

HOW WE'LL GET THE ASTRONAUT BACK TO EARTH



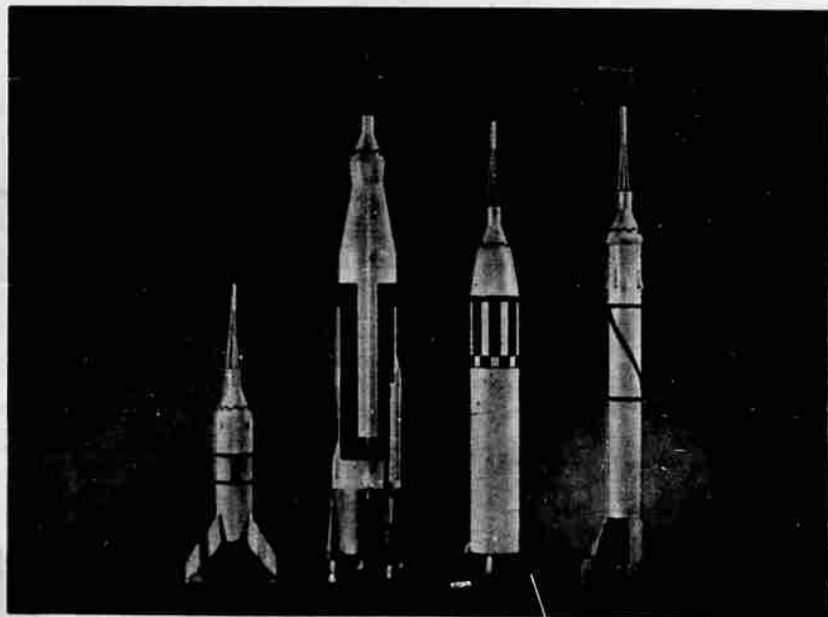
The Goal:
A manned capsule orbiting the earth.

by Willy Ley

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The Man inside the capsule will be one of these (l to r): Lt. Cmdr. Walter Shirra, Lt. Cmdr. Alan Shephard, Jr., Capt. Virgil Grissom, Capt. Donald Slayton, Lt. Col. John Glenn, Lt. Malcolm S. Carpenter, Capt. Leroy Cooper, Jr.



THE QUESTION I was most often asked during a recent lecture tour was: "What are the chances of bringing back alive the first man who goes into orbit around the earth?" Here's my answer: "If those in charge of the project have any doubts about his safe return, he won't be sent out."

Sometimes I quote an Air Force friend of mine. As you know, man will be preceded into space by a chimpanzee, and this officer told me: "After the same chimp has come back twice in good shape, I'll go into the briefing room and ask for a volunteer for the manned flight."

This attitude about sums it up: the orbital flight of Project Mercury will be anything but the daredevil venture some people think it is. It will be a feat in which every step has been planned, discussed, criticized, and planned again, followed by countless preliminaries and "rehearsals."

To explain the plan, it might be useful to break it down into categories labeled "the goal," "the man," "the capsule," "the preliminaries," and finally, "the flight."

The Capsule will be mounted on Atlas rocket (second from left); preliminary rockets are (l to r) Little Joe, Jupiter, and Jupiter C.