations which were given these young men.

Dr. Lovelace.

DR. LOVELACE: I just hope they never give me a physical examination. It has been a rough, long period that they have been through. I can tell you that you pick highly intelligent, highly motivated and intelligent men, and every one is that type of a person, and our job is a relatively easy one.

They are as you know family men. I am not worried about their stability, their powers of observation, or their powers to accomplish the task which they are given. I can tell you that I am very, very thrilled that we have had a part in the program.

MR. BONNEY: As all of you know, the Air Force participated very importantly in throwing its aero-medical resources to help in our task. Don Flickinger may have a few words to say.

GENERAL FLICKINGER: Thank you, Walt. I really am here as a spokesman only for the team of scientists which we pooled together at the Aero Med Lab at Dayton. We pulled these scientists

together from both the Army and the Navy and Air Force resources. This was a composite team whose objectives were to subject all of the candidates to stresses which most nearly simulated those which we project for the individual in the first orbital and flights of Project Mercury.

All that I have to say, Walt, is that from our standpoint the most difficult job was in not taking all of the 31 or 32 that started through. It was really a difficult job and it is a great tribute, I think, to our Air Force, Navy, and Marine flying personnel that they came through with such flying colors.

I have been very proud to be associated with this project and we on the aeromedical side have learned a great deal from it.

Thank you.

MR. BONNEY: Thank you, Don.

You photographers I am afraid we will have to ask you to sit down. We are trying to give as much of a break to everybody as possible. We have limited facilities, as all of us are experiencing. The boys with the long lenses in back do have problems. So please will you sit down, and this includes the young man with the telephoto lens.

I will ask you not to take pictures until after we get through with the "Q" and "A". We have ordered it this way, please.

Now I would like to call on Captain Norman Barr.

CAPTAIN BARR: Thank you very much. I am quite sure that no finer group of men could have been selected by the tests that are available to us today. All of us are very sure that the correct men have been selected for this program. These men have been chosen from a population of about 180 million to represent the United States in this important project. We are all behind them a hundred percent.

MR. BONNEY: Thank you, Captain Barr.

Now I will call on Charles Donlan, who is Mr. Gilruth's right-hand man.

MR. DONLAN: There is little I can add to what has been said except that we are delighted to have these Astronauts with us. They bring to the program a wide range of experience, engineering, and flying, and other scientific engineering disciplines. I hope we are going to have a chance to work with them with a bigger proportion than we have had to date.

MR. BONNEY: Thank you.

Now we come to the "Q" and "A". I ask you ladies and gentlemen to address your questions to me. I will repeat them and then we will get them answered.

Peter?

QUESTION: I would like to ask Lieutenant Carpenter if his wife has had anything to say about this, and/or his four children?

LIEUTENANT CARPENTER: They are all as enthusiastic about the program as I am.

QUESTION: How about the others? Same question.

MR. BONNEY: Suppose we go down the line, one, two, three, on that. The question is: Has your good lady, and your children, had anything to say about this?

CAPTAIN COOPER: Yes, mine have. Mine are very enthusiastic also. I can answer the same for myself.

COLONEL GLENN: I don't think any of us could really go on with something like this if we didn't have pretty good backing at home, really. My wife's attitude toward this has been the same as it has been all along through all my flying. If it is what I want to do she is behind it, and the kids are too, a hundred percent.

CAPTAIN GRISSOM: My wife feels the same way, or of course I wouldn't be here. She is with me all the way. The boys are too little to realize what is going on yet, but I am sure they will feel the same way.

COMMANDER SCHIRRA: My wife has agreed that the professional opinions are mine, the career is mine, and we also have a family life that we like. This is part of the agreement. I can't say much for my youngest daughter -- she is only eighteen months old. But my son has quite an interest in the program.

COMMANDER SHEPARD: I have no problems at home. My family is in complete agreement.

CAPTAIN SLAYTON: I can say what the other gentlemen have said. What I do is pretty much my business, profession-wise. My wife goes along with it.

MR. BONNEY: The next question, please?

QUESTION: This is a general question. I see you have three Air Force, three Navy, and one Marine. Is this on purpose so that each of the services is represented?

MR. BONNEY: The question is, we have three Air Force, three Navy, and one Marine. Was this on purpose?

I would like to answer that one, if I might, because I was born in Vermont, which is almost as bad as being born in Missouri from the standpoint of looking at things with a somewhat jaundiced eye. I said, "How come it came out this way?" Randy Lovelace tells me, Bob Gilruth tells me, everyone associated with the Project tells me that they did it by numbers and not by service, and it just happened that way.

Next question?

QUESTION: I notice that the three gentlemen on our left have been smoking. I wonder what they are going to do for a cigarette when they get up there?

MR. BONNEY: The question is -- and the tobacco trust please close your ears -- it is noticed that three of our seven young men are smoking. What will they be doing when they get up in the capsule?

Perhaps, Randy, you might tackle that one.

DR. LOVELACE: I think they are mature men and we will leave it up to them in large part. Of course we have a few months for an indoctrination program.

QUESTION: Do all of them smoke?

MR. BONNEY: How many of you gentlemen smoke?

CAPTAIN SLAYTON: I will have to qualify myself.

(There was a showing of hands.)

MR. BONNEY: Three and a half.

I quit once for three and a half days.

QUESTION: The words "high motivation" have been used here today and earlier. What is the motivation of these men?

MR. BONNEY: The question is: What is the motivation of these men?

Let's try that starting from the left and down.

QUESTION: Can we get them to give their home towns, also?

MR. BONNEY: Yes, will you give your home town and age as you do this. This will be helpful to the boys on the lenses and also to the reporters.

QUESTION: Their names first.

MR. BONNEY: Full name, age, and home town, please.

CAPTAIN SLAYTON: My full name is Donald K. Slayton.

My home town is Sparta, Wisconsin. My age is 35. I am in the Air Force. As far as my motivation is concerned, I feel that this is the future of not only this country but the world. We have gone about as far as we can on this globe, and we will have to start looking around a bit.

It is just a natural expansion of flight. I consider it in that light. It is an extension of flight and we have to go somewhere and that is all that is left. This is an excellent opportunity to be in on something new, to begin with.

COMMANDER SHEPARD: I am Alan B. Shepard from East Derry, New Hampshire. I am also 35. I don't think there is any question but that we are on the threshold of space travel. We have seen many evidences along that line. The Project Mercury is just one part of the endeavor toward space travel.

I quite personally am intensely interested in it and just delighted to have been given the opportunity to participate.

COMMANDER SCHIRRA: My name is Walter Schirra -- Walter M. Schirra, Jr. I originally came from Wardell, New Jersey. I think in my answer to what is my motivation, I think it is typical of most of us in this country: We are interested in new things. Aviation has been a new thing, now it is a 50-year old thing.

I might add that in talking to my mother just recently, asking her if she had any anxieties about this, I had an answer. My father was one of the very early aviators. His parents faced the same problem. So I feel it is an expansion in another dimension, much as aviation was an expansion on the surface of the earth.

CAPTAIN GRISSOM: I am Virgil I. Grissom, from Mitchell, Indiana. I am 33. My career has been serving the nation, serving the country, and here is another opportunity where they need my talents. I am just grateful for an opportunity to serve in this capacity.

COLONEL GLENN: I am John Glenn. I am the Lonesome Marine on this outfit. I am 37. In answer to this same question a few days ago from someone else I jokingly, of course, said that I got on this project because it probably would be the nearest

to Heaven I will ever get and I wanted to make the most of it.

But my feelings are that this whole project with regard to space sort of stands with us now as, if you want to look at it one way, like the Wright brothers stood at Kitty Hawk about fifty years ago, with Orville and Wilbur pitching a coin to see who was going to shove the other one off the hill down there. I think we stand on the verge of something as big and as expansive as that was fifty years ago.

I also agree wholeheartedly with Gus here. I think we are very fortunate that we have, should we say, been blessed with the talents that have been picked for something like this. I think we would be almost remiss in our duty if we didn't make full use of our talents. Every one of us would feel guilty I think if we didn't make the fullest use of our talents in volunteering for something that is as important as this is to our country and the world in general right now.

This can mean an awful lot to this country, of course.

CAPTAIN COOPER: I am Leroy G. Cooper, Jr., Carbondale, Colorado, age 32. It is always a disadvantage to have to speak loud. I think the others have expressed very well and I think we are motivated by -- I myself, I should say -- am motivated by the fact that I am a career officer, career pilot, and this is something new and very interesting.

LIEUTENANT CARPENTER: I am Malcolm Scott Carpenter, from Boulder, Colorado. I am 33. I think we are all of a mind on this motivation question. It is a chance to serve the country in a very noble cause. It certainly is a chance to pioneer on a grand scale. I am very happy and proud to have been given the opportunity.

MR. BONNEY: Thank you, gentlemen.

Next question?

QUESTION: What element of suitability is there about being a family man that eliminated all the bachelors and brought out seven family men?

MR. BONNEY: General Flickinger is a bachelor, and he laughed so we will give him a chance to answer that question.

The question is: All of these men are very demonstrably family men. Why is it that family men were picked instead of bachelors?

Don, as a bachelor, will you answer that, please?

GENERAL FLICKINGER: The only thing I can say is that the medical statistics prove that married men live longer than bachelors. We hope to keep these people in the project a real long time.

MR. BONNEY: It doesn't always seem that way to another married man.

QUESTION: Another question is the age. Are men over thirty more stable, reliable, or what?

MR. BONNEY: The question is: What about their age? Are men over thirty more stable, more reliable, or what?

Captain Barr, perhaps you might like to answer that one.

CAPTAIN BARR: In addition, of course, to the medical qualifications, there are certain other qualifications. For example, these men had to have a technical background in the subjects related to this new specialty. They had to have about 1,500 hours as pilots of jet-type aircraft. They had to know some astronomy, applications, many other basic sciences. You can not find younger men than these who meet these qualifications.

QUESTION: Dr. Lovelace said that the men had a few months for indoctrination. Would you want to give an educated guess as to how many months before?

MR. BONNEY: The question is, according to Dr. Lovelace, there will be several months for indoctrination. How long would this take?

The answer to that, and if I might try to provide it instead of Dr. Lovelace, it would be that these men will be in training and getting experience right up until the time that they will be making their flights, which as Dr. Glennan said earlier this afternoon, will be in a couple of years, we hope.

Bill Levitt?

MR. LEVITT: One of these gentlemen will make the initial flight. But is it scheduled that the other six will make subsequent flights?

MR. BONNEY: The question is: There are seven gentlemen; one of them obviously has got to be first. Will the others also participate?

Indeed they will. They will participate all the way through, and this is one reason why we cut the number from twelve to seven. Perhaps the most important single reason for cutting from twelve to seven, so as to give all of them a maximum participation in the program. We expect to make more than one orbital flight by far.

Peter?

QUESTION: When the final day comes around, or the final week, whatever it is, how will the final selection be made and by whom?

MR. BONNEY: When the final day or week or hour comes around, how will the selection process be made and by whom?

I think perhaps Bob Gilruth might want to tackle that one, insofar as he can at this time.

MR. GILRUTH: I think you are asking for a lot in that question, inasmuch as we have so far yet to go in the Mercury Program. Not only pilot-training-wise but hardware-wise.

All of these models of the capsule you see, the systems that we have talked about, are all yet to be translated into real hardware. This real hardware has to be tested, retested, and where found wanting it has to be corrected and proven out.

We are still a very long way from being far enough down the road to answer when we will have the final system and just how we will go about picking the best-qualified man at the time.

MR. BONNEY: I might add a footnote to that.

I had the privilege last evening of meeting these gentlemen at Langley for the first time. My guess is that it is going to have to be pretty much a matter of drawing straws, because all seven of them should be first.

Bob?

QUESTION: Could I ask for a show of hands of how many are confident that they will come back from outer space?

MR. BONNEY: The question is for a show of hands from you seven as to how many of you are confident you are going to come back?

(All seven astronauts raised their hands.)

(Laughter.)

QUESTION: What lies immediately ahead of these men? Will they continue in their normal service assignments, or will they be segregated from now on?

MR. BONNEY: The question is: What will happen to these men; will they continue their normal service assignments?

They will not. They will shift over to NASA as soon as they can get their family moved down to Langley Field. They will participate in the Program in the most intimate sort of way. As the biographies will show, they all have engineering backgrounds, they will be working on the hardware; they will be working on the systems; they will also be very intensively carrying on their training program.

QUESTION: As of now, which do you expect to finish first, the space vehicle or the training program?

MR. BONNEY: The question is: As of now, which will finish first, the space vehicle or the training program?

The answer is, if it is not a dead heat, we are not doing our job right.

QUESTION: Walt, as we understand it then, these seven men are going to be taken along together in every stage of their preparation?

MR. BONNEY: The question is: It is understood all seven will be carried along as a team, participating in concert in every step of the program.

The answer is, 100 percent correct.

Paul?

QUESTION: What salary will these gentlemen receive as civil servants?

MR. BONNEY: The question is: What salary will these gentlemen receive as civil servants and as astronauts?

The answer is, their service pay. I think this is correct.

QUESTION: Will they remain in the service?

MR. BONNEY: They will remain in the service, detached to NASA.

QUESTION: Will there be hazardous-duty pay involved?

MR. BONNEY: Question: Will there be hazardous-duty pay involved?

Bob?

MR. GILRUTH: That is correct.

MR. BONNEY: There will be hazardous-duty pay involved.

QUESTION: Equivalent to flight pay?

MR. BONNEY: Yes. It is the same as flight pay. In other words, they don't get a dime extra.

QUESTION: One other question. Were any civilian test pilots considered, or is this confined to military career pilots, and why?

MR. BONNEY: The question is: Were any civilian test pilots considered or was the selection process limited to the military testpilots?

The answer to that is that the selection process was limited to the military test pilots. It was a purely arbitrary decision because we knew that the records on these people were available. We could run them through the machines and very quickly make first-cut selections from an elite group.

Phil?

QUESTION: You say these men will be detached to NASA. Will they be eligible for military promotion during that time?

MR. BONNEY: The question is: Will they be detached from military duty and assigned to NASA; will they be eligible for promotion in the military?

The answer is: Yes, indeed, they will.

QUESTION: I am still hazy on this one point. Is it planned that each one of these seven will make orbital flights?

MR. BONNEY: To the extent possible. The question is: Is it planned that all seven will make orbital flights?

To the extent practicable, the answer is Yes. We expect to bring the capsules back. We expect to use them more than once.

QUESTION: Where will these flights originate?

QUESTION: I would like to get back to the astronauts for a minute, if we could. It would be interesting if we could hear briefly from each of them what is their sustaining faith. Do any of them have a particularly strong religious faith, or is it motivation of service to country? What are they hanging on to?

MR. BONNEY: Getting back to the motivation, the question is: What is the sustaining faith of the gentlemen; what is the basic motivation?

Again, let's start with Brother Carpenter.

LIEUTENANT CARPENTER: As far as I am concerned, my sustaining faith, I think, is the fact that I believe we have the best minds in the country behind this project.

CAPTAIN COOPER: I would like to clarify this question. Do you mean by "sustaining faith" our sustaining faith in life? Or in the project itself?

QUESTION: My feeling was that you men are obviously risking your lives. We all of us hang on to something as we go through life and feel that if we are risking our lives, it is worth it. And also those who have a religious bent feel that if things don't go right that religion takes care of that. I would like to know if any of you have a religious, a strong religious feeling.

CAPTAIN COOPER: Yes, for myself I am a Christian, a Methodist, and I think religion is definitely with those who are Christians a sustaining aid. Likewise, I believe that I have faith in the people that I am working with in this program, and I know it will be a success.

MR. BONNEY: Before we get to the next one, let's go back to Carpenter and let him fill out that particular question so that we will get a full reading on it.

LIEUTENANT CARPENTER: If the question involved religious faith, I have that, although I don't call on it particularly associated with this project. I am merely a faithful church-goer, where it is possible. I think this might help sustain my, also.

COLONEL GLENN: As far as faith in the program goes, to cover that part of it, yes, I have all the faith in the world in the people running this thing. If we didn't think we had the finest brains in the country working on this thing, I am sure all of us would look at it with a pretty jaundiced eye.

We are pretty new to this, our dealings with the people in this program so far, but naturally, from what we

have seen and what we know of the people so far, we have a lot of faith in them.

As far as religious affilliations go, I am a Presbyterian, a Protestant Presbyterian, and take my religion very seriously, as a matter of fact. I have taught Sunday school in the Presbyterian Church and I was on the Board of Trustees at the last duty station, and a few things like that. We are very active in church work, and the kids are in Sunday school and all the things connected with the church work.

My own feelings, as far as religious background on this, are very easy. I think you will find a lot of pilots who like to take what I consider to be sort of a crutch and look at this thing completely from a fatalistic standpoint, that sometime I am going to die so I can do anything I want in the meantime, and it doesn't make any difference because when my time comes I am going anyway. This is not what I believe.

I was brought up believing that you are placed on earth here more or less with sort of a 50-50 proposition, and this is what I still believe. We are placed here with certain talents and capabilities. It is up to each of us to use those talents and capabilities as best you can. If you do that, I think there is a power greater than any of us that will place the opportunities in our way, and if we use our talents properly, we will be living the kind of life we should live.

This is the way I look at this whole program. I look at it, if I use the talents and capabilities I happen to have been given to the best of my ability, I think there is a power greater than I am that will certainly see that I am taken care of if I do my part of the bargain.

CAPTAIN GRISSON: I consider myself religious. I am a Protestant and belong to the Church of Christ. I am not real active in church, as Mr. Glenn is, but I consider myself a good Christian still. We usually hold Sunday school for my church, when I am away from home. I enjoy this very much.

As far as faith in the program, I couldn't agree more with what Mr. Glenn said. I have faith in the people who are working with us and on the capsule.

LT. CDR. SCHIRRA: I have followed the Episcopal Church as my faith. I have been an active participant in church activities.

I think I should like to dwell more on the faith in what we have called the machine age. We have the faith in the space age. The remarks the other fellows made about the best minds in the country involved in this project obviously have to apply.

All of us have had faith in mechanical objects. We have been driving cars, sometimes not successfully; we have been flying airplanes, some not successfully. I think the space program will have problems in it. Again, you have to believe that we are trying to do something and we are going to do it as well as we can.

LT. CDR. SHEPARD: To answer your question about faith, I don't mean to slight the religious angle in my answer. I of course am a Christian and attend church. I think pertinent here is the entire philosophy of the Project Mercury, as expressed by Dr. Glennan in the latter part of January, I believe, and possibly to rephrase his words a little, this project is not in direct competition with any other agency as we know it. The project is described to you people, and to us, as merely one step in the evolution of space travel.

Along those lines, I would like to say that I think it is also pertinent to state that the risk, as you put it, is not as great as you possibly feel that it is.

The program is designed, yes, as a step in the evolution of space travel, and as such, I am sure that the men connected with this project will not attempt space flight until we have reached the probability which has been set. The probability which has been set is higher; in other words, we have a better chance of coming back than we have many of us here in our contemporary duties on routine test flights in which we have been serving.

I would like to discount the fact that this project is extremely hazardous. And also to agree with what Dr. Glennan said: It is not a technical race, it is a step in the evolution of space travel.

CAPTAIN SLAYTON: As far as my religious faith is concerned, I am a Lutheran, and I go to church periodically. Like most of the other people, I don't feel that any particular extra faith is called for in this program over what we normally have.

I have been flying in the Air Force for seventeen years. Many people think flying is hazardous. I don't. I have been test flying for the past four years and I don't think this is especially hazardous. To me, it is just a normal extension of flight.

I see nothing about it that is any more hazardous than what I have been doing for the last four years.

MR. BONNEY: Question?

QUESTION: Could you tell us what Mr. Shepard's church affiliation is?

MR. BONNEY: Mr. Shepard, your church affiliation, if you care to say?

LT. CDR. SHEPARD: Yes. I am not a member of any church. I attend the Christian Science Church regularly.

MR. BONNEY: Question?

QUESTION: In the event one of these gentlemen were eliminated from the program during the period, will he be replaced?

MR. BONNEY: The question is: In the event that for any reason one of these gentlemen becomes eliminated from the program, will he be replaced?

Bob?

MR. GILRUTH: Not necessarily.

MR. BONNEY: Not necessarily. And, as I understand it, we don't think that it will be necessary.

QUESTION: Have you got more work to do at Wright-Patterson with this group, or will they all be at Langley?

MR. BONNEY: The question is: Do we have more work to do at Wright-Patterson, or will all the work be done at Langley?

If I might give the answer to that one: Yes, indeed we will be going back to Wright-Patterson. We will be

going to Johnsville, Pennsylvania, where the Navy has a centrifuge. We may be going to a number of other service installations or medical facilities around the country.

This is in truth and in every possible way of saying it a national program in which every resource of the nation, in the areas required, is being called upon.

QUESTION: While all their wives are going along with them now, they say, do they recall their wives' first reactions when they said they were going to volunteer?

MR. BONNEY: The question is, or the observation, take your choice: While the wives of these seven men at the present time are all giving their support to the project, what about when it gets closer to the first orbital flight, and would the gentlemen like to recall, if they can, their wives' first reaction to a hazardous undertaking?

QUESTION: When they decided they wanted to volunteer.

MR. BONNEY: When he decided to volunteer for this project. Let's start in the middle with Brother Grissom.

CAPTAIN GRISSOM: There was never any question in my mind about volunteering. It was just could I get in on the program. When I said something to my wife, what she thought about my volunteering, she said: "Do you even have to ask?"

COMMANDER SCHIRRA: It was way back, when the first information on this program came in, when everyone of us -- as well as those of us sitting right here -- were wondering about the same thing. I remember my own reaction, that we were a bunch of idiots. My wife felt the same way.

It takes a little education. I had to be educated, too. I think that is what we are trying to do to you today, to educate you to the fact that we are not playing games. This is serious business. You can't just face up to this thing and say we are going to -- as Mr. Donlan said -- put a million dollars in the can and fire it into space. It is nothing like that at all. You don't make a program out of something as crude as that.

This is a professional program. We are trying to do something with it. Most people have asked me, "Why are you in this idiotic program?" I immediately say, "If you will take a little bit of time to think about it, and study it, you will realize that this is something that we are very serious about."

COMMANDER SHEPARD: The answer to the question about

my wife's original reaction, I believe I indicated earlier that she was in complete support of my professional decision. She is now, and has been at all times.

CAPTAIN SLAYTON: My wife isn't too concerned about what I do professionally. She is more concerned with whether I can find a baby sitter and whether there is a commissary nearby to buy groceries and that sort of thing. Whether I am in this program or in a filling station doesn't make any difference.

LIEUTENANT CARPENTER: My wife's enthusiasm has matched mine throughout the program. As a matter of fact, when I was notified that I was being considered during the second and third days of the competitive program I was at sea at the time, and so my wife called Washington and volunteered for me.

(Laughter.)

CAPTAIN COOPER: That is the best one yet.

I have never had any problem so far as my wife going along with my career. My wife is also a pilot and is quite sympathetic, and particularly to this program. She is enthusiastic.

COLONEL GLENN: My wife made a remark the other day, I "have been out of this world for a long time, I might as well go on out."

I think all the wives, at least my wife, when they first hear something like this, they have reservations about it because they don't know anything about it. It is like all of us. When you first hear of something like this, you are very interested, but you sure want to find out a lot more about it before you are willing to place your neck way out there. I think that is the way all of us have been.

I think I can best describe my wife's reaction in that as she has learned more about the program as I have gone through some phases of it, she has learned more about it with me, and she has become as enthusiastic as I am.

I don't recall her initial reaction on this when we first started talking about that. It is just one of those things

that you come home and start talking about like anything else.

QUESTION: Is Dr. Lovelace's work done or will he continue with the program? If so, what will he continue doing?

MR. BONNEY: The question is, is Dr. Lovelace's work done; and if the answer is No, it isn't, what will he be doing?

I can tell you very quickly, his work isn't done by a jug full, but perhaps Randy would like to explore on that just a little bit.

DR. LOVELACE: We hope to continue to participate in the program. I might say that all our doctors and technicians are a little tired at the moment. We are going to let them take some time off. We have more of these tests to do in the near future.

QUESTION: Does NASA feel that one of these gentlemen here will be the first human being to go into orbit, or will the Russians beat us to it?

MR. BONNEY: The question is, does NASA feel that one of these seven gentlemen will be the first to go into orbit, or will the Russians beat us to it?

To answer that I would like to quote in a general way comments made directly both by Dr. Glennan and by Hugh L. Dryden, Deputy Administrator of NASA, that we won't be at all surprised if the Russians get out there first because they may well have started on their man in space project before we did. But if trying will have anything to do with it, we will get there just as quickly as anybody.

GENERAL FLICKINGER: I think that everyone can understand my sort of, you might say, emotional attachment to the boys that we have been working with. I think it is quite possible that the Russians have us beat in terms of propulsion, but I maintain that given cards and spades that the quality of our human component will be far superior to theirs, and we will learn more from our first manned flights than they will from theirs.

MR. BONNEY: Thank you very much.

QUESTION: Along those lines, about a year and a half ago, a Navy spokesman said that there won't be any space flying with a single man in the capsule because it would be more or less a publicity stunt, that one man would have to sleep part of the time and that kind of thing. Beyond the first orbital flight, is it planned to send a man up in more than one orbit, or is this going to be a multi-crew project?

MR. BONNEY: Can you break that down into one or two questions instead of an afternoon's worth?

QUESTION: This is the first step.

MR. BONNEY: This is indeed the first step.

QUESTION: Will the second step involve one man?

MR. BONNEY: We don't know yet. It is in the planning stage. The question is: Will the second step, after Project Mercury, involve more than one man?

The answer is we don't know yet, but for sure the second or third or fourth step will involve more than one man.

QUESTION: I have a question about physical requirements. Is the most important thing the stamina to withstand an immediate shock, or endurance to stand a long gruelling strain?

MR. BONNEY: The question is about physical requirements. Is it stamina to endure a long gruelling strain or is it stamina to endure a shock?

Captain Barr, General Flickinger, and Dr. Lovelace, you can flip coins on that one.

DR. LOVELACE: I feel that the problem will be one of multiple stresses, and I think Captain Barr and General Flickinger will feel the same way, and the way the program is set up I feel that every man here can withstand the stresses to which they will be subjected.

I forgot one thing when you asked if we were going to follow along in the program. There will be a Major Bill Douglas, Flight Surgeon, who will be with the men all the time. There have already been some fellows at Langley Field with them who participated in the program to a very minor extent.

QUESTION: I don't know what that means. Does that mean by "stresses" a long time endurance? Or a momentary shock?

GENERAL FLICKINGER: I will try to be as specific as I can with you, and am willing to get into specifics if you want to take the time. Really if I could give you this picture, we start out, as you already know, with an extremely detailed clinical examination, perhaps the most exhaustive that has ever been devised. Then we go from that to, as I say, this battery of what we call simulated space stresses. This is the full spectrum of it, isolation confinement, dynamic forces as a part of the vehicular expenditure of energy to get into orbit, and destruction of that energy to get back on to land.

It turns out that when you pick people with you might say a superior foundation physically, with a good mature psychological approach to hazardous and new types of experiences, that by and large you will find that for any individual stress, whether it be an impact force of 50 Gs for a short period of time or prolonged exposure of say six to eight to ten Gs for the re-entry pattern, that by and large this individual will react favorably to all of these stresses, both individually and combined. And that is what these candidates proved in the stress tests.

Does that answer the question?

QUESTION: Yes.

I would like to ask General Flickinger if the scientists, if the doctors plan any particular pep pills or injections or anything they can give them before they go up or take along, to sustain them and combat this fatigue?

MR. BONNEY: The question is, will pep pills or other means be used to keep these boys at maximum alertness throughout their orbital flight? The question is addressed to General Flickinger.

GENERAL FLICKINGER: Specifically, No. We won't resort to any pep pills. They certainly will be trained on all of what you might say ordinary medical emergencies that might occur to them either as a result of vehicular failure, component failure, or some acute happening to themselves.

But we have definitely proven in the work that we have done on ground simulators that for the duration of the mission that they are expected to perform, we will have no need to have artificial stimulation. They have their own built-in governing factor which is quite adequate.

MR. BONNEY: Question?

QUESTION: Walt, you have been talking about orbital flight. Do you have any idea of when you might be ready to begin manned flights in ballistic missiles over less than-orbital range?

MR. BONNEY: The question is, we have been talking about orbital flight. How soon earlier than that will we be shooting them in their capsules over a ballistic trajectory?

Before we answer that, might I urge you gentlemen, after the answer to this question, insofar as possible, to stick to the questions about the men themselves, because they have other things to do later in the day, and while they want to be thoroughly responsive, they don't want to stay here all afternoon.

Bob, would you like to answer that?

MR. GILRUTH: Walter Bonney has already quoted Dr. Glennan to say that the orbital phase might come off sometime after two years. The sub-orbital flights are a prelude to the orbital ones. We are going to get to them as soon as we can. However, as I said earlier we have all these systems to translate into hardware and to check out. Any kind of an exact estimate can't be given except it will definitely come before the orbital flight.

MR. BONNEY: John Finney?

MR. FINNEY: We have heard a lot about these men's

physical capability. I wonder if General Flickinger or anybody else can give us an idea of their IQs?

MR. BONNEY: We know they are nearly physically perfect.

What about their IQs?

GENERAL FLICKINGER: That's easy, Walt. I can tell you this: Every one of the gentlemen has an IQ about 10 percent higher than any of us.

MR. BONNEY: I would say a lot higher than 10 percent.

GENERAL FLICKINGER: They are all above normal.

QUESTION: Could you give any number bracket range?

QUESTION: 120?

GENERAL FLICKINGER: Above 120.

QUESTION: Are they all above 130?

GENERAL FLICKINGER: I would say Yes, which is high; 100 percent is high.

MR. BONNEY: Let's get a lady's question.

QUESTION: Would the gentlemen mind telling us which one of the tests individually felt the hardest?

MR. BONNEY: The question is: Would the gentlemen like to say which tests they liked least? I will say next to one, because they have all agreed on one.

COLONEL GLENN: That is a real tough one, because we had some pretty good tests. I think the tests at Dr. Lovelace's place at Albuquerque, certainly some of the tests we had out there were most trying.

It is rather difficult to pick one because if you figure how many openings there are on a human body, and how far you can go into any one of them -- (Laughter) -- you answer which one would be the toughest for you.

(Laughter.)

COMMANDER SCHIRRA: I think that goes for all of us.

COLONEL GLENN: That was the toughest one for me.

QUESTION: I don't know which it was yet.

CAPTAIN COOPER: I think it would be very difficult to pick any one. I think he answered it very well.

LIEUTENANT CARPENTER: There are many different types. I believe that the ones that involved extended effort, like the treadmill and bicycle, were certainly the most fatiguing.

CAPTAIN SLAYTON: The one I had most difficulty with was swallowing the rubber tube into my stomach for gastric analysis.

COMMANDER SHEPARD: I think John Glenn answered the question pretty well. Perhaps to carry it a little bit further -- (laughter) -- the tests at the Lovelace Clinic, and also those at Dayton, actually complemented each other. Almost every test they devised was strenuous in one way or another at that particular time because they were administered separately.

COMMANDER SCHIRRA: I have nothing to add to the tests. I think the stresses were covered well by John Glenn.

CAPTAIN GRISSOM: They were covered quite well. To me I think this is the worst, here.

QUESTION: Could we have the present home addresses of these men?

MR. BONNEY: Could we get the present home addresses of the gentlemen? We will start with Mr. Carpenter.

LIEUTENANT CARPENTER: 11911 Timmy Lane, Garden Grove, California.

MR. BONNEY: I think if you read them carefully you will find them in the biographical sketch.

Let's go through them.

CAPTAIN COOPER: We are in the process of moving right

now. My address today is Edwards Air Force Base. Shortly after this it will be Langley.

COLONEL GLENN: It was originally New Concord, Ohio. Right now it is 3683 North Harrison Street, Arlington, Virginia.

CAPTAIN GRISSOM: Presently my home is 280 Green Valley Drive, Enon, Ohio.

COMMANDER SCHIRRA: I am presently stationed at the Naval Test Air Center, Patuxent, Maryland. I am presently quartered there on the base at the Test Center.

COMMANDER SHEPARD: My family and I presently reside at 109 Brandon Road, Virginia Beach, Virginia.

CAPTAIN SLAYTON: I am at Edwards Air Force Base, California, 1201 Community Road.

QUESTION: This is a sort of a double question.

MR. BONNEY: Can you make it one and come back?

QUESTION: I am curious in the sense of the Astronauts, did they ever entertain an idea scientifically before they went flying, and while they were flying did they ever say to themselves that they themselves would like some day to make the first flight into space?

I know that is a difficult question to answer, but can you give me an answer to that? Did you ever entertain any ideas before you even went into flying, and while you were flying?

MR. BONNEY: The question is: Did these gentlemen ever think about flying into space before the announcement of Project Mercury was made?

Is this basically the question?

QUESTION: Yes.

MR. BONNEY: Would you mind starting it?

CAPTAIN SLAYTON: Yes, I did.

I have been at the Flight Test Center for the last four years. We have numerous writers out there off and on interviewing X-15 pilots and so on. The last time Martin Cage was out there about three or four months ago. He asked me this same question, whether I would like to be the first man in space. This was before I ever heard of the Project Mercury, of course. I told him at that time that I would give my left arm to be the first man in space.

COMMANDER SHEPARD: In answer to the question, in my particular case the answer was definitely Yes. I have followed the developments as closely as I can from my present duty, outside of the program. I think that all of us here, being technically minded, having had flight test experience, have thought about it. There isn't any question but what we have all thought about space flight.

I think that I was enthusiastic about the program from the start, and I enthusiastically volunteered. I had no difficulty in making my decision at no time whatsoever, once they asked me to participate in the program.

QUESTION: How about before?

COMMANDER SHEPARD: Yes, I had been following it before.

QUESTION: Had you any inclinations of being thrown into space?

COMMANDER SHEPARD: I misunderstood you. I did, very definitely. All of us have been in programs similar to this.

COMMANDER SCHIRRA: I think I can answer that simply by saying that all of us in this room have probably read of the Buck Rogers, Flash Gordon, Jules Verne routine. We were interested in reading these things and obviously we had intentions of following something like this in our lifetimes.

I will readily admit that I didn't think of this. But in flying aircraft we have been striving to get higher and higher. We have heard about airplanes such as the Lockheed-104 and Navy Grumman F-11-F that have gone to quite high altitudes.

Space, to any one of us, really begins at about 22,000 to 25,000. At 22,000 to 25,000 feet we can't live without survival equipment. So we really are in space. We have been flying in space as far as our environment goes for many years. As far as going higher, that is just one more step.

CAPTAIN GRISSOM: I am just going to say Yes, and for a long time.

COLONEL GLENN: I have been much interested for a long time, too. I think a specific example, in direct answer to your question, of where I really felt this desire or this inclination to get into space flights, we did considerable work or some work when I was back at the Test Center at Patuxent, the Naval Test Center, on zoom flight work where you get all the speed you can and try to optimize the flight path to get the maximum altitude out of the airplane on a climb. I don't think I ever made a zoom climb where I didn't have the feeling: If I just had the power to "loop" this thing on a little bit!

To give you a specific answer, on a period like that I really felt I would like to go on out. I have been interested in it for a long time.

CAPTAIN COOPER: Yes, I am, too. I have entertained thoughts for some years of the possibility of space flight.

LIEUTENANT CARPENTER: The answer is Yes.

MR. BONNEY: Ladies and gentlemen, the hour is drawing long. If it is all right with you, from here on out, we won't ask all seven each to answer the question. I think it is becoming pretty apparent that they already are thinking and acting like a team, and as a group rather than as individuals.

We don't want to short-change any of you. We want to answer all the questions you have, but we do want to make it fairly rapid.

QUESTION: I would like to direct a question to Colonel Glenn.

On your 1957 transcontinental flight do I understand correctly that it was the first supersonic transcontinental

flight?

MR. BONNEY: The question to Colonel Glenn is, was his transcontinental flight the first supersonic transcontinental flight?

COLONEL GLENN: That is right, yes. We averaged supersonic speed for the flight level we were flying at for the whole trip, including refueling and everything. Total elapsed time for the whole trip; that is correct.

QUESTION: How long a period will they be in the air on their flight?

MR. BONNEY: How long a period will they be in the air or in space during the first orbital flight?

As I understand it, it will be two to three orbits, and it will be about 90 minutes for each orbit. So two or three times 90 minutes.

Ed?

QUESTION: These men were selected from some thirty-two others by a series of psychological tests also. Weren't they given psychological tests?

MR. BONNEY: Ask the question and then we will get it answered one way or another.

QUESTION: I was wondering what they were looking for, what kind of a man they were looking for, and how these men were picked from the others?

MR. BONNEY: The question is, in addition to the physical tests, there were psychological tests. What were the doctors and psychiatrists looking for in this area?

Randy or Don, do you want to answer that?

GENERAL FLICKINGER: I will try. Maybe it would be easier to do it this way: There were, you might say, three teams of us and, as was mentioned earlier, we all operated from numbers right up until the final getting together. These three teams were first of all, you might say, the educational, engineering, professional background. This was the function of the task force group under Bob Gilruth and some of the staff members here at NASA. Then there was the clinical group under Dr. Lovelace, and Captain Barr and staff, and they operated more or less within the confines of clinical evaluation. Then there was our group at the Aeromed Laboratory on the multiple-stress tests.

Contained in the initial screening, of course, were some arbitrary criteria that had to do with their educational background, their height, and age. The height was governed largely by the dimensions within the capsule. There were certain preliminary, I would say, psychological or intelligence screening tests, and certain medical history background that was developed at the initial screening level, prior to the selection of the initial group to start through the actual clinical and stress phases.

Have I answered your question?

QUESTION: You have a list of tests, the perception test, double mathematical reasoning test, et cetera.

GENERAL FLICKINGER: Let me also try to give you this picture. We attempted to establish valid criteria in all of these areas. All of the services have had experience in, you might say, picking premium individuals for unconventional tasks. Whether it be flying research aircraft or Navy frogmen or submariners or special tasks of the Army.

So we took those tests that had had certain degrees of proven validity from our experience, and then we added to those some additional, you might say, experimental tests. Some of those psychological and some stress tests were under that category.

It would be difficult to tell you at this particular moment just exactly which of the tests were utilized in the final selection and how much weight was given to each one.

MR. BONNEY: Peter?

*Is this
the last page?
Don't know!*