

CADET SLOUCH

by Jim Earle

MERRY CHRISTMAS



A Merry Christmas?

Christmas is a time for happiness. For some it will be a time for mourning.

The traditional joys of Christmas will not infect the homes of some Texas families this year.

Instead the sorrow over departed loved ones will overrule the festiveness of the Christmas season.

Estimates predict that 110 Texans will never live to see the new year of 1966 but will instead die violent deaths on the highways of our state.

Four Aggies have already died this year from injuries received in automobile accidents. Will you be the fifth?

The Photographer's Dread

Being a photographer for a college newspaper is a fun job and one that everyone should try at least once. You get to meet many people, go to many places, and occasionally be with pretty girls.

But once or twice a year you come up with an assignment which takes away from the joy of the profession. An assignment although done before always makes you sick.

That assignment is the dread of the newspaper world. It'll be a beautiful day until you receive that phone call of a Fatal Accident. Then even jokers turn serious and a cloud of gloom ascends on what is normally a loud and boisterous office.

Last year I was driving into town when I heard the sirens sound. Being a fire-truck chaser I raced to the scene where a train and a sports car had crossed paths. The train came out okay, but that was all for the sports car and its driver.

Although a veteran newspaperman might say I was lucky to get there early, I would disagree. Since I represented a paper I was let through the blockade to get a clear picture. Too clear a picture. Seconds later they placed a sheet over the body but I had already seen too much.

And that wasn't the first time either. In Aspen, Colorado summer before last a date and I were in a coffee house when a man reported an accident. We raced to the scene at high speeds only to find we had beat the ambulance. Two teenagers were dead and two were mangled for life. Since it was late and I was one of four men there, besides the cops, I had to help in removing the bodies from the demolished car. That was enough for me and my date, and I

creeped back into town with both hands on the wheel.

I no longer chase fire trucks even if duty does call. If you've ever seen a body up close it'll take something out of you and make you think. Your skin will crawl everytime death is mentioned or everytime you read of an accident which happens almost daily. And you always have those pictures as constant reminders.

Last summer in Italy I came upon three fatal accidents in two days. The ambulance crews were still there and the bodies lay under clean white sheets.

I went out of my way to avoid them. I wasn't surprised or shocked because the Italians drive like maniacs passing on hills and taking corners on two wheels. But their fatality toll is high and they seem to have little regard for their life.

Not so with me. I've seen too much death for a student my age. After the Thanksgiving game I drove to Austin. There was a three car accident and the wrecking trucks were hauling the cars away. I read in the paper a 20-year old University girl was killed. Some family did not have a happy Thanksgiving.

Being a photographer is fun, but not all fun. You may not think about it often, but occasionally something reminds you that anytime you could receive an emergency assignment. It isn't pleasant to think of, but you could arrive at the scene and find it to be a friend, a close friend.

Then a photographer's job grows serious, the nights uneasy. Weeks will pass before you feel easy at the job again, and months before you can pick up a newspaper without being reminded of the gruesome details of a wreck.

THE BATTALION

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Capsules Rendezvous, Make History

By RONALD THOMPSON
AP Aerospace Writer

MANNED SPACE CENTER, Houston—Four excited U. S. astronauts culminated a tense space hunt in the lonely world of space Wednesday nudging their two spaceships into a historic rendezvous 185 miles above earth.

Gemini 6 pilots Walter M. Schirra Jr. and Thomas P. Stafford masterfully flew up for a visit with the tired, bearded crew of Gemini 7, Frank Borman and James A. Lovell Jr., then together set out on a six-hour formation flight.

The tiny spacecraft continued their twin voyages nose to nose only six to 10 feet apart.

First word the maneuver was successful came from Stafford. He calmly reported to anxious ground controllers over a noisy communications channel shortly after 2:30 p.m., EST: "We're about 120 feet apart and sitting."

The meeting occurred high over the Pacific Ocean during Gemini 6's fourth orbit of the earth and Gemini 7's 165th.

A busy worldwide tracking network, for the first time in history keeping tabs on two spacecraft at once, came to a virtual standstill during the final breathtaking minutes of the momentous and dramatic meeting in space.

"This is the waiting time," Mission Control said as the final, tricky maneuvers to bring them only feet apart started.

"It's all up to them."

Even though they were traveling 17,500 miles an hour over a 13,000-mile chase course, Schirra cautiously maneuvered the spacecraft at a relative speed of only a few feet a second nose-to-nose with Gemini 7—not risking a collision.

"We did it," someone said over the command channels.

Thus the United States claimed title to man's greatest space adventure, one that represents another giant step in its race to put men on the moon by 1970.

If American spacemen are to return to earth once they land on the lunar surface, they must launch themselves from the moon in their excursion vehicle and rendezvous with an orbiting mothership.

Twice stalled in an attempt to become the nation's first hunter spacecraft, Gemini 6 roared off its Cape Kennedy, Fla., launch pad right on schedule at 8:37 a.m. EST.

The new kings of space travel, Borman and Lovell, took a back seat to the razor-sharp Gemini 6 crew. The Gemini 7 pilots appeared cheerful and chipper while circling the earth waiting for the big moment of meeting.

With Schirra, a cool, veteran of space travel, at the ship's controls, and Stafford, making his first rocket ride, running the on-board computers, Gemini 6's six-hour stalk of the sky appeared destined for success from the start.

At the moment of blastoff, these elated words were heard from Gemini 6: "I should say. This is a real one."

The chase was on.

Nose skyward, the mighty 90-foot Titan 2 rocket roared steadily from the pad in a cloud of pink-tinted smoke. Minutes later, Schirra and Stafford got the go-

ahead for rendezvous on the fourth orbit—just as planned.

"You've got a big fat go from us!" Schirra gleefully replied.

Gemini 6 was drilled into an initial egg-shaped path around the world 100 miles low and 165 miles high, virtually what flight controllers wanted.

Applause broke out in the control room. Gone were fears Gemini 6 might be a jinxed spacecraft. Schirra and Stafford had made two earlier trips to the launching pad and failed to get off the ground.

On Oct. 25, they had to climb from their capsule when an Agena rocket they were to chase and link up with failed to go into orbit. Then Sunday, a small plug prematurely fell from the base of

the rocket and shut off the Titan's engines at the moment of ignition.

But all went well Wednesday. "Tom says there's no doubt about liftoff," radioed Schirra, who had felt the pulse of big rocket engines before—on his nine-hour Mercury flight three years ago.

Gemini 7 dashed overhead. "We didn't get to see the lift-off," Lovell told earth. "But we saw them coming up through the clouds."

As Gemini 6 shot into orbit, spacecraft communicator Elliott M. See Jr., an astronaut, told Schirra: "Steering looks good from here, Gemini 6."

"Oh, she looks like a dream," Schirra replied.

Told everything was "go" for rendezvous, Borman replied with one happy word: "Wonderful."

This word set them for the spine-tingling hours to follow.

At 10:12 a.m., near the end of the first revolution, Schirra made his first move toward catching Gemini 7, then about 1,200 miles away. A blast from his jet thrusters adjusted the high point of his orbit and placed him 17 miles below Gemini 7 and 690 miles behind. Then, at 10:55 a.m., over the Indian Ocean, he used small jets to elevate his low point to 135 miles.

First radar contact between the two small vehicles came three hours and 22 minutes after launch. And at the same time,

the four spacemen began carrying on conversations between each other, but most did not reach ground stations.

Gemini 6 moved into a near-circular path 17 miles below that of Gemini 7 at 12:19 p.m. over the Indian Ocean. It trailed by about 115 miles.

Schirra reported two minor problems with the Gemini 6 spacecraft. He said there was a little smoke across the windows during blastoff, but Mission Control conjectured it was just Florida haze.

He noted that his cabin temperature was a bit higher than expected. Early in the flight it rose to 90 degrees, but then dropped to a point where it was not a problem.

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