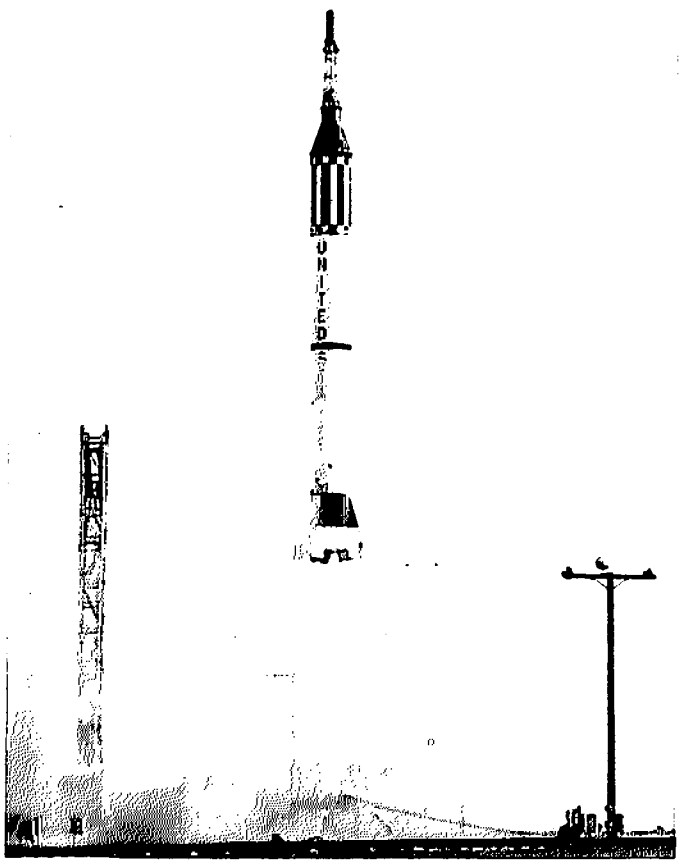
PROJECT MERCURY

GRISSOM CONGRATULATED BY PRESIDENT AFTER SPACE FLIGHT



VIRGIL I. (GUS) GRISSOM (top right) receives telephone congratulations from President Kennedy after he arrived on board the Navy recovery carrier Randolph after his sub-orbital space flight-- the nation's second successful effort-- July 21, 1961. Mercury-Redstone (MR-4) spacecraft leaves the pad (above) at Cape Canaveral, Florida, at 7:20 a.m. EST on 16-minute flight that ended approximately 305 statute miles down range in the Atlantic Ocean. Marine helicopter (right) has Astronaut Grissom in harness and is bringing him up out of the water. His spacecraft, the Liberty Bell 7, has just sunk below the water after hatch blew open accidentally. The spacecraft landed in the Atlantic at 7:36 a.m. EST.

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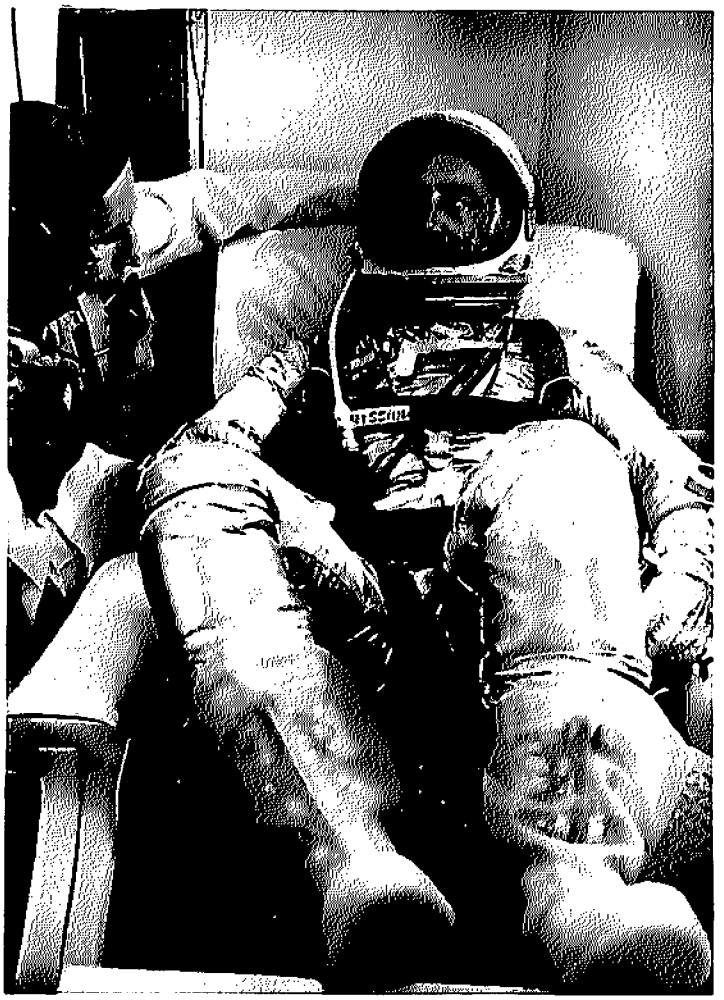
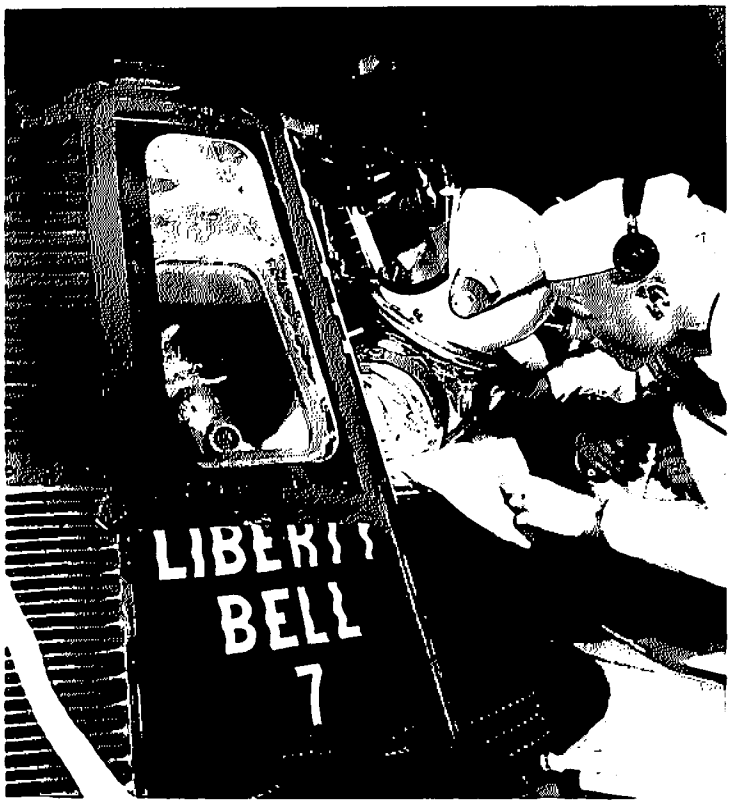
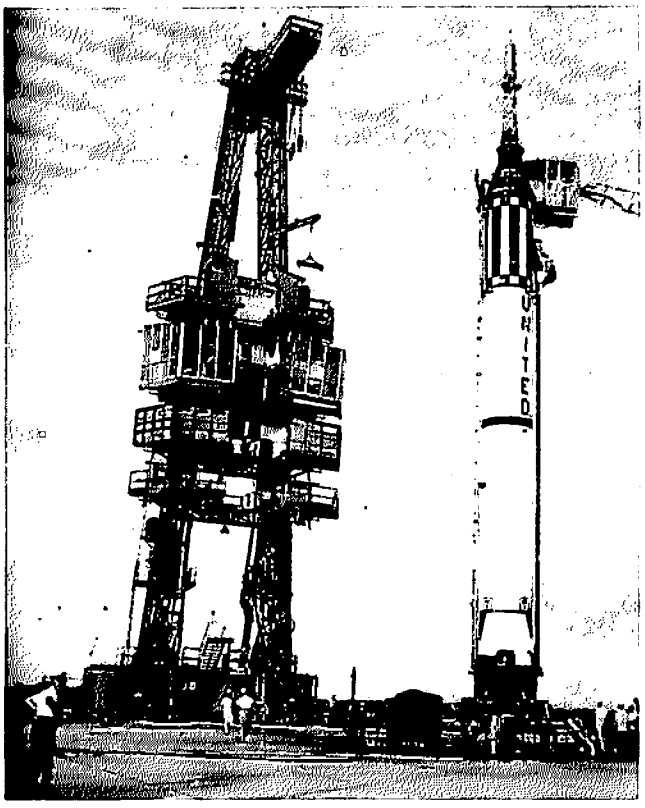
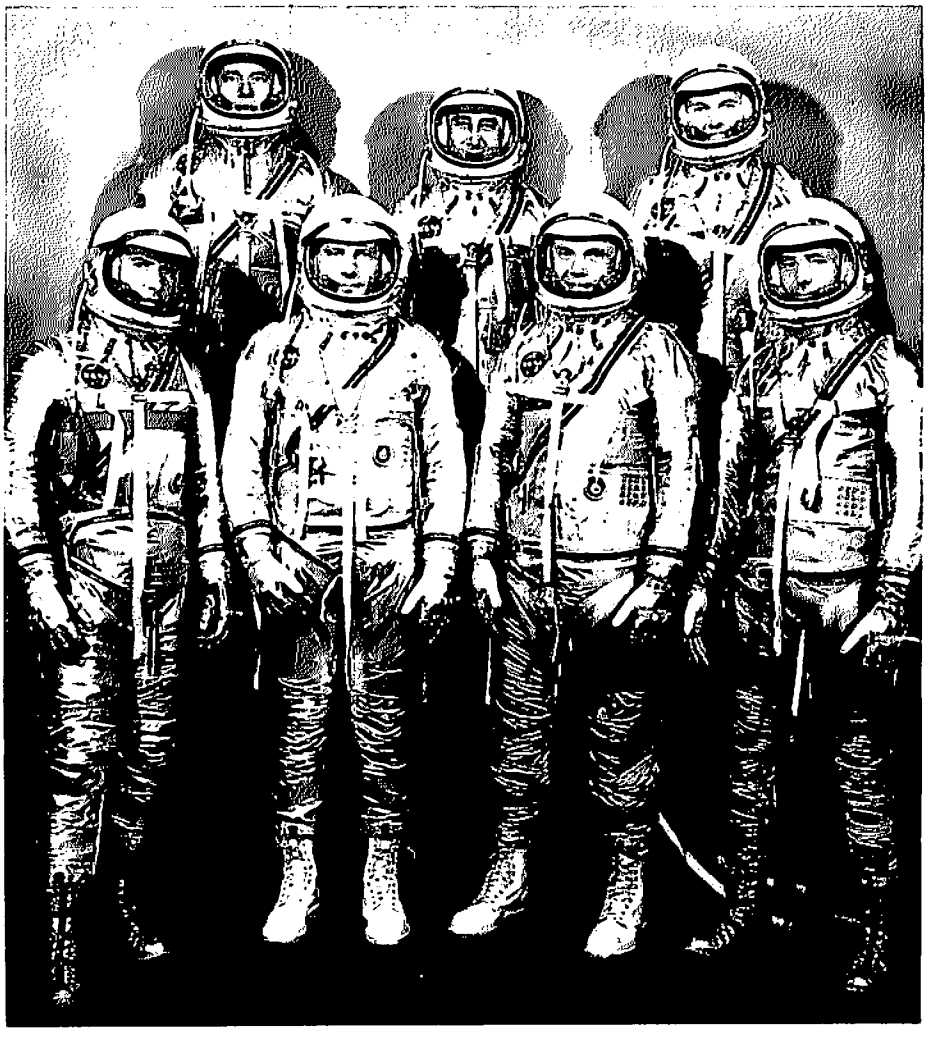


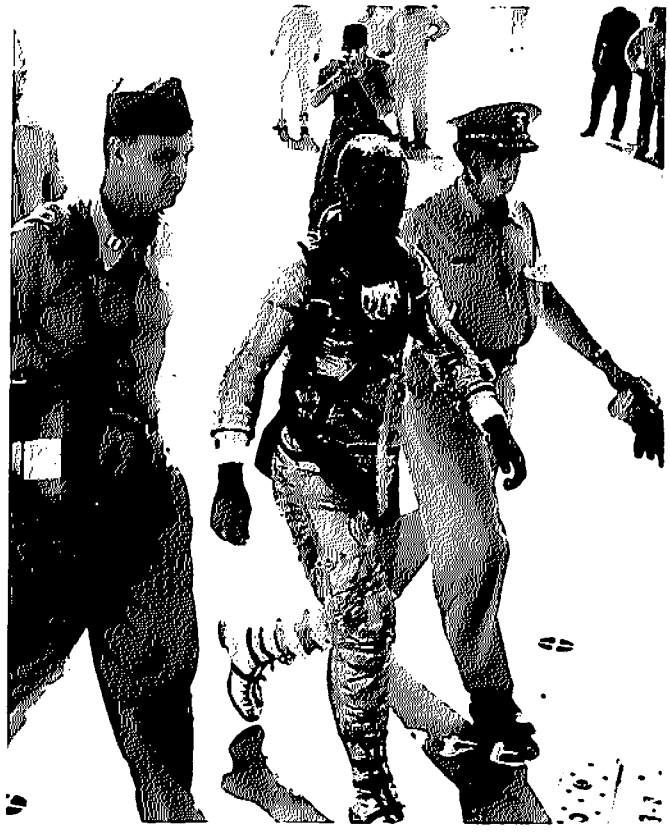
DR. WILLIAM K. DOUGLAS (top left), personal flight surgeon to Project Mercury astronauts, applies body sensors to Grissom in preparation for MR-4 flight. Grissom (top right) relaxes in NASA transfer van on the way to the launch pad. Gantry crew watches (lower right) as Grissom arrives carrying portable air conditioning equipment to keep him comfortable. As Grissom prepares to enter the spacecraft, families gather on beaches near Canaveral (lower left) to wait through the night so they will have a reserved seat at the historic launching.

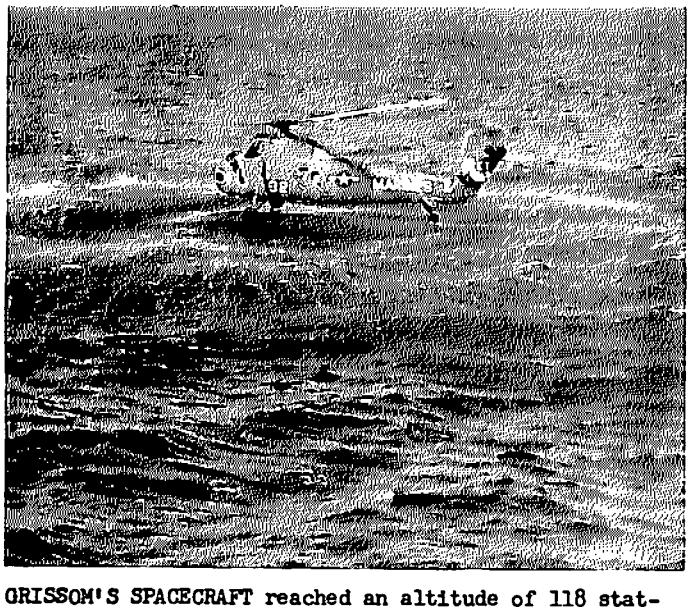






GRISSOM IS HELPED into the spacecraft (top left) by the mission backup astronaut-- John H. Glenn Jr. Dawn arrives and the MR-4 (top right) is in the final minutes of the mission countdown. Alan B. Shepard Jr. (lower left), who made the nation's first space flight, mans the voice communication console in Mercury Control at Canaveral during Grissom's flight. All NASA astronauts (lower right) participated in the historic flight. They include (from left): Front row - Walter M. Schirra, Donald K. Slayton, Glenn, M. Scott Carpenter; back row - Shepard, Grissom, and L. Gordon Cooper.





GRISSOM'S SPACECRAFT reached an altitude of 118 statute miles and a top speed of 5,310 miles an hour. A Marine helicopter hooks onto Liberty Bell 7 (top left), but weight of the water-filled spacecraft forces the helicopter wheels to touch water (lower left). Seconds later, the helicopter released the capsule and it sank. Grissom walks across the Randolph deck (top right) after being airlifted by another helicopter from the spacecraft impact area. The astronaut arrives at Grand Bahama Island later for a debriefing session with representatives of the Space Task Group. At Grand Bahama Island, he is joined by James E. Webb, NASA Administrator (second from left).