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Mercury—Manned Steps to the Moon Title 112

Simultaneously with the exploration of the Moon's surface by unmanned spacecraft, manned orbital flights around our planet took place, both by the Russian Kosmonauts and the American Astronauts, as the spacemen were now officially called by their countrymen. The first to complete one orbit was Yuri Gagarin in his *Vostok* on 12 April 1961. Less than a month later, on 5 May, Alan Sheppard followed in his American *Freedom 7 Mercury,* but he did not reach orbit. Three months later, on 6 August, Guerman Titov in another *Vostok*, achieved 17 orbits in 24 hours.

It was not until 20 February the following year, in 1962, that an American astronaut, John H. Glenn, achieved true space flight, three orbits. At that time I was only a temporary science correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph,* but by forecasting the event, seven days in advance, I was able to give all relevant details on a full page. Its headline was "Tracking Stations for US Orbital Flight Span the World". I could show a World Map with the three orbits and the 14 tracking stations, a portrait of Glenn, a cutaway drawing of the *Friendship 7 Mercury* spacecraft, of the Hawaii station and of a flight doctor watching Glenn's medical profile while in orbit.

Glenn's great space flight gave the American people the long awaited assurance of success which up to then had gone to Russian kosmonauts. Glenn was a hero, not only to his countrymen, but also to all those in the West who supported man's exploration of space. I was one of these and have remained so ever since. Glenn later toured the world and gave a press conference at the American Embassy in London. On that occasion I asked him to define courage. He replied: "To know danger and to work through it". I should have written this up for my newspaper, but seem to have considered it not important enough to keep a copy, if indeed I ever reported it and if it was ever published.

Other *Mercury* flights followed, all in spacecraft named 'Seven'. There was Scott Carpenter in *Aurora 7*, Walter Schirra in *Sigma 7*, and Gordon Cooper in *Faith 7*. The enigmatic number 7 [see Title 310] was obviously a Good Luck symbol. All *Mercury* spacecraft achieved their tasks without any mishaps, and Gordon Cooper stayed in space for 34 hours during 22 orbits. But it was not only man's endurance in space that was shown to be possible without any ill effects, three different types of rocket launchers were tested, recovery from the Ocean proved possible and the Operation Center at Cape Kennedy was shown to be efficient.

Throughout all subsequent American space flights it was this center that was in overall command of all launch operations, and the astronaut was simply told what to do. I did not write any more about *Mercury* for the *Daily Telegraph*, as soon afterwards I left as a 'temporary', but only for a time, before returning for the full position as Science Correspondent in 1963.

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