

9-6-67

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REINTERVIEW WITH FRANCIS J. HICKEY, JR.

216 We had two radio frequencies assigned to the Security Office, both of which were piped into our office and automobiles and only one of which was in the guard cars and on the guard office console. In order for us to prove to the guard contractor company that its employees were faking their assignments, we arranged that I would stay in the office one night after all MSC personnel normally went home and with my door locked so that nobody could come in and find me there. Barker and Puffer were in one of our automobiles with both frequencies on. I had my radios on very low volume so that I would not be overheard from the hall. I was able to monitor the guard radio traffic and at the same time communicate with Barker and Puffer without having to use the guard frequency. It was in such a fashion that we finally put an end to the abuses by the guards with respect to falsifying mileage on the cars and failure to man their posts in a proper manner during the night hours.

218 Barker and Puffer went over to Farnsworth-Chambers. They had to penetrate the grounds from the rear by climbing a chain link fence while I went to the guard office to confront the dispatcher and to literally seize his records before they were destroyed so we would have some documentary evidence of this falsification of the records. The Farnsworth-Chambers grounds were rather secluded -- off the road, no street lights to speak of, a good many trees -- and an ideal spot for a lover's lane. Before MSC moved in the Farnsworth-Chambers Building, the gates on each side of the grounds had been left open and it was also customary for

teenagers to use the grounds as a thoroughfare, and attempts to continue this practice were evident. Puffer, who was a little on the heavy side, was halfway over the chain link fence and trying to negotiate the barbed wire on the top, at about the same time that several carloads of teenagers came driving in the grounds. Their headlights caught him on the top of the fence and it must have been quite a sight.

178 There was no organization within NASA in those early days for the sole purpose of taking care of protocol needs common in a large organization such as we were establishing at that time. NASA Headquarters Security had an employee by the name of Bart Fugler who had also been a former Secret Service Agent. In the early days when the astronauts were stationed at Langley Field they were frequent visitors to Headquarters I suppose, and consequently, Bart Fugler and a fellow by the name of Steve Grillo who was sort of an administrative services officer, became fairly well acquainted with the original seven. Fugler and Grillo stepped into this protocol void by offering to assist the astronauts as best they could. When fan mail started coming in by the bagfull after the first successful Mercury flights, Grillo set up a means of responding to this adulatory mail. Through the first two flights, nobody had any inkling of the coming upsurge in public interest. In so far as the public interest in their home life and families was concerned, I don't believe there was much of a problem on either the Shepard or Grission flights, but the Glenn flight was something else. John Glenn had a residence in Arlington, Virginia and by then the public was obviously intrigued by the Mercury program and especially interested in all types of information pertaining to the

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astronauts. The Glenn family had its lawn trampled, the public clogged the streets and sidewalks in the vicinity of their home, and the Arlington Police had their hands full attempting to maintain order. The press with all of its unusual equipment and electric^{al} cables added even further to the problem.

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At this point, the efforts of people like Fugler and Grillo were paying off, but it was viewed at that time principally as a security problem -- protection of the family and their property, that type of thing. There was some backlash within NASA over the propriety of Security getting involved in this type of activity. The problem was that there was nothing in NASA regulations that would give a NASA Security employee any authority outside of NASA installations, and in the event a NASA Security office felt it necessary to restrain a member of the general public, say in the vicinity of an astronaut's home, he and the Agency might well be joint defendants in a suit for false arrest. There was an understandable reluctance on the part of management personnel within NASA Security for this sort of role to be perpetuated. As we went into the Gemini Program, we still had no Agency posture on just what was needed and who should do what in assisting flight crew personnel and their families in their relationship with the public. It's obvious that a hero traveling with his family through crowds can hardly be expected to park his own automobile or carry his own luggage and sign autographs and still be able to protect his wife and children and elderly parents from the pressure of even a friendly crowd. In the interim ~~period~~^{IN TIME}, MSC Protocol was established, ~~on a~~
~~rather tentative basis~~ for the first Gemini flights. We were a little

unsure of what ^{NEEDED} ~~ought~~ to be done, and SO WE OPERATED ON A RATHER

TENTATIVE BASIS.

3-16 You might say we played it by ear for the first flight or two. During this period we tried to get a feel for how to handle the press, what demands they would make, and to distinguish what were their genuine needs as far as information and assistance from NASA. The astronaut family obviously needed assistance, but what did the Agency owe them in terms of information and assistance since by virtue of the breadwinner's assignment he was absent from home at that particular time when everybody in the world seemingly was interested in his family? Once the press ^{ALSO} got a feel for what they were doing, the problem was greatly simplified. Initially in the Gemini flights, the press tended to "over cover" the families, and each network with its own equipment and its own personnel competed for limited amounts of curbstone space. There wasn't that much news. It got to the point where reporters were throwing rocks at the garage door to get the dog to bark so they could get some sound on their tape. They admitted that it was expensive and unnecessary and agreed on a pool procedure that worked out very well. Protocol in turn, had the blessing of the Public Affairs Office to deal with the news media. We went to the extent of arranging meetings in advance of the flights with the news media representatives, to find out "who was on first base" for this flight. We exchanged telephone numbers and discussed ground rules in general, [family eccentricities -- each family is so different] -- and we got to the point where we discussed the best ways for the news media to get what they wanted at the least expense in terms of family privacy and dignity. It worked out well for everybody. The families appreciated it and so did the networks.

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In those early days in Mercury before we were protocol conscious, there were some rather involved activities as a result of the flight successes. There were tickertape parades in New York City, various hometown celebrations, etc. Many minute arrangements have to be made in cases like this, essentially the same sort of thing we do here at the Center for incoming VIP visitors. These arrangements have to be made in advance of a complicated trip surrounding a hero and his family. Most hometowns have not had the experience of a recent hero and consequently, there is a good deal of indecision, a springing up of committees and volunteers and a general confusion about arrangements to be made. Consequently, if things are not well planned in advance, you find five people being squeezed into a four passenger revolving door or three people having to sit in two bucket seats, and the like. Such happenings may sound humorous, but they aren't. They are a hazard and in many cases can be very embarrassing to the Agency. It's a horrible situation when a man who is being treated as a hero is suddenly placed in an embarrassing position on a reviewing stand or at the head table or elsewhere, when thousands of people are staring at him. So many things have to be considered and worked out -- little things like who gets into the cars first. If you treat the hero the way most people would, you put him in the motorcade first and then load the local politicians and various second string relatives. The problem with that arrangement is you'll never move your motorcade because the crowd will press up and want autographs, will want to shake hands and the like. [Fuegler and I learned a little trick in Secret Service: when the President's rear end hit the seat of the car

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the motorcade moved whether the other people were loaded or not. That way the crowd doesn't have a chance to press up to the car and clog the street.] Most people who are ordinarily chamber of commerce officials or businessmen suddenly find themselves the chairman of the hometown hero's day, and try to make all arrangements. They feel that the first thing they have to do is to make sure that their own wife and children are photographed with the astronaut. Fugler and I and various other people tried to anticipate such common problems, and went to the hometown to pin down as many arrangements as possible before the hero and the official party ever left homeplate. You have to plan a few ^{basic} things like rest stops and rainy day alternatives. There are times when the astronaut's wife and children and parents need not be thrust into crowd situations -- they can be left behind or diverted elsewhere. We learned the art of coping with critical timetables. We also learned how to tactfully avoid other problems. [For example, we were in Arizona with Frank Borman and the mayor's office was to coordinate all activities surrounding Frank's hometown appearance in the aftermath of his flight. It developed that a very close personal friend of the mayor, a prominent businessman who happened to own a string of beauty shops, was the man who was really making most of the arrangements. He was very well intentioned, and was well regarded in the community, but his primary concern and the principal goal of his planning seemed to be that the astronaut be taken to all of the beauty shops in the chain and introduced to the beauty operators.] We are always on a rather limited time schedule and the hometown appearance ought to be viewed more in the light of what is the maximum advantage

likely to accrue to NASA for permitting an appearance like this. (It must be remembered that such activities interfere with a man's schedule.) It's much more desirable that an astronaut be brought to a municipal auditorium or a stadium or other large public arena to deliver a brief but carefully prepared talk, say to young people. Something of an inspirational nature that would be given favorable publicity by the press. These are the things that you cannot assume will be considered by the ad hoc hometown committee, and we operate on the premise that if you want to do something right, do it yourself. However, you can't go out and offend hometowns or city governments or politicians. You must defer to them and let them have the maximum public attention and credit.

220 We had a lot of experience during Mercury with correspondence from mental cases. They were very similar to the type of letters that come to the White House and to the Secret Service addressed to the President, Vice-President and the members of their families. At this particular time I was still in Security, and fresh from Secret Service, so we set up a nut file, if you will, patterned on the Protective Research Section of the Secret Service. We indexed this correspondence according to postmark, stationary, handwriting characteristics, unusual words, misspellings, and various things like that and we found this to be very useful. I don't recall any that constituted a threat. They were all friendly; never the less they could not be disregarded. I remember one in particular. It was from a lady in the Chicago area who wrote and said that she was [John Glenn's] real wife. He was due up there for a public appearance

and I had gone to Chicago in advance to help work out the arrangements. I got a phone call while still at the airport from Ed Barker. He indicated that they had just gotten a letter from this particular lady and they were able to identify her. I worked on an informal basis with a State Department investigator in that area who was a personal friend, and assigned in Chicago basically to investigate matters pertaining to passports and visa's. He was readily available, was another federal employee, understood the problem, and knew the local police. Working through him we solicited the help of the local police and they interviewed this lady's family discreetly and arranged that she stay home on that particular day and not turn up in a public place like a hotel lobby behaving like a long lost estranged wife. The family knew her condition, so there was no resistance from them although it was distasteful as these things always are. That one instance alone would, in my estimation, prove the benefit of maintaining files like that.

September 5, 1967

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Frank,

The transcript of your interview, edited to remove extraneous material, is attached. We lost part of your interview, apparently because of an imperfection in the tape. I would like to get together with you at your convenience and have another go at getting this information.

If you will, please read the statement and mark those sentences with brackets [] that you would not want alluded to in a Center history for reasons of embarrassment to an individual or the Center. As I mentioned during our recording session, this interview is to be part of the source material for the history, and it is doubtful that I will quote from it verbatim. Therefore, please don't worry about a sentence here or there which might not be as polished as would be desirable were it to receive public scrutiny.

If you want to add information feel free to do so. Just tack it on at the end of the statement, unless you prefer it inserted into the text.

After you return the transcript to me, I'll send you a copy for your personal file.

Thanks,

BR

BR:

This is rough, as you suggested, but OK with me. I'd appreciate cutting down the belly aching on pages 14 & 15. We have lately taken the case to court and are getting much endorsement. Also the Presidential references and other identifications of individuals should be deleted.