

# Exclusive Account Given Of How Air Force Picks Candidates For Nation's First Space Man

**Editor's Note:** America's first space man will be selected from a group of 110 highly-trained pilots. These pilots have been in Washington and have now completed the first phase of the selection process.

United Press International has obtained an exclusive account of what went on in three days of searching examinations — and of one candidate's reactions to the prospect of being put into orbit in a space capsule.

By WILLIAM D. HALL  
United Press International  
WASHINGTON (UPI) — The orders read simply: Report to

room 4-E-1063 of the Pentagon for temporary duty. But most of the hot jet jockeys who received them suspected what was in the works. They knew for sure when Gen. Thomas D. White, Air Force chief of staff, strode into the room and announced he wanted to shake hands with the first American who will reach outer space.

The name of the program is "Project Mercury," the purpose to put a manned space vehicle in orbit.

About 30 Air Force test pilots were gathered in the Pentagon office to shake hands with White. They were among 110 Air Force, Navy and Marine pilots brought

to Washington for initial screening. Twelve of them will be chosen to work on the project from the start.

One of the 12 — to be selected at the last minute — eventually will ride a space vehicle atop an Atlas intercontinental ballistic missile and go into orbit around the earth.

How is he going to feel? "The day they push the button," one candidate said, "the man who's sitting in this thing is going to be scared as hell. But he's not going to back out."

"He'll have had a lot of training and if he has gone that far he'll go all the way even though he knows there's a lot of risk involved. It's no snap decision. If it was, he'd probably have backed out right away."

"There's probably no test pilot alive who takes up a new airplane who's not apprehensive about his life. But he's trained to do this sort of thing and he's not going to back out just because he's scared."

White emphasized that the program was strictly voluntary; any candidate was free to leave at any time. The general said he could think of a hundred reasons why a pilot would not want to become involved. He emphasized that failure to volunteer would not reflect on an officer's service career.

Some of the pilots decided pretty quick. The group was obviously smaller when it assembled the following day for a series of technical tests.

The pilots had several things in common. They all were test pilots with degrees in engineering or one of the physical sciences, and they met certain physical requirements.

After meeting with White, they joined Navy and Marine Corps pilots in a Pentagon auditorium for a detailed briefing by scientists from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

The candidates were assured that this was not a "crash program" to put a man into space by a certain deadline.

The 12 volunteers who are selected will have a strong voice in the final design of the capsule that will carry one of them into space.

They also will have a say as to when the first flight can be made with the minimum chance of accident.

The scientists sought to allay the airman's fear. They pointed out that the pilot could separate himself from the launching rocket and parachute to safety at any time simply by pushing a button.

One young Air Force captain, worried about the possibility of a launching accident, said that "this made me feel a lot better about the whole thing."

He said he decided to volunteer for the program if he qualified. But immediately he began worrying "whether I could cut the mustard with all these talented people."

He has 2,100 flying hours, 1,600 of them in 14 different jets ranging from the first operational jet, the F-80A, through the F-104, which holds all records for air-breathing planes.

But he returned to the Pentagon in the afternoon for a brief medical review and picked up instructions for the second day of screening.

He was told to report to NASA headquarters here in civilian clothing to avoid attracting any unnecessary attention. The technical screening took place in a classroom-like auditorium at NASA. It involved mathematics from arithmetic to calculus, technical vocabulary on everything from electrical engineering to medicine, and an engineering test that would have done justice to a graduate school.

When the testing was over, the dazed captain said, "I really felt sick. But I felt a little better when I saw that all the rest of them were shaking their heads."

After that there was a geographical interview, a complete summary of your life history, plus the history of your family.

The group was broken up on the third day and the scientists tried to find out what made each man tick.

It began with a psychiatric interview. One of the big questions was whether a man had a wife who was completely opposed to him taking part in a space program. If he did, he couldn't do his

best work. There was a talk with another psychiatrist later in the day during which many of the same questions were asked, probably so the two doctors could compare notes.

In between there was a medical interview. The physician went through your complete medical history and asked questions about everything from boils to back injuries.

Had you been subject to extremes of heat and cold and had there been any adverse reactions? A man who enters the bitterly cold void of space and the intense heat of re-entering the earth's atmosphere will get a taste of both.

The final part of the screening was a technical interview, sitting in a hard chair and facing three NASA scientists.

A big question was: How would you feel if you were selected as one of the 12 for the program, and then in the end didn't get to fly in the space vehicle?

The captain thought he gave the

right answer: "Regardless of whether I got to fly it, the experience would be invaluable and I would be getting in on the ground floor of a new age of flight."

The candidate then was told to return to his home base. He'd hear in about a week whether he was one of 36 to 40 pilots selected for phase two.

If so, he'll be sent to Albuquerque, N. M., for a six-day physical examination. Then there will be a week-long series of tests to determine how each individual will stand up under the physical and emotional stress of space travel.

The final 12 will be selected after that for assignment to the program for three years. They will help conduct unmanned test flights of the space capsule and those involving animals.

They also will ride balloon-carried capsules high into the air. Most of them will take a "ballistic ride" of 170 to 200 miles aboard a Redstone missile and parachute back to earth.

Finally, one of them will ride hours and return to add immeasurably to man's knowledge of the earth for something under 24 universe around him.

## House Of Representatives Produce Barber Shop Four

WASHINGTON (AP)—Who says Congress is lacking in harmony? Your House of Representatives can — and, at the drop of a hint, will — produce as swingin' a barber shop quartet as ever murdered "Sweet Adeline."

What's more, this frantic foursome is made up of both Northern and Southern Democrats, with an Oklahoman thrown in to sing first tenor.

In derby hats and pasted-on handlebar mustaches, to say nothing of ladies' garters on coat sleeves and pantlegs, the (hmm) singers were:

Tenors—Reps. Toby Morris (D-Okla.) and John S. Monagan (D-Conn.).

Baritone—Rep. Oren Harris (D-Ark.).

Bass—Rep. Ross Bass (D-Tenn.).

Bass in this case is pronounced bass as in fish. The part he sings is pronounced bass as in base.

If this confuses you, you should have seen Congressman Bass. His mustache fell off in mid-air and he never did get it fastened on securely.

Don't get too optimistic about the hint of North-South harmony in Democratic ranks.

Monagan, the man from Connecticut, was only an understudy getting his first big break. He'll be out of "The House Boys" when the regular second tenor, Rep. Hale Boggs (D-La.), gets back to town. It'll be a 75 per cent Dixie outfit then.

A pianist-singer named Hank Fort summed up the situation by singing a song of her own composition:

"Save your Confederate Money, Boys — The South Will Rise Again."

"The House Boys," as they call themselves, the eldest being only 29, brought down the House, or at least threatened the foundations, Tuesday at a fund-raising tele for the National Symphony Orchestra.

**ASSEMBLY PARTICIPANTS**

LAKEVIEW — The Lakeview High School Spanish Club, "Los Burrrios," participated in an assembly at Paisley High School, Friday, February 13, at 1:30 p.m. in the auditorium. Featured as guest speaker was Felix Ortega, a Spanish exchange student at Lakeview. He was assisted by A. Arrambide, Spanish instructor at Lakeview High School. The Paisley Spanish class, directed by Freda Thayer, served refreshments in the cafeteria following the program.



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