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Oral history interview with Eugene G. Edmonds  
[full name of interviewee]

about Photography of Mercury + Gemini Recovery  
[main focus of interview]

Operations; Setting up MSC Photo Laboratory

<sup>1962</sup>  
Title: Photographic Services Division, MSC  
[interviewee's current and/or former title and affiliation]

1968 General Photography Branch, Photographic Technology Laboratory,  
Staff Admin

Interview conducted by Robert B. Merrifield, Staff  
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Education - \_\_\_\_\_

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Hampton, Va; 1958 - joined Space Task Group (at  
Langley Research Center)

Topics - 1st photography of Little Joe I from 35,000 ft. transfer  
from STG to Langley; separation <sup>mse public relations</sup> of audio visual ~~dept~~ <sup>for public relations</sup> from photo lab; initial reaction  
to Houston; collaboration w/ John Brinkmann on  
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INTERVIEW WITH EUGENE G. EDMONDS

December 19, 1967

I operated a commercial studio in Hampton from 1949 until the Space Task Group was formed at Langley. The lady who did my portrait coloring was married to one of the personnel managers at Langley Research Center. At Christmas 1958, he told me that Space Task Group had been organized. He felt sure they would need photographers and if I were interested, he would try to help me get a job there. I told him I had been in business too long and felt that I was not interested at the time but I would let him know if I changed my mind. Like a lot of other people I became interested in the space program just through the papers. One day I went out and talked with him again and got a feel for the organization. He had me return later and introduced me to Harry Hamilton, Chief of the Photographic Division at Langley. Hamilton told me that a whole new era of photography was on the horizon and that it could be an interesting career. At the time he had no openings but if I was interested, he would keep me in mind. About a month later I was notified that I had been hired. After the usual personnel office forms had been filled out, I was escorted over to the Space Task Group on the East side of the field and introduced me to a man named Paul Taylor, their Personnel representative. Paul hadn't expected me and he called Personnel at Langley to find out what I was doing over there, as he hadn't asked that I be hired. I sat in his office for about two hours before it was decided what was to be done with me. Apparently I had been hired on sort of a Lend-Lease basis. Langley had been squawking about the additional workloads that were being imposed by STG, and hadn't gotten any additional people to handle this increased workload. The most obvious one

at that time was photography. A decision had been made to hire a photographer and put him on the Space Task Group payroll and IRC <sup>assign him to</sup> ~~would pay his~~ <sup>almost</sup> ~~salary.~~ I worked ~~close to~~ a year on that basis. That year was one of the happiest that I had ever spent. I was asked to do more of the STG work than any of the other Langley photographers <sup>because they could use my</sup> services without incurring a lot of paperwork <sup>since they paid me.</sup> I got to work with the astronauts and I began flying which was a real love of mine.

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I had been ~~a pilot~~ in the Air Force many years before and ~~was~~ qualified for jet flying. ~~I began operations that had never been performed before in jets.~~ John Brinkmann, <sup>head of the</sup> ~~who also worked in the Photo Division~~ <sup>Branch</sup> had difficulty finding anybody else in the Division who would participate in these photographic assignments on new-experiments at high altitude flying in jets. He and I were <sup>of three who</sup> ~~the only two that would do it.~~ <sup>this type of flying.</sup> We flew as photographers <sup>from 35,000 feet).</sup> ~~for the first ground-launched rocket.~~ <sup>We were the first to photograph a</sup> Little Joe I. It was a

wonderful year and I guess my roots with the organization really took hold at that time. Then Brinkmann one day asked me if I would transfer to Langley. I talked with <sup>Kimbille</sup> ~~Kembill~~ Johnson in STG and told him that I didn't want to transfer because I liked the STG and didn't want to leave but Brinkmann was kinda putting pressure on me to transfer. I think a little of the animosity between Space Task Group and Langley was pretty obvious at that time. Kembill pointed out that there was no photographic organization at STG, and that there was nobody who could put me in for a raise, etc.. He told me that I wouldn't be losing anything by transferring to Langley, and that if STG ever had a photographic organization of its own, <sup>That</sup> ~~he would like to have the opportunity to have me back.~~ <sup>I could come back.</sup> With that, I <sup>the</sup> ~~accepted~~ transfer to Langley.



When the Space Task Group became MSC and everybody started to make plans, I was caught in quite a dilemma. Andy Sea and Al Morowitz had transferred from LRC Photo Division to the Audio Visual Office at MSC. It seemed logical at that time that <sup>they</sup> ~~he~~ would be in charge of the photographic organization, so I talked to Andy about joining his organization. Unfortunately, he didn't have too much to offer at that time but recommended that I come back when I felt I wanted to make the transfer. Many people at Langley were fearful of rushing to STG, and in the process ~~would~~ <sup>burning</sup> bridges behind them, and then not be accepted and find themselves in an awkward situation. I wanted to go so badly that after talking it over with my wife I had just about decided to go over and accept anything that Andy would give me in the organization. Then one day Brinkmann and I went out at a little hamburger place outside of the West gate to have lunch. He asked me how I felt about STG <sup>and was I thinking of</sup> ~~now that it was~~ going to Houston. Langley people seemed to think that MSC wouldn't last long in Texas. What did I think? I had to be careful as at the time <sup>as</sup> I was still with Langley and I didn't know whether I would be accepted by STG and I couldn't afford to be too pro-MSC when I knew that a strong anti-MSC feeling was common at Langley. I just couldn't help letting my feelings show, and told him that I had faith in MSC, I thought they would make it, and in a way I kinda wished I was going with them. He wanted to know why would I like to go, what did I think the future of photography in the organization was? I did a first class selling job. That afternoon he told me that Jack Heberlig had approached him earlier, asking him to ~~undertake on an after hours basis or in his spare time, the outline of a~~ <sup>plan</sup> photographic laboratory, ~~to~~ draw up prints and plans, a list of equipment, etc. for a processing

laboratory at Houston, and his recommendations for organizing a photographic office. Naturally the first thing that came in mind was how this would fit with the Andy Sea organization. At that time, we could only surmise that there was a group at MSC who felt that there should be a photographic organization separate from Andy Sea's. Andy Sea had done a great job of bringing the Audio Visual Office along and that they could foresee a heavy volume of public affairs activities requirements at Houston and expected that that would take all of the time that Andy and Morowitz could devote. This same group (Hjornevik, Purser, Heberlig, and others) felt that it would be unwise to burden Sea with the problems of a processing laboratory and engineering photography. Heberlig solicited Brinkmann's help and Brinkmann was asking me to help him. I agreed. We worked late into the nights. One day Heberlig offered us a trip to Houston, which we accepted. We flew down during the first week of December 1961. By this time it seemed pretty obvious that there was a good chance that there would be a separate photo organization and of course putting two and two together, I realized that Brinkmann and I had a good change to be a part of it. Building 122 at Ellington, had been offered us as a laboratory and this was the one we were to look at and to use as a basis for our planning of a photo laboratory. Needless to say, I was terribly disappointed in Houston. It was shortly after Carla, and it was cold. I didn't like anything I saw, and I didn't see anywhere I wanted to live or work. When we went back, like many other people we had problems with our wives and families in trying to make the decision to come down. Brinkmann had a few more problems than I did and he wanted to handle them cautiously. I wanted to work at MSC so badly that I was at the point of



189 deciding to overlook all the unfavorable things. I will never forget the week between Christmas and New Year. Heberlig, in sensing that Brinkmann was ready to back out, asked me privately how I felt. I had told Brinkmann that I agreed with him, and at the same time I wanted to go with MSC. He asked Brinkmann to continue to work on the organization of the laboratory, because regardless of who took the job, he would need this information and these plans. Heberlig gave us a nice office, a couple of desks, and said for us to make this our office, work all we want to <sup>since</sup> and the more we got done for him, the better it would be. As we <sup>made new</sup> ~~new~~ plans well into ~~the night~~, I could see Brinkmann's interest growing. He had quite a problem. I had already made my decision to join MSC. I was determined to come on and be a part of any organization that materialized whether he did so or not. I did everything I could however, to maintain his interest.

The first week in January, Heberlig asked Brinkmann to <sup>go</sup> ~~come~~ back <sup>to Houston</sup> and do some final checking. He thanked us for our help and indicated that if we didn't want to continue, he would understand. A couple of days later when he was ready to leave <sup>Brinkmann</sup> ~~on a trip~~, he asked me to look around for a person that would be suitable to run the laboratories. ~~About a week before we had a person--a fellow by the name of McGee--in the laboratory at Langley--whom we had talked to about running the processing lab and he had tentatively accepted our offer. The day before Heberlig left, McGee changed his mind and declined the job. Since there was no one else at Langley in our organization that was suitable for the job, when Brinkmann boarded the plane he told me to find a person to run the laboratory.~~ That night I remembered a very close friend of mine, John Holland, who was in charge of photography at the Naval Weapons Depot in Yorktown. I ran over to his

house and talked with him. It was quite a shock for him because his roots were well established. He had a photographic studio on the side as well as his job at the depot and he was pretty well set. I didn't feel there was a chance in the world, but he was keenly interested. He told me to call him when Brinkmann came back and just keep in touch with him. When Brinkmann came back, everything happened very quickly. A decision was made that we have a separate photographic organization with Brinkmann as head. He and I transferred on January 21 and moved over to <sup>the</sup> Space Task Group complex on the East side. <sup>of Langley.</sup> I got a wheelbarrow load of catalogues and blank purchase requests and started to work. I had Holland ~~to~~ come <sup>over</sup> ~~up~~ immediately for an interview with Brinkmann. He just couldn't turn this challenge down, and yet he needed more to convince him. He finally accepted.

The three of us, became the nucleus of the present day organization. We added one more desk to <sup>the</sup> ~~this~~ little ~~space~~ room and Holland began researching and writing purchase requests for laboratory equipment and I began ordering cameras. Brinkmann ran the administrative end of it.

<sup>mt</sup> At this time, I was still involved in flying in support of the Mercury program. I had been on two recoveries up that time and were coming up to the Glenn shot--MA-6. I will go back now to tell how we got into photography coverage of recovery operations. At the time of the Shepard flight, people were so excited and involved in the launch itself that they didn't have too much time to think about photography. Knowing that the Navy had photographers on their ships, it was decided to let the Navy handle photographic coverage. NASA Headquarters sent Dean Conger, a National Geographics photographer for the first time <sup>on this</sup> ~~in any~~ operation. ~~There~~



~~were so many things that go wrong that time, in fact I think that every-~~  
~~thing that could go wrong did go wrong~~ <sup>many things went</sup> from a photographic standpoint.

116 For example, a couple of news photographers were assigned to the recovery ship and one was allowed to fly in the helicopter, <sup>with</sup> ~~he~~ and a Navy photographer. One of them forgot to take the lens cap off his camera. ~~I think~~  
~~it was the Navy newsman or something happened to~~ <sup>and the other fogged</sup> his film. No one was in the right position at any time because no one knew what the right position was since there had never been a recovery <sup>before.</sup> It was just those things that will happen, but the bad part of the whole affair was that in the final analysis, there was practically no usable footage of any kind as record.

Some good friends of mine back in the recovery section were working for Bob Thompson, and called ~~me~~ <sup>Brenkman</sup> to assist them, in preparation for the next

<sup>I was assigned the job.</sup> flight. They asked ~~me~~ what could I do to come up with a plan to assure better coverage on the Grissom shot. I offered to coordinate the effort

<sup>STG</sup> between ~~us~~ and the Navy. They let me go to Norfolk, to talk with the

208-1 Navy photographers who would go on the ship and try to standardize the  
 206-7 film that we would use and coordinate the coverage. It was a very small  
 208-3 effort because we didn't have ~~many~~ personnel to send out at the time. I

think I took one person with me. I went to Florida and <sup>boarded</sup> ~~got on~~ the Carrier Randolph at Jacksonville. I flew in one of the helicopters that went out

174 to pick up Grissom and saw the whole episode, how they lost the spacecraft and almost Grissom. This opened my eyes to requirements for a more complete photographic coverage of these recoveries. So when I went back I hollered for more people. We had the people, but it was a matter of getting approval, because remember, they were all still Langley personnel.

145-7 There was much paper work and much approval to be gotten to shake these

people loose because Langley had a policy that kept such people from travelling <sup>much.</sup> For the next shot which was ~~an~~ unmanned ~~shot~~, I was able to get a couple more people, so slowly the pattern began emerging that we would put one representative on all of the key ships. In this way they could act as monitors or leaders for the Navy in directing them as to what we needed so that everybody would tend to follow the same plan so to speak.

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sailed, When we came to the Glenn shot which we had been building up to, I planned to carry as many people as possible. John Holland had been hired about February 15-16 and I made plans to take him on the mission. With about five Langley photographers, we manned all the ships and had a very good photography plan. I went to Norfolk and talked with the Navy, and <sup>after we</sup> I made several trips over to the destroyers by helicopter prior to the launch. Of course the launch was postponed many times, but when the final mission came off, everything worked well as far as photography was concerned. Some interesting things happened that day. Since we were aboard the carrier we planned that as soon as Glenn was picked up, Dean Conger representing Headquarters, myself representing Space Task Group, and one PAO representative--were to be immediately helicoptered over to the ship that picked him up. When the Destroyer Noah recovered him, we left the carrier by helicopter. It took us some 20 minutes after we got over the destroyer to get down on it because of the evasive action the destroyer took when it knew that personnel from the carrier were trying to come aboard. I have never seen such a jubilant scene <sup>was it</sup> as on that destroyer. When we got up to the rooms where Glenn was being examined, it was pandemonium. Everybody, including the cooks I think, was in there. Every ranking officer on the ship was there, and the poor doctors were trying

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to examine him, and they were pushing the doctors around. It was really a mob scene. The PAO man took charge and got the people out, and the rest of the operation was conducted as it should have been. I took movies of Glenn then and afterwards as he went out on the flight deck for his private debriefing. As soon as this was over (it was getting real late in the afternoon), he went back to the spacecraft and looked in. Then the helicopter picked him up and I took movies of the helicopter pulling off in the sunset. I was supposed to go back with all of the film, the tape-recorders and all of the pertinent hardware out of the spacecraft as soon as it was ready. The recovery engineers were busy removing this stuff at the time. I went down and got something to eat and when I got back to the bridge, it was dark. The destroyer was going flank speed. I checked with the recovery engineers and they said they would have the <sup>equipment</sup> ~~stuff~~ ready to go in about 15 minutes. I told the commander of the destroyer that I would be ready to leave in 15 minutes and he laughed and said--you are not going anywhere--there's no way to get you off. We don't do night helio removals and do not perform highline transfers at night. We are readying a room for you now and you might as well go to bed and get some sleep ~~be~~ ~~cause the carrier and we are going at flank speed.~~ We are separating now so that we can travel at safe distances apart throughout the night. So you can just go to bed and forget it and we'll send you over at daybreak. I told him that I had to go and that they were waiting for me. He refused to consider it, despite my <sup>so</sup> ~~pleans~~ <sup>and</sup> finally I told him that as a representative of NASA I demanded that he send a TWX to the Admiral on the carrier and the TWX should state that I had all of the onboard tapes and film and requested to be picked up. After some hesitation, he sent the message. I

went back to the wardroom and had another cup of coffee and waited about 20 minutes and I got a call to come to the bridge. He told me that the destroyer was closing with the carrier at flank speed and his crew would rig for a night highline transfer. That was all he said. The next scene was one I'll never forget. They rigged a highline at flank speed of some 30 knots in pitch blackness and I went across with my bag of goodies. What I didn't know was that on the flight deck, John Glenn and the doctors ~~and everybody else~~ had been in their planes with engines running waiting, *about 35 minutes.* When I got on the carrier, I was grabbed by a couple of big Marines by each arm, lifted clear of the deck and rushed up to and thrown into the planes. They slammed the door and we took off.

*208-1  
208-3* This ~~photographic work~~ laid the ground work for my being put in charge of coordinating recovery operations photography. Then it expanded to two oceans. I went to San Diego and began coordinating with the Pacific Naval Mobile Unit showing slides and trying to interest them in what we wanted to accomplish. Of course it was all contingency effort out there, but I knew that in the later Mercury Programs the prime area would be in the Pacific. After the Glenn flight I spent one day at home in Hampton--Washington's Birthday, and the next day I boarded a plane for Houston to open the office for the photographic organization. I went to the Farnsworth Chambers Building as the first so-called permanent resident of the photographic organization. ~~Nobody had made any preparations for me.~~ I had to find *my own* a desk until they could get an office for me. I stayed three weeks and by that time I had a phone, a desk, and an office and an organization chart. We still only had three people, but work was beginning on the lab, in particular the construction work to modify the building at



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Ellington. I rotated with Holland who came down and took over for the next two weeks. Brinkmann came down, when he had time, to see how we were doing. During the next several months I hired a secretary and a couple more photographers whom I took with me on MA-7, the Carpenter shot, in May.

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The one incident worth mentioning in the Carpenter shot was that everything had been planned around the use of Marine helicopters for the pickup, and <sup>when</sup> ~~then~~ Carpenter landed too far away for the Marine helicopters to pick him up. Commander Wonderjim of the Navy Helio Squadron on the ship had been kidding me the preceding week by telling me that well--if those Marines can't hack the job, we'll be standing by. They had a new long range helicopter <sup>but</sup> ~~and~~ were having trouble keeping them <sup>flying</sup> ~~up~~. Every ~~other flight they made off the flight deck that week in practice had to be aborted.~~ As soon as it was determined that the range was about 225 miles, Commander Wonderjim hurried up to the bridge. I happened to be outside the door at the time and he said, "I just can't help it, I've got to go in and tell the Admiral we would like to try to make the recovery." <sup>I asked him to take me if he went,</sup> ~~I said OK, but remember we had been friends this week and now you have to tell him that you will take me.~~ He said, "Well the Admiral is going to say we can't carry any excess weight out there, but I'll see what I can do. ~~After the Admiral gave his OK, I told the Admiral I would like to go with him.~~ The Admiral said it was up to Wonderjim. I ran down with one camera in my hand--that was all I had time to get, for his helicopters were ready to take off. We just literally ran from the <sup>bridge</sup> ~~flag plot~~ right to the helicopter and jumped in. ~~All~~ the news people onboard the ship, when they saw me jump in the helicopter, sensed what was taking place, and

as we started to take off and the door was closing at least eight newsmen ran over and literally threw cameras at me: movie cameras and still cameras of every description. Four helicopters started and before we were gone more than 15-20 minutes, two of them <sup>returned.</sup> ~~came back.~~

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Carpenter was 209 miles away when we left the carrier. That was my second most memorable experience in my 20-odd recovery trips. That helicopter was going wide open--it shook, it vibrated, it made every noise, and three times during that trip, Commander Wonderjim got up and came in the back and asked me--where was that noise, coming from? what did it sound like?--try to describe it. ~~Some of the instruments that were color-coded such as speed and engine temperature were out of the green into the grey area.~~ Needless to say, we had one thing in mind. It was a fight between the <sup>air force</sup> seaplane and us to see who would pick him up. It was a real disappointment when the plane was given the go-ahead to pick him up, after we had made the <sup>long</sup> trip, ~~made~~ <sup>and had arrived at</sup> the scene, and were close enough to see the spacecraft. We were a pretty disappointed group. The Commander said--we aren't going to stop now, we are going right on in <sup>and wait</sup>. He didn't even pull the throttles back, he just kept right on charging and after the seaplane had started its final approach it's pilot called and said since the helicopters are here, <sup>then</sup> let them pick him up. So we picked him up and I had <sup>a great thrill</sup> ~~the answer to~~ ~~all my dreams--~~ I photographed an astronaut actually coming up the sling for the first time. Of course that was the occasion when Carpenter took a dunking. The crew chief in the helicopter that was controlling the button to raise Carpenter after he got in the sling was so excited he pushed the down button instead of the up button. Carpenter had practiced this thing before and standing on top of the spacecraft when he gave the signal

to go and the crewman said OK, then Carpenter rather than wait until the line was taut--~~there was just about a couple of feet slack in it,~~ he jumped off the spacecraft. Just about the time he jumped, the guy pushed the down button instead of the up button and of course gave out all kinds of slack. He ~~never was pulled tight~~ and landed about some six feet away from the spacecraft down in all the dye marker. He disappeared entirely except for the camera he was holding in his hand. He went down so far that nothing was showing except the camera. When he came up, I pulled him into the helicopter and dye marker was running out his ears, nose, and mouth and I tried to get the camera out of his hands. It was just like a dying man grasping something. I couldn't break that camera loose from his hands. After the dye marker drained off him, he finally let go of the camera. <sup>During</sup> ~~All through~~ the two-hour ride back, ~~and at the interrogation,~~ I emptied all of those cameras, every camera I had, ~~I used up its film.~~ We got back and all the people got pictures and it was the most exciting <sup>experience</sup> ~~time~~ I had had up to that time.

172 After that, it was back to Houston, hire more people, and move into our building. By the end of May 1962 Brinkmann had moved down and we were about ready to move into Building 122 at Ellington. Our group had grown to about 20 people.

135 Incidentally I want to give major credit to Marty Byrnes. As far as I am concerned, not enough credit can be given to the man. Behind the scenes, at late hours, when we had a problem and went in to see him, and he had a million other problems, he always made us certain of his confidence in our judgement. He would ask "have you looked into the situation and do you feel that this is the right move?" If we said yes, he took our



word for it, and trusted in our professional judgement. He was <sup>often</sup> severely criticized, I know, for many things that he did, ~~that weren't thoroughly checked into,~~ <sup>check everything,</sup> but I know that had he taken time to do that, I think we would not <sup>be where</sup> ~~have been as~~ advanced as we are today. With a group of dedicated people like we had and with a leader like Marty, I think that first year at the Farnsworth-Chambers Building was a <sup>great</sup> ~~100%~~ success.

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When we moved to Ellington in the mid-summer of 1962, into an old modified building, we had the usual problems, but it was through the help and cooperation of other organizations, especially Tech Services, Engineering, Graphics, Reproduction--we all supported each other in our problems. It was only through this kind of cooperation that we were able to progress as we did. <sup>A</sup> About this time, I became convinced that there would be need for television at the Center, so I went to Brinkmann with the request that I be allowed to build this functional capability within ~~the~~ <sup>our</sup> ~~Center.~~ <sup>Division</sup> At that time he was taken ill and was out some three months, ~~and~~ [I was obliged to fight during that time with other organizations to convince them that I was not trying to take anything away from them, that the kind of television that I wanted to develop was different. The engineers in IESD and the other engineering organizations had their type of television--for systems and spacecraft systems and I was not interested in that. The communications people also felt television was in their field. I did not give up, but kept pushing the TV from purely a visual standpoint and a support capability. I did not have the background in it but hoped that I would be able to hire competent people. At this time, Joe Piland took over from Marty Byrnes and set up an office at Ellington. Brinkmann was still in the hospital and I was having a running battle with General

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During this time I succeeded in starting a television section and furnished limited support to the Center. 15

269-1 Electric and other companies who were trying to get their brand of television established. I fought my way along for several months until it looked like it was becoming a reality. ] When Brinkmann <sup>returned from the hospital</sup> came back he hired Jim Stamps as head of our television operation.

Probably two months after I had been in Farnsworth-Chambers helping to set up the organization Brinkmann indicated that I would have the title of Branch head. I would have photography and Holland would have the laboratory. After assuming this position, I tried to develop the branch along the lines of experience that I had gained and decided on an instrumentation section, a still section, ~~and then of course the television section~~ <sup>and a section,</sup> which I combined with the documentary photography since at this time we were doing what we called engineering documentary photography as opposed to strict documentary photography that audio visual was doing. This was the conflict that I spoke of earlier when the functional division was vague and overlapping as to PAO's role in documentary photography versus our responsibility for engineering documentary photography. ~~With these three sections, I continued until Mr. Stamps was hired. He then took over the television section and it became a separate office.~~

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272-2  
For MA-8 and 9 I <sup>used</sup> ~~had~~ more Civil Service people than I ever had before. We also had more Navy people and I coordinated <sup>all</sup> ~~the~~ efforts. I had over 65 photographers, about 35 of whom were Navy, the rest <sup>were</sup> from Ames, Lewis, Huntsville, Langley and MSC. I had Civil Service Photographers from all those places stationed on ships around the world as well as the Navy personnel in both oceans. They were very successful photographic missions, <sup>and</sup> We had our opportunity to see our first spacecraft splash down, <sup>on both.</sup>

At the close of the Mercury Program our activities here at the Center

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were oriented toward the development of hardware and for the next several months we were involved in retriever operations, helicopter drops, zero g flying up at Wright Patterson, and weightless flying to simulate conditions in space. Our photographers were constantly going on astronaut field trips to Hawaii, Iceland, Panama, <sup>and</sup> all parts of this country, the ~~desert and the Northwest~~. <sup>1</sup> On ~~all~~ of these expeditions we accompanied the astronauts, <sup>and</sup> ~~our photographers probably enjoyed one of the greatest years of excitement in their lives. It taxed the fellows considerably, however, from the standpoint of their families. They were averaging about 40% of their time on travel and this had great impact on their families. They deserve major credit for their devotion and their desire to do the job.~~

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This work went on well into the Gemini launches. I was on all Mercury recoveries with the exception of Shepard's flight. I started at the beginning of the Gemini Program and participated in all but one of the Gemini recoveries. We enjoyed even greater photographic success in engineering, documentary, and PAO recovery photography in the Gemini Program than we had for Mercury. Even Andy Sea and Al Morowitz ~~never ceased to compliment us and praise the photography we brought back from all recovery areas starting with GT-4, McDivitt's flight.~~ The number of people <sup>used</sup> in the Gemini Program decreased because at this time the Navy was reducing its support to the recovery operations, and did not have as many ships. Because of the experience we gained in Mercury we were better able to place our people and have personnel out who knew what they were to do. We were able to accomplish this task with fewer people than we had in the Mercury program.



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We are engaging in quite a bit of research work now because we know ~~that~~ that the effects of ~~and~~ longer duration flights in deep space will have a different affect on films than what we ~~have~~ <sup>had</sup> experienced in the Gemini Program. Our EVA was very time limited and not long enough to have serious affects on the films. We know this will be different when we get into the AAP mission so we are now faced with research photography in areas that we weren't concerned with in the Gemini Program. <sup>#</sup> For GT-4, McDivitt and White were going to stay on the ship for a couple of days. The medical people had decided to do extensive medical examinations and the recovery people were to conduct engineering debriefings. The first day went as planned and the astronauts spent almost all their time in the ship's medical quarters. The next morning a little incident occurred which I will always remember. Ed White was being escorted from his quarters down to the sickbay to have some more blood taken. When he arrived on the hangar deck a tug-of-war exercise was getting ready to start between the Navy and Marine enlisted men. The Marines, being a specially trained group and usually bigger and in better physical condition usually allowed the Navy team to have two men to their one on the other end of the long rope. There were 60 Navy men on one end of the rope and 30 Marines on the other. White said, "Wait a minute, I want to go over and tell these Navy people that this is unfair." When he told the Navy that they were taking unfair advantage of the Marines, the Marines insisted that they could take them, and would even give them three to one if they wanted it. White still thought it unfair and decided to help the Marines. He jumped right in the middle of those 30 Marines and a tug-of-war started. To their embarrassment, the Marines <sup>were</sup> pulled down in a big heap and White disappeared

345.1 underneath them. The doctor started pulling his hair and ran over and stood there yelling--"Ed, where are you? What would Dr. Berry say? My God, <sup>are you alright?"</sup> where are you?" He was so afraid something might happen to him, and already was trying to figure how he would explain it. Those Marines and Navy fellows were elated and excited to think that he would do this <sup>for them.</sup> ~~on his own.~~ This was one of the first times that I had seen astronauts participate in ship activity without it being planned either by NASA or the ship's personnel. One ~~colored~~ sailor who shook hands with him (White happened to single him out at that time to say--"Thank you, I enjoyed it.") stood holding one hand with the other hand at his wrist, squeezing it and extending all fingers and just walking around with a big glow on his face. After the "NASA mother hens" who protected the astronauts debriefed them, and hovered over them had disappeared or gone to bed, the astronauts would sneak out of their cabin and go into areas where there were groups of Naval personnel to just talk with them. This was personally pleasing because I saw how good it made these Navy boys feel. The Executive Officer on our ship, The Wasp, was the same Commander Wonderjim with whom I had made that famous long ride on the Mercury Program. <sup>(MA-7)</sup> One night in his cabin after White and McDivitt left the ship he told me that having those two fellows on his ship was a tremendous morale booster, and that if I ever had the opportunity to make the astronauts understand this, to please do so. I later did tell them how much it meant to those fellows on the Navy ship to have the astronauts take a personal interest in them.

The Gemini recoveries really got to be quite routine. Everything worked so smoothly that we seemed to accomplish the things in half the time and without any major problems. Probably our biggest problems were

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with the New York television people who came aboard and started broadcasting live television from the ship. On Mission 7 and 6, better known as 76, was packed with tension and a lot of anxiety because it involved so many civilians on a packed ship for such an extended period. We were at sea for 21 days and this led right into Christmas. Because of the travel time involved and the problem of getting plane reservations at the last minute, and the crowds, some of us began to worry whether we would get home for Christmas. We had over 100 civilians onboard the ship. Quarters and eating facilities were limited and the recreation room was crowded. It led to a lot of tension and it was difficult for everyone to be as friendly and cooperative as in the past. We worked hard around the clock to finish sending back all the equipment and films out of the number 6 spacecraft then immediately afterward recovered number 7 and repeated the process. We worked some 48-50 hours almost straight and afterward there was a big let down and we still had  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to three days sailing time back to Boston. A responsibility that I had on all of the recovery missions was to get the film and onboard tapes back to Houston as quickly as possible. This was done with the cooperation of the recovery engineers and the Navy provided special planes to be launched from the carrier as soon as the film and the tapes were extracted from the spacecraft. Since we never knew until recovery was completed what would be the closest land point (fuel capacity and time of day and many other factors determine where the plane could land), all during the Mercury Program and most of the Gemini Program areas such as Bermuda, San Juan, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Island, Grand Turn, Antigua and many other places were sites that the film could be landed, ~~at~~. My responsibility



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was to deliver the films and tapes and experiments. Special handling was required and everything had to be logged and packed and a duplicate copy of the manifest given to the recovery team leader, to be phoned to the people at the Cape and Houston. They in turn would check to see if everything arrived that was sent off the ship. This caused many, many problems because we experienced situations out there that no one back at Houston could comprehend. Sometimes because of problems of logistics and operations on the ship we would have to operate under severe handicaps--lack of light, rough seas and equipment in the spacecraft that didn't check with the ~~PTD's~~ or the spacecraft storage list. The Navy always wants to operate on a precise schedule. We would have to estimate a departure time and the Navy used that as the basis for establishing when to catapult the planes. After we opened the spacecraft we would give them an estimated time. It took us about two-three years to explain to the Navy that we couldn't anticipate this down to the minute and they couldn't understand it because if they set a time up to launch, they wanted to launch that plane within give or take five seconds of the prescribed time. Here I would be in a packing and logging room about four or five decks above where the spacecraft was and I would have very fragile things like frog eggs, blood and other experiments that had to be specially refrigerated packed and handled in the presence of astronaut representatives, special crew stowage representatives, Gemini Program Office representatives, the medical office representatives and one or two other miscellaneous engineers. Everybody had a special item that had A-1 priority. I would be getting ready to leave the ship with all of this material and the planes would be running and on the launch pad, and the Navy screaming that we only had 10 minutes

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left until launch and it seemed that at that point I would only have half of my stuff packed and logged. The recovery team leader would be standing there saying that Paul Haney or somebody back in Houston was on the horn and wanted to know the exact list of items that we had and when we were going to launch. To me the most hectic part of whole entire operations was the hour or two between the time that we began getting this material together until we launched. It was bedlam. I would go up to a dark flight deck with all those things I mentioned, a couple of containers of frog eggs, 1-2 containers of blood--some in hot ice and some in glass containers--a PCM tape recorder and all the film and cameras, and upwards of 10-12 little packages and be put in the plane and launched. By this time, I had been about 16 hours without sleep. The average flight into one of these remote sites would take about four-five hours in a small Navy plane launched off the carrier. A typical place would be Grund Turk Island, almost desolate with a long dark runway with no operations building of any kind. We would land there say around 3:00 a.m. and look for a plane that had been sent from the Cape to meet me. Typical was the C-130 that came in, turned around, and opened its cavernous rear. I got in, and anyone familiar with the plane knows its huge size and there I was with all my little containers and packages and all by myself. It's sorta like some kind of TV program--the door opens and you jump in, you give the pilot a signal, the door closes and you take off for the Cape. The flight took in the neighborhood of three-four hours. When I arrived at the Cape, possibly at daybreak, there were waiting all the people who were to receive this experiments, medical items, etc.--and all screaming to get their things. I had to know what film went to the press, what film went to the

Cape and what ~~block~~ was to go to the doctors at the Cape. Everybody was screaming and grabbing for their stuff and in the meantime I couldn't give anything out until customs has checked me through. ~~Then everything is distributed and I try to get people to sign for it.~~ Invariably I was cautioned that these experiments were so important that they were not to be given to anybody but so-and-so and if he didn't make it, his alternate will be so-and-so and don't give it to anybody but those two. Often neither one of these two people <sup>would be</sup> ~~is~~ there to get the frog eggs, the blood, their tape or what have you. At the same time, pulling at you--come on, let's go, the plane is running (probably a jet that has been sent from Houston) and the pilot is screaming to go and Haney is on the phone that PAO back here is waiting for the film and to come on. After getting through this, you board the jet and come back to Houston. When you arrive in Houston, usually a team of people that have just had a good night's sleep and a good breakfast, meet you. You get out of the plane, open the luggage compartment in the bottom of the jet, and if you let a package hit the runway just a little bit too hard, they come swarming over you and say--don't you realize you have flight film or flight equipment there, and haven't you been told how to handle it with care? Of course you are going into your 40th hours of trying to protect this equipment and get it back to Houston without anything <sup>happening to it.</sup> ~~to eat or sleep.~~ You try to restrain yourself and then they drag you down to the bonded locker and make you sit there for an hour or two while they go through a fantastic amount of paperwork to accept all of this stuff. About the time you sign the last receipt, they turn their back on you and you are a forgotten man as the recovery operation has been completed.