

PROJECT MERCURY

America's first spaceman has tested the excitement of flying into the unknown and coming back to earth to tell about it. His pioneering flight has opened infinite vistas of the universe for exploration by man. The accomplishment, of course, was not a surprise. It has been known for some years that Project Mercury was underway, that the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration had as one of its many space projects the development of a manned spacecraft, and that thousands of scientists and engineers were engaged in the great effort. Now, with the feasibility of manned space flight established, the endeavor is moving ahead. In prospect are orbital flights for the astronauts, advanced spacecraft, and flights to the moon and planets. What will be found in the reaches of space will be a tale of discovery unfolding in the years, generations, and ages to come. Ahead lies a time of great adventure and progress for mankind. (The accompanying pictures show some of the steps that led to America's first pioneering leap into space.)

One of the preliminary tests leading to the first manned flight, this Redstone rocket boosted the chimpanzee Ham into a 420-mile (676-kilometer) space ride on Jan. 31, 1961. Ham was carried safely by the Mercury spacecraft (shown above the striped rocket body) which was separated from the Redstone a few minutes after the launching.

(Photo No. 61-53. Accompanies "First U.S. Man in Space" Packet.)

