

As my return flight from Sydney to London was equidistant, whether I travelled west or east, I asked Qantas to give me a first class ticket via Hawaii and across the United States. It produced a number of good stories for the newspaper and was a perfect ending to my Grand Tour of Australia.

Having returned to Sydney from Perth on Passion Sunday 27 March 1966, I spent Monday morning, 28 March, seeing a number of friends and left by Qantas QF 550 at 19.10 hours to arrive at Los Angeles via Fiji and Honolulu at 17.30 on Monday 28 March Los Angeles. I had crossed the International Date Line at 180° west or east, and thus had the same day twice. This was the same phenomenon which Jules Verne described in *80 Days around the World* and which enabled his hero Phileas Fogg, so unexpectedly to win his bet of £ 20000.

I stayed two days in Los Angeles, the first with my friends of the Hughes Aircraft Company and learnt the latest details from Dr Robert Roderick; the Project Manager of Surveyor, the Moon landing spacecraft, and of the progress of its seven missions. From Richard Bentley I heard the future plans of Hughes to build bigger and better communication satellites, the successors to Early Bird. They were to be called Big Bird, and they proved a great commercial and technological success.

The second day I spent at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, J P L, at Pasadena, a suburb of Los Angeles. It is a very large NASA research and satellite-production establishment, reaching back to the earliest days of rocket propulsion and space exploration, and it has the responsibility for the design, the choice of manufacturer, the launch and the results of all unmanned spacecraft. As I had been there several times before, I knew the scientists in charge, the 'project managers' as they are called, and learnt about the progress of Voyager, the mission to Jupiter and about Mariner, the mission to Mars.

Onward to New York and to the Grumman Aircraft Corporation at Bethpage, Long Island, about 60 km out of town. The headline of my story from there read: "Flat out over the Moon at 6 m.p.h." as I described how I had been given the chance to operate the training simulator for future drivers of the Moon Rover, being built by Grumman. It was an exciting experience, as the conditions of the simulator matched so perfectly the picture projected in front of me of the Moon surface. [About its use, see Title 218]

In Washington, my next stop, I saw Arnold Frutkin at NASA headquarters and my story was called "Queuing for the Capsule", the competition for a 'Brit' to take part in a USA manned spaceflight. However, this never happened. From Washington, still first class, I flew back to London.