

NASA JOHNSON SPACE CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

EUGENE G. EDMONDS
INTERVIEWED BY SANDRA JOHNSON
HOUSTON, TEXAS – 11 DECEMBER 2003

The questions in this transcript were asked during an oral history session with Eugene G. Edmonds. Mr. Edmonds has amended the answers for clarification purposes. As a result, this transcript does not exactly match the audio recording.

This presentation consists of four parts: two oral history interviews; Appendix A, 32 photographs linked from within the oral history interviews; and Appendix B, The Memoirs of Eugene G. Edmonds.

JOHNSON: Today is December 11th, 2003. This oral history interview is being conducted with Eugene Edmonds, in Houston, Texas, for the NASA Johnson Space Center Oral History Project. The interviewer is Sandra Johnson and is assisted by Jennifer Ross-Nazzal.

I want to thank you for coming back to visit with us again, Mr. Edmonds. To begin with, you wanted to clarify some points for us, so if you'd go ahead and begin.

EDMONDS: Okay. I just thought it would maybe explain things a little more clearly if I started back at the beginning of the organization and my branch. I had three sections in my branch. Basically, I'm just explaining the details of what the responsibility of my branch was. It was called the General Photography Branch, and it was in three sections in the beginning. The Instrumentation Section, that was the biggest, the main one, and the most difficult one. Instrumentation and Engineering are the same, the way I refer to it. So sometimes when I refer to Engineering, it's the Instrumentation Section. Then there's the Motion Picture Section, which most people call it documentary photography, to document what's happening, and they are

regular motion-picture cameras most of the time. Then the Still Section, of course, is all still cameras, either mounted or handheld.

I was acting head of the Motion Picture Section in the beginning—they added television to it. When they first started television here at Manned Spacecraft Center [NASA Johnson Space Center, Houston, Texas], they put it under my section and I hired a fellow that was pretty capable of starting the television part of it. We got started by buying equipment and training the other photographers. Later, that was taken away from me, when it developed and reached a certain point where it was obvious it was going to be so important it needed to be another section or branch of its own.

I should make some reference to this Support Services Branch. It turns out that we started getting so many requirements for special support services, where a photographer would go and spend a few days with some engineering group discussing equipment types and what's available and how this should work, it was taking so many of my photographers away that they decided to form the Support Service Section off of the division chief, off of the division office, and then they could go over. Because so often when I didn't have enough photographers and we had so many requirements, you couldn't find anybody available and there'd be engineers waiting for somebody to come help them to order some equipment or something.

I'll start out first by saying that the requirements of my branch was to service everyone in the Manned Spacecraft Center, to cover all of their requirements, which was instrumentation, still, and motion picture, as I stated. But what I'm pointing out is that we made no decisions on our own to take any film, any pictures of film, with a few exceptions. I might mention them in a second. But anyway, the idea is that all work that we did was officially requested by an organization or their people within it. They had to fill out a purchase request in connection with

the photographer, to the detail, what they wanted, what film, and what pictures after it was processed. So we did not make any decisions.

Some exceptions were if something developed that wasn't planned and we saw an event, a setup, or had visitors or something showed up all at once, we would make the decision, "Yeah, let's photograph this, because I know PAO [NASA Public Affairs Office] will want it or the engineers later will want it." Most all of the engineers wanted instrumentation photography, and that was all cameras that had a very high speed. You didn't hold the cameras; they were either on a tripod or they were mounted within a test unit of some kind that could be any size. It could be something that was going into space, and test programs could run for weeks. It could run in different stages where it was first set up and they had to develop the hardware, and then after that, they would put it together in something like a capsule and carry it up in an airplane and drop it out the back of it. I'll get a little more on that just later, but the point I'm making is that we didn't do anything except what was requested of us.

Then still photography was for everything, anywhere, any time. Most everything was covered with still photography. Most all organizations, when they started a project, they would want engineering still photography. The technical part was most important. Then they would want some still pictures covering it, and then they would want documentary motion picture and still, because they would want to make their own documentary film of the project to keep as history of their own group for this project.

Then PAO didn't have but one photographer most all the time, and he could not be everywhere, so they would depend on us taking pictures and they would look at all of our purchase requests or ask the photographers, "What did you shoot on this project?" Then they

would want something and we would know what was interesting to them, so that sometimes we would shoot something that we thought they would want.

Now, the types of photography, and I've covered some of this, but I'll go ahead again. The high-speed photography that I've talked about and, well, the high-speed and high-altitude, jet coverage, from jet planes, for drops and testing, that was one type.

The regular aerial coverage of drops and testing landings, this picture here just shows what basically happened so much [refer to Appendix A, photo 8]. They would put any kind of a unit—most of them were like the first capsule, the Mercury one—in the back of a plane and they would drop it. They would want pictures of it coming out and they would try to get a plane to follow it down, and when things happened, when things started separating or if it never separated or if it broke or anything, the plane would try to cover that.

But then on the ground, look what we had covering on the ground [refer to Appendix A, photo 9]. You would have sometimes three to four long, long lenses. Some of them would be over here. Maybe another guy would have nothing but a documentary camera, and then all of these long lenses, high speeds and everything to cover all the things that happened as it fell all the way down and then into the water, and sometimes we'd drop it on land.

JOHNSON: And those are [motion picture] film cameras, not still cameras, right?

EDMONDS: Right. This one happened to be a manned capsule impact. That's the capsule hitting the water [refer to Appendix A, photo 10]. That's the only time we ever got an actual picture of a manned capsule hitting the water. It just slammed into the water. We also had trained some of our photographers to do underwater activities and projects where necessary.

Then we had the Earth Resources Program, which was very big requirements and it took a lot of training in the early days. As far as training is concerned—now, this is one that was on one of your questions—when we would decide to get new cameras or a new kind of program to cover, like this Earth Resources, we would do two things. One, we'd have an agent from the company to come down and talk to us and see where we were going to put it. Then he would make all the recommendations. Then after we decided that we were going to continue with the program and buy new equipment, then we would send photographers to the company and they would get short training there. Then anytime we needed more additional, we would call their representative to come down.

I want to show you, all of the cameras would be taken on most missions [refer to Appendix A, photo 4]. When the plane would leave Houston here, it would be gone sometimes anywhere from one week to two weeks and it would go anywhere in this country. We even went over in Europe and other countries. But this was a typical load to carry in the plane and install them all in the bottom [refer to Appendix A, photo 3]. Look at all of those big cameras. And talking about the big ones, here's a close up of one [refer to Appendix A, photo 5]. That was one of the main ones, so you can see it's a lot of work.

JOHNSON: Is that one of these? [pointing to photo 5]

EDMONDS: One of those, right there. It's a lot of work to load all of those; I mean to load them physically and then to load all the film. Then here's the console [refer to Appendix A, photo 2]. All of the cameras were operated from the console, right there. So you can see it was very technical and a lot of hard work. So that's the Earth Resources Program. That's a picture taken

in Washington, but look at—that's infrared film, and that was taken somewhere around Washington, D.C. I think it's an air base, Andrews Air [Force] Base [Maryland] , somewhere, maybe. Right in there [refer to Appendix A, photo 11].

JOHNSON: Yes, there's an air base, right. That's amazing.

EDMONDS: Then we have zero-G [gravity], the weightless aircraft, KC-135, and that just grew into training astronauts and testing space equipment. All new astronauts are trained—after all of the onboard equipment and everything was developed and put into big units, then they had to go up and train how to work it. Well, of course, the engineers had to get it working first, and then they'd have to go up and train the others.

Here's an idea of what that's like [refer to Appendix A, photo 31].

Now, see, this whole big unit, these are Milliken cameras [refer to Appendix A, photo 12]. This is the most widely used of all of our engineering cameras because of the size, and it had good speed. And see, this is a whole unit that was put together down on the ground and then all put in the plane, this whole unit, whatever this was. You see how complicated the photography is on it, three engineering cameras and what have you, and every time they'd go weightless, they'd run the cameras during that time. They'd turn them on just before they got weightless and leave them for thirty, thirty-five seconds.

Then here's another engineering one [refer to Appendix A, photo 13]. There's a camera in there. Now, see, back in the shop for maybe weeks, we had to help the engineer to figure out where to put it, and then he'd have to design how to hold it and all of that. See, here's one here,

and then this one's in the unit now. The photographers carried up this one and put up, but this is all in the unit that was put in. Then the control panel here, turning it on and the speed and etc.

After completing the mission, the pilot would fly one or two for all of the crew members to receive some extra training [refer to Appendix A, photo 14]. I went up a couple times.

JOHNSON: Did you?

EDMONDS: Yes. It was fun. I have a few pictures of me.

This project , Female Waste Management Studies was a little exciting for photographers [refer to Appendix A, photo 15]. However, all cameras had to be mounted and controlled remotely as each of the test subjects tested their individually designed unit to be used in flight.

Anyway, all types of photography shown in this group of odd and end pictures. We would mount four Millikens on a helicopter [refer to Appendix A, photo 16].

JOHNSON: Pointing down.

EDMONDS: Yes, to point down, when the helicopters get over top of the spacecraft, when it is in the water. Now, this was on the second helicopter. The one that was going to pick the astronaut up, we couldn't put those right there, because when he was pulled up, they'd be in his way. On the pickup one of the cameras was mounted up over top of the door, usually one Milliken and one big still camera.

It was a lot of work taking all that equipment with us and getting it all installed on the helicopter. We'd get the brackets made here and then we'd take them with us, because it would be the same kind of helicopter and we could mount our brackets on it on the ship.

Here's something, just kind of an idea what it's like chasing a launch [refer to Appendix A, photo 17]. See, we'd be heading such a way when it come up, and then as soon as it passed us, like that maybe, we would turn and get out of the way. But sometimes the pilot would get awful close. [Laughs] You'd be looking down in the camera and it looked like that thing was coming right in the camera. Then just when it would get close to us, then he'd pull away. We always hoped he would.

Next, the photographers in the room [refer to Appendix A, photo 18]. They all had desks and they worked because they had a lot of work to do, reading and studying, and then figuring out new assignments and talking to each other. You can see, with all of these new projects, how I could use more photographers. And the way we would do it, the engineers, if they were new and hadn't had much support, they would call the branch office or even the division office and say, "We're starting a new project," and then we would pass it down to the section head. But most of them would call the photographers first. They knew them all personally; they'd worked with them. They'd call the photographer, "Hey, we want to start his now and here's what we want."

Well, then they would come back to the section chief, and then he and I would have a meeting and we would assign who we wanted to do it, based on who else had already been assigned. We had a big board, with all the names and assignments, and most of the time you'd look up and everybody was already assigned. Then you'd have to pull somebody off another job, depending on which job was the most important. Of course, then the main thing was, there

was always people that were better qualified for a certain type of work than others. Then you would have to use your judgment. If this guy really had to be the one to go to that guy, you'd pull him off a job, put another one on his job.

This is a wind tunnel, and we would install cameras in a vacuum chamber or a wind tunnel. This was a vacuum chamber of some kind [refer to Appendix A, photo 20]. Then that was just a picture of me in the back of a T-38 [refer to Appendix A, photo 21], right there with—I think I was using the outfit that I rigged up and used, the still and motion picture camera [refer to Appendix A, photo 6], when the Shuttle was released the first time from the back of the carrier aircraft.

This one was when I went down in the jungle of Panama and spent three days in the jungle with this group here of astronauts training in there, and we had come out and were heading to go home [refer to Appendix A, photo 7].

Next was when NASA rented a plane to take me to Rochester [New York] to pick up all the film that Rochester [Kodak] had specifically made and packed for the Apollo 11 flight, and a Kodak man helping me to load all of the Apollo 11 film onboard, and it was really handled carefully [refer to Appendix A, photo 22].

This picture was a typical engineering setup [refer to Appendix A, photo 19]. This, a Fastex camera, was one of our most widely used high-speed, like two or three thousand frames a second. When they would have things separating or something clicking in a fraction of a second, you had to have a fast camera to catch that to show how or what had happened. See, even that's a control unit to support the cameras, power and speed and everything here.

Next, in the very early days of the Mercury program, this was the first time that an astronaut was ever put in—we called these boilerplates in the beginning—the Mercury capsule,

boilerplate [refer to Appendix A, photo 23]. This was the first time that one was ever lowered into the water and then closed the door and let him stay in it for a while and they did certain things. This was [Virgil I. "Gus"] Grissom in the capsule with his family and John [H.] Glenn watching. This was a little old boat that we spent the day on while we covered the operations.

You asked me about the TV being fuzzy or out of focus on the Moon. Well, that's just one of those experimental things. It was the first time, and I had no idea what caused it or whether it was something wrong with the camera or whether it was the atmosphere, or lack of it, or what caused it, but anyway, it was just something somebody added to cover more of the landing. I'm sure it was operated remotely.

Next, that's just a typical documentary coverage of ejection training [refer to Appendix A, photo 25].

This is one of me in my office here at the Johnson Space Center [refer to Appendix A, photo 32].

Then we had the other thing that I never mentioned. In the studio, we had a huge copy camera, and that was one of the busiest cameras, because everybody would come in with blueprints and just hundreds of things, all day, "Hey, I need a copy of this." Then we had a studio, where we took portraits. And then we had a Polaroid camera set up, where people would run in, "I need a picture of this right away." So we'd have one guy to stay in there all day and work those three cameras, if he could. So you can see again how I had a big requirement for photographers.

I haven't even mentioned travel. They started wanting us to go to different places, like McDonnell [Aircraft Corporation] and other aircraft factories and places that had a contract with NASA, and if they were doing a certain project, they would want us to go there and shoot our

own because they wouldn't trust them to shoot what they particularly required of the project or program.

[Edmonds answers a list of questions that were sent to him prior to the interview.]

[Question 1: Did JSC have the responsibility of photographing and/or filming the early Mercury and Gemini launches or were those assignments handled out of Cape Canaveral/Kennedy Space Center? If JSC photographers were involved, please share with us the logistics of coordinating that effort.] We covered only one early mission at the Cape [Canaveral, Florida]. As mentioned earlier, we covered only the MR-2 chimpanzee Ham mission, as requested.

[Question 2: During your career with NASA, were you and your photographers allowed to use your own discretion and/or judgment when choosing subjects for your photographs?] Now, I think I've covered that, but that was where I said our responsibility was only to answer requests, and very seldom, with just a few exceptions, did we decide to take any pictures ourselves unless we knew it was important and that no one had time to request coverage.

[Question 3: What type of technical training did you and your staff receive in order to photograph technical engineering or scientific testing?] I start out with "none." We would set up all of this equipment in the engineering work areas and make test runs to determine all camera settings. I've covered most of that. I guess you'd say three things. Either the representative would come here and train our people, or we'd send one there. And the other would be, which was mostly our own people would train our new photographers. This is where most of training took place.

[*Question 4: Cameras were included on the unmanned Apollo flights. How did the decision to include them come about?*]. The best way I can say is, starting out with Mercury [Program], cameras were not a high requirement. Naturally everyone wanted to see something from the mission as much as possible. Small mounted cameras were used whenever space was available.

Then in Gemini [Program], they started thinking about installing, and they called us and we went over and we discussed, because in those days, back at [NASA] Langley [Research Center, Hampton, Virginia], in-flight photography wasn't a big thing since they were so wrapped up with getting the spacecraft to work, that I think they mounted a camera whenever and wherever they could. They did send handheld cameras more often for whatever they may get. Anything was great.

But by that time, what happened was that the engineers were responsible—and all equipment inside a spacecraft was all handled mostly by the engineers that were in charge of the spacecraft. They could not afford to call us and tell us, “Okay, we're ready to pack the spacecraft. Bring us some certain kind of cameras and film.” They wanted that camera, from the day it left the company, they wanted that camera marked and not touched by anybody to do anything with it other than in that spacecraft. They would take some pictures to see that it was working.

In the early days, they would call us and we'd go over and we would work with them. They would want to know, “Well, now, what's the best angle? What's the best kind of film? What's this?” And the lighting, and we would help to work out the exposures, and we would put the camera in, take pictures with them and work out the exposures, based on what conditions they would say. Then sometimes they would have to tell the astronaut to change the f-stop or

something up there, knowing that a condition will be dark or light. Remember, no one really knew all of the answers—this was developing and experimenting.

The engineers were getting smart by this time. Then if one of them would find out some new camera that was in existence and then they would run to the factory. What I'm trying to say is, as time went on, they needed us less and less. Later [John R.] Brinkmann moved Tom [F.] Brahm up in his support service group and they would call him to come over as a consultant when needed. Brinkmann took him away from me so I wouldn't tie him up on a job when they needed him.

He'd go over and work with them when preparing for a mission. Then he would load the magazines, like the Hasselblad camera and maybe he'd load ten magazines and then another camera, and he would just work with them totally. Then he'd help them to set the f-stops and do things like that. That was where it boiled down to. And from then on, that was about all the support that we give them. Then when we'd get the film back, he'd download them and write up the purchase requests and bring them over to the lab. When I'd bring the flight containers back, they would call him and then they would unpack the stuff and hand the blood to somebody and urine to somebody and then hand him the film. So that was about all the support that we did after we got down to the Apollo.

[Question 5: Describe your reaction, and the reaction of your staff, when you first saw those hazy television images from the Moon and the photos that came back from the Apollo 11 mission.] The hazy television thing. I mentioned that and as I said, I'm not familiar with it.

[Question 6: What was the reaction to the television camera failure during Apollo 12?] I don't know anything about TV camera failure on Apollo 12.

[*Question 7: What was your role, if any, in preparing the Apollo Photographic Instrumentation packages included on Apollo 15-17?*] Same thing as in [question] four. I have told all about Brahm and his support to them.

[*Question 8: During the Skylab project, were radiation and its affect on film a concern? If so, how was that handled on these long-duration flights?*] Also, I don't think—I didn't know that they suffered much from radiation on Skylab Project. Maybe they did, but I don't know. I'm not familiar with that.

[*Question 9: Following the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project, photographs were exchanged between the US and the Soviet Union. How did Soviet Space Photography compare to NASA Space Photography? Was there any hesitance in sharing these photos, both from the US and the USSR?*] I know nothing about that. All of that was handled over with the mission engineers. They didn't figure there was any need for my branch to know anything about that. They didn't tell us.

[*Question 10: How did the changes in photographic technology over the years affect your job?*] Okay. There was no great advancement in technology, except in size and weight and things like that. However, that did provide help to us when a good camera that we liked was made smaller and would do the same thing with less size and weight. Now, all of that type of development was great, also the development of better quality and higher speed film

Now, film. Eastman kept us in touch with any development they made or anything that they thought that they could do and wanted to know if it would help us, things like this. Increasing the speed of film for us, and different types, infrared and the color film increasing—remember when color film first came out, it was so slow that, gosh, I forget what the speed of it was, but it was slow, but then they slowly increased the speed. When you go buy some now,

[ASA (American Standards Association)] 100, 200, and 400, and see, the faster it gets, the better it is under a lot of conditions. But when they first came out with the speed, the more they would speed it, the more resolution they would lose. It would get grainy. And if it was something important that you wanted top quality, you'd have to go back to the slower film, because the faster it goes, the more grainy. But now, today, the 400 gives you good pictures. So that's the kind of technology.

[Question 11: How much input did the photography division have into mission planning, engineering considerations, etc?] I've already done that one.

[Question 12: What do you consider the most challenging event or time period in your career working with the space program?] I had to decide on the Mercury Program, and as I said here, just being a part of providing photographic coverage throughout the program, helping to develop high-speed jet coverage from high altitudes for launches and all kinds of testing. There was just dozens of test drops long before the man ever flew, because they had to develop all of those things that would happen when the separation from the rocket—and then the parachute coming out and how long it took him to land and how it landed and all of those things that happen, so that's why when I say that we didn't cover any manned flight launches, we covered most of the equipment development and pre-testing.

Astronaut training, that was something big that I had a big hand in photographing and I enjoyed so much working with, both here and on travel places, like the jungles and mountains. The new types of helicopter coverage, mounted and handheld, and having the responsibility of working out a plan, with the Navy, for providing coverage of all recovery operations on the carrier and in helicopters.

So that was about what I considered as my most challenging and enjoyable time that I was with NASA, because it was all new and everybody was so dedicated and worked so hard. I ought not to use this word, but we didn't have contractors much in those early days. All of the people were so loyal and dedicated and they worked so hard. We didn't worry about overtime. We'd work twelve hours a day without putting in any overtime, a lot of times.

Things like travel, all of my twenty-nine trips to Los Angeles [California], I think about all but half of them, I'd catch the midnight—I forget what they called it—the midnight plane out of Los Angeles, get in here at six in the morning, and come from the airport to work. That didn't work with contractors. [Laughs]

[*Question 13: What do you consider your most significant accomplishment?*] Two or three things here. ...Getting a job with NASA at such a crucial time and just after the Space Task Group was formed. Being promoted to Photography Branch Chief, and moving to the Manned Spacecraft Center, all in three years. I thought that was a good accomplishment.

[*Question 14: Do you have a favorite NASA photo – either taken by you or someone else?*] There were so many outstanding and beautiful pictures taken in training, at launches, in space, on the Moon, and landing, that I could not possible select a favorite. But I do have four or five, and I showed you this one taken of the Surveyor [probe] that had been on the Moon about two years before this picture was taken, and nothing had touched or changed the surface since the time that it landed there [refer to Appendix A, photo 27].

Then, of course, the one where I brought the Moon rocks back to Houston, with all of the VIPs excited over—they all wanted to get their hands on the container and they almost let it slip [refer to Appendix A, photo 28]. I quickly bent over to try and catch it.

The next one was of the Earth [refer to Appendix A, photo 29] taken from the Moon. And I think that's fantastic and beautiful.

Then this one, I always felt so sorry for him [refer to Appendix A, photo 30]. [Laughs] He said he sure did hope that spacecraft wasn't going to speed away from him [referring to Extravehicular Activity of Bruce McCandless during STS-41B using the Manned Maneuvering Unit and flying free of the Shuttle for the first time]. Now, that's what you call lonely. [Laughs]

Then last but not least, Astronaut Edwin E. Aldrin, Jr. descends the steps to walk on the Moon [refer to Appendix A, photo 24]. It just seems like the climax to everything we had all been working for for many years.

JOHNSON: That's true.

EDMONDS: So anyway, I just thought they were pictures that I've always liked so much.

JOHNSON: I have a couple of quick questions that I just wanted to ask you. Are you still talking photos today?

EDMONDS: Only with my point-and-shoot. [Laughs]

JOHNSON: I was going to ask you what type of camera are you using?

EDMONDS: I have a nice Nikon, but you have to do some figuring when you use it, because it's not totally automatic, and you have to get your f-stop and your speed. I used it for a long time,

and after I got a point-and-shoot, and the quality of that little thing is so good, that years went by and the Nikon's just been sitting there and sitting there. Now, I will take it out when I want to take something special like indirect lighting, that gives you the best picture. If I was taking a picture of you, the best picture I could take would be point the light to the ceiling and then that gives good, or better, face quality. The light all spreads and it doesn't burn up any one point or nothing. So sometimes when I want to take a good picture, I will get the Nikon out, but I've gotten spoiled.

Now, after I retired, I did try to take pictures, pretty scenery pictures. Now when I go traveling, and we've been to Europe several times since I retired, I take both my camcorder and my still point and shoot camera, and I do take good travel pictures, but that's about it.

JOHNSON: Have you gotten interested in digital at all or that technology?

EDMONDS: No. I had to make a big decision on it and I said no. I may change my mind, but I don't think so, because I don't really have enough reason to do it. I don't have enough pictures to take. I have nobody but my wife and I. Well, I have my little grandson and I just take still pictures of his birthday and Christmas and stuff like that. But I don't have enough reason for digital. I really don't take enough pictures to justify getting one.

JOHNSON: I read in your memoirs that you took the first official portraits of the first seven astronauts.

EDMONDS: No.

JOHNSON: I thought that's what it said.

EDMONDS: I'm sorry, but we're both right. I forgot about assisting the early Public Affairs Office [PAO] photographer at Langley to take the first individual portraits of the first seven astronauts. I was thinking of the first formal group portrait taken in our new studio of the seven.

That one was taken by John [W.] Holland, the chief of the Processing Laboratory Branch. This gives me the opportunity to discuss some events that I had planned to cover in the beginning but overlooked. Holland ran a private portrait studio on the side in Virginia like I did.

When Brinkmann told me he decided that he would take the job with the STG and he would be division chief, he said, "Okay, now," and he drew up this diagram and said, "I want two branches and I've got so much to do, I'm going to make you the Branch Chief of Photography. Then we will talk to all the guys and see if we can find one that is interested in taking the Lab Branch Chief."

Well, Bob McGee volunteered, so he and I worked together for a while. One day, McGee came to me—his wife got some bad information, like my wife, about Houston. [Laughs] He said she would absolutely not go. My wife was told that they didn't have any trees in Houston, that this was all desert out here, that Texas was nothing. I don't know who told her that, but after she found out that I wanted to go, she started asking many more questions.

Later McGee came to me and said, "I've got to give up. I can't do it."

Well, Brinkmann walked in the office and I told him, and he said, "Oh, my god. I have an afternoon plane to catch to Houston. "You've just got to find me a Lab Branch Chief."

I went and talked to Holland, and he didn't want to go, but he said, "I won't say no, but I will not consider the job unless I can get a raise." He said, "I'm five years overdue a raise here with the Navy." He had a government job with the Navy. He said, "If I can get a raise, then I'll seriously consider the job."

I told Brinkmann, and he said, "Okay. I'll try."

I had gotten my first raise, and Holland I were both GS [General Schedule] 9s.

Brinkmann said, "Remember, if I can get him a raise, GS 11, you've got to realize that he's going to be higher than you."

I said, "That's okay. Go ahead," and, sure enough, he went to Personnel and he got him a GS 11. In those days you'd go every two with each raise. You'd go 7, 9, and 11. That's the way you got raises. I don't know why. Anyway, he got the 11, and he took the job and that's how he got it.

Now, let's see. I want to ask you one.

JOHNSON: Okay. Before we start that, I was just going to see if Jennifer had anything she wanted to ask you before ended the interview.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I just had a question. You mentioned your wife was a little uneasy about moving to Houston because there were no trees here.

EDMONDS: She really was. She was a little shy in those days and she was just scared of the thought of coming down here to a strange place and everything. Go ahead. I'm sorry.

ROSS-NAZZAL: No, that's fine. Where did you end up settling? Where did you end up buying a house?

EDMONDS: How did I end up in LaPorte [Texas]? The first time, I came by myself and rented a car, I went to LaPorte. Somebody must have told me. Boy, that old road from the airport out to LaPorte, a little old small, two-lane, winding thing, bumpy. God, I can't believe it. They told me of this new section called Fairmont Park, and that's where I went. I looked around. So many of the others had come down to Timber Cove and all of those areas around here, and for some reason, I just didn't want to get in those sections or that close. Another thing was, I knew that I didn't have enough money, I mean, a high enough salary to buy a house in the area, because I didn't have any money of my own. I was just a [GS] 9, and I knew I'd have to buy things for any house, so I didn't think I could afford it.

Then I came about at least three or four or more times by myself before she ever came, and I was convinced that it was a nice area. Fairmont Park and the section that we have been in for in forty-two years has not deteriorated in any way. It seems just as good as it was the day it was done, maybe better with all of the flowers and trees.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's great.

EDMONDS: When she came down, the day we drove up with the kids, no grass had been planted, it was just all sand, and it was 103 or [10]4 degrees for several days. And in about four or five days, I was sent to Bermuda for a week or so. Now, that didn't set too well with her, because

with two little kids she didn't know anyone, and the new house, and I had gone to Bermuda for a week.

I came back, and in about two weeks, I went to somewhere else out of the country. And that went on and on. I had kind of a record of how many days, like 130-some days I was gone the first year that we were here, and that didn't set well with her at all. [Laughs] She changed considerably after a while and then she learned to love it, and we have been very happy here and do not plan to leave.

JOHNSON: When you first moved there, were there other NASA people living there?

EDMONDS: Yes, yes. Well, many NASA people moved in there, probably a couple of dozen or more families, and we've become close with many of them. Quite a few moved, but some stayed here in Fairmont Park.

JOHNSON: So there are still several NASA families that are still living in that area.

EDMONDS: Yes there are. I will say most of them moved, because they got big raises and they moved down in the big expensive areas. I never did really want to move out of the area. I was happy. I'm still in the same house. Very happy. Still in good shape.

JOHNSON: That's wonderful.

EDMONDS: Yes, still in great shape and still happy.

JOHNSON: Is there anything else, Jennifer?

ROSS-NAZZAL: No.

JOHNSON: I want to thank you for letting us record again today and coming back to see us.

[End of interview]

NASA JOHNSON SPACE CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
APPENDIX A – PHOTOS

EUGENE G. EDMONDS



Photo 1

Astronaut Scott Carpenter and helicopter pilot Lt. Wonderjim



Photo 2
Earth Resources aircraft camera control panel



Photo 3
Earth Resources support aircraft



Photo 4
Camera equipment used on the Earth Resources aircraft



Photo 5
Wild Heerbrugg Camera with magazine installed



Photo 6

Edmonds holding motion picture and still camera unit used in T-38 aircraft and on the ground



Photo 7
Astronauts leaving the Panama jungle



Photo 8
Boilerplate drop test



Photo 9
High speed, long lens coverage of drop test

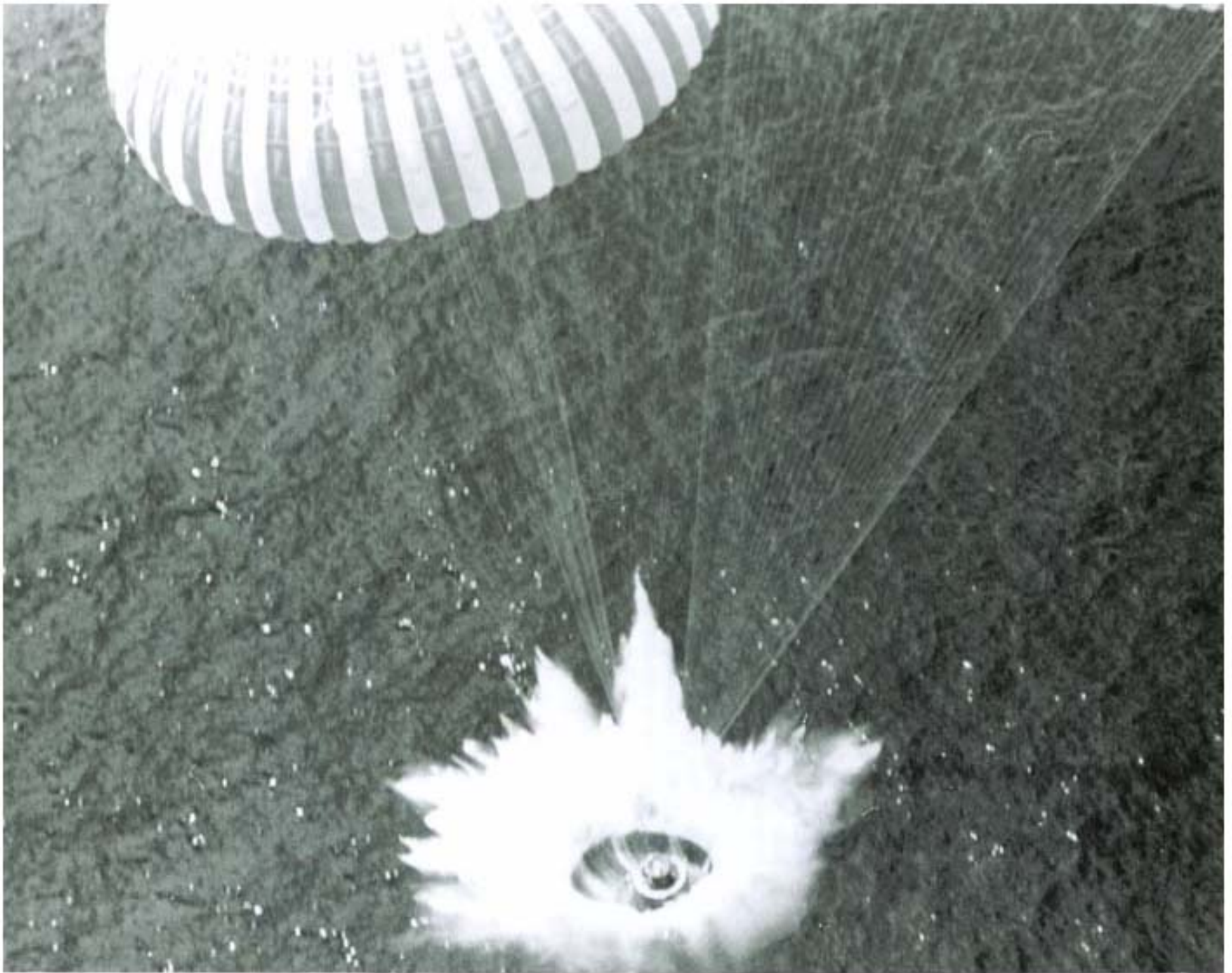


Photo 10
Manned spacecraft touchdown

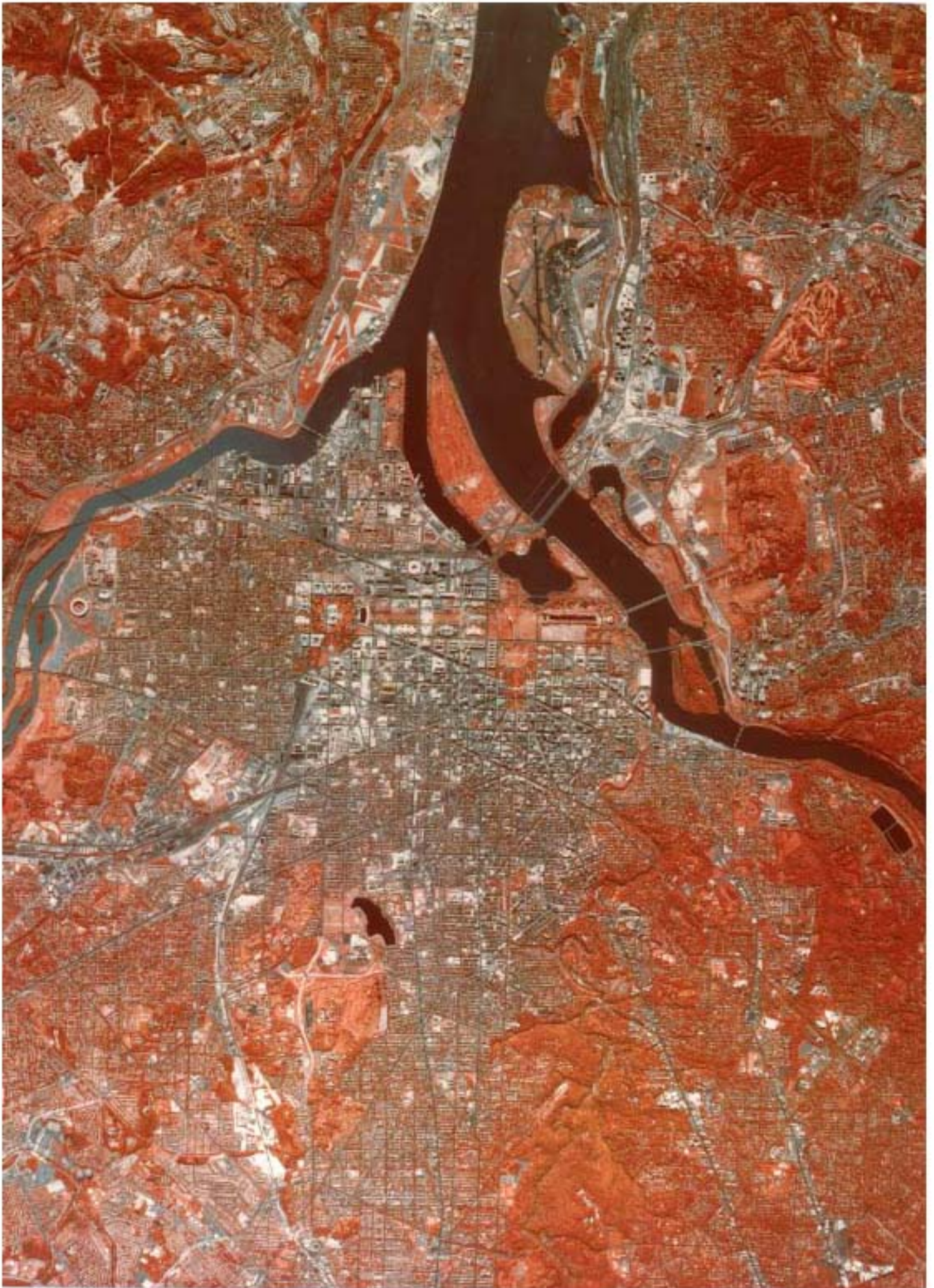


Photo 11
Infra-red aerial photograph in the Washington D.C. area

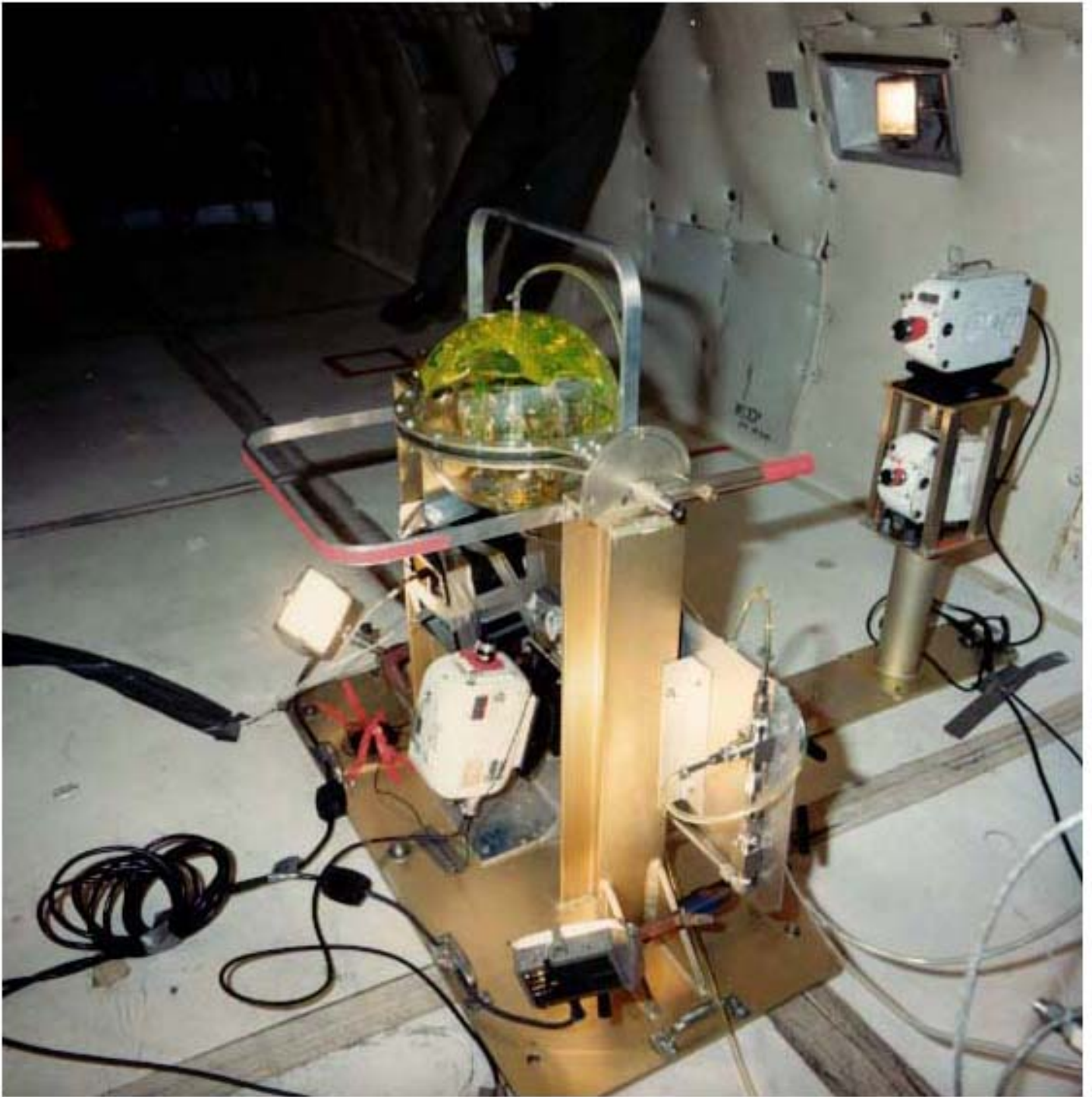


Photo 12
Zero G test project unit installed in aircraft

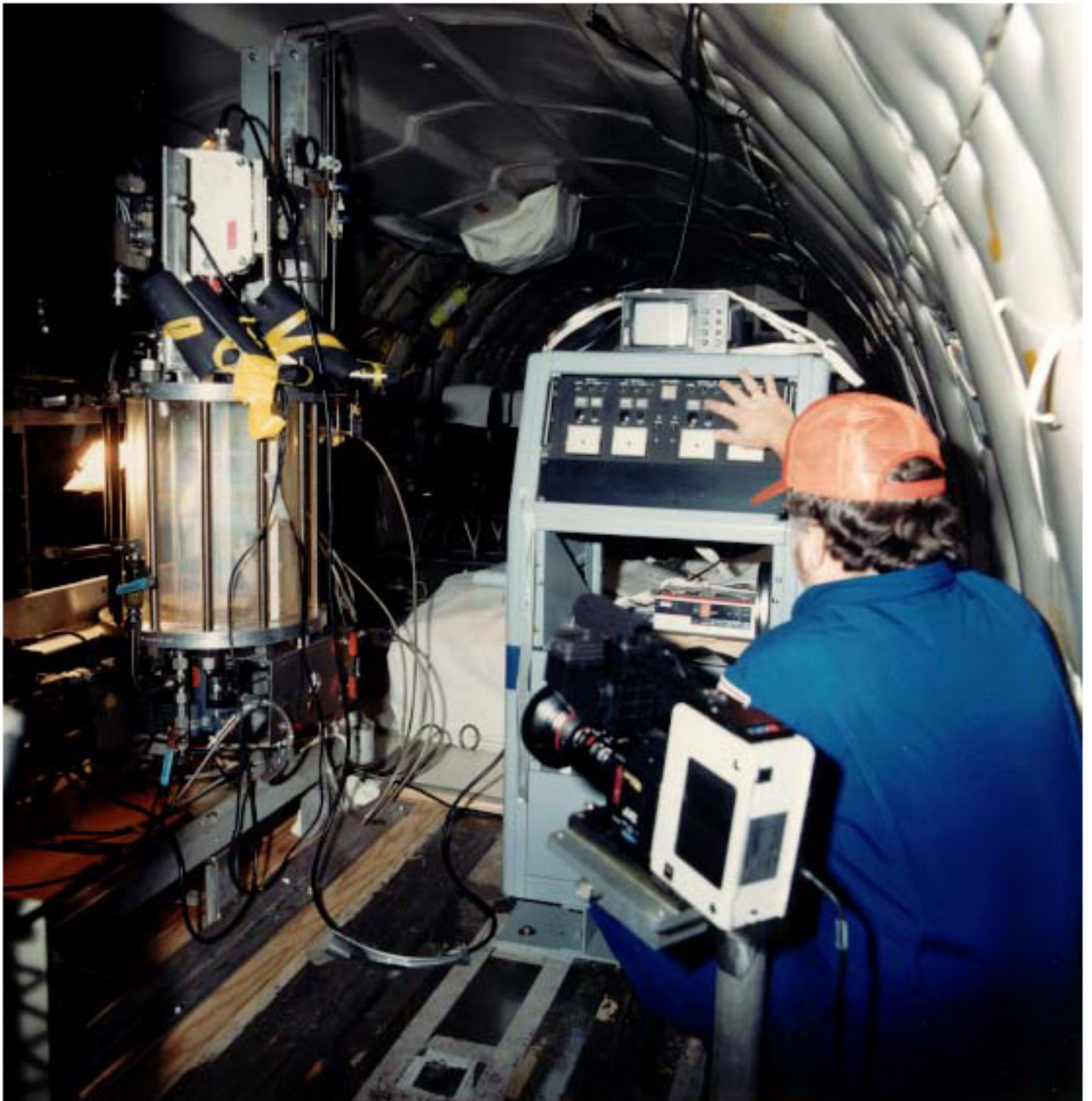


Photo 13
Camera installed in zero G test unit



Photo 14
Zero G crew training

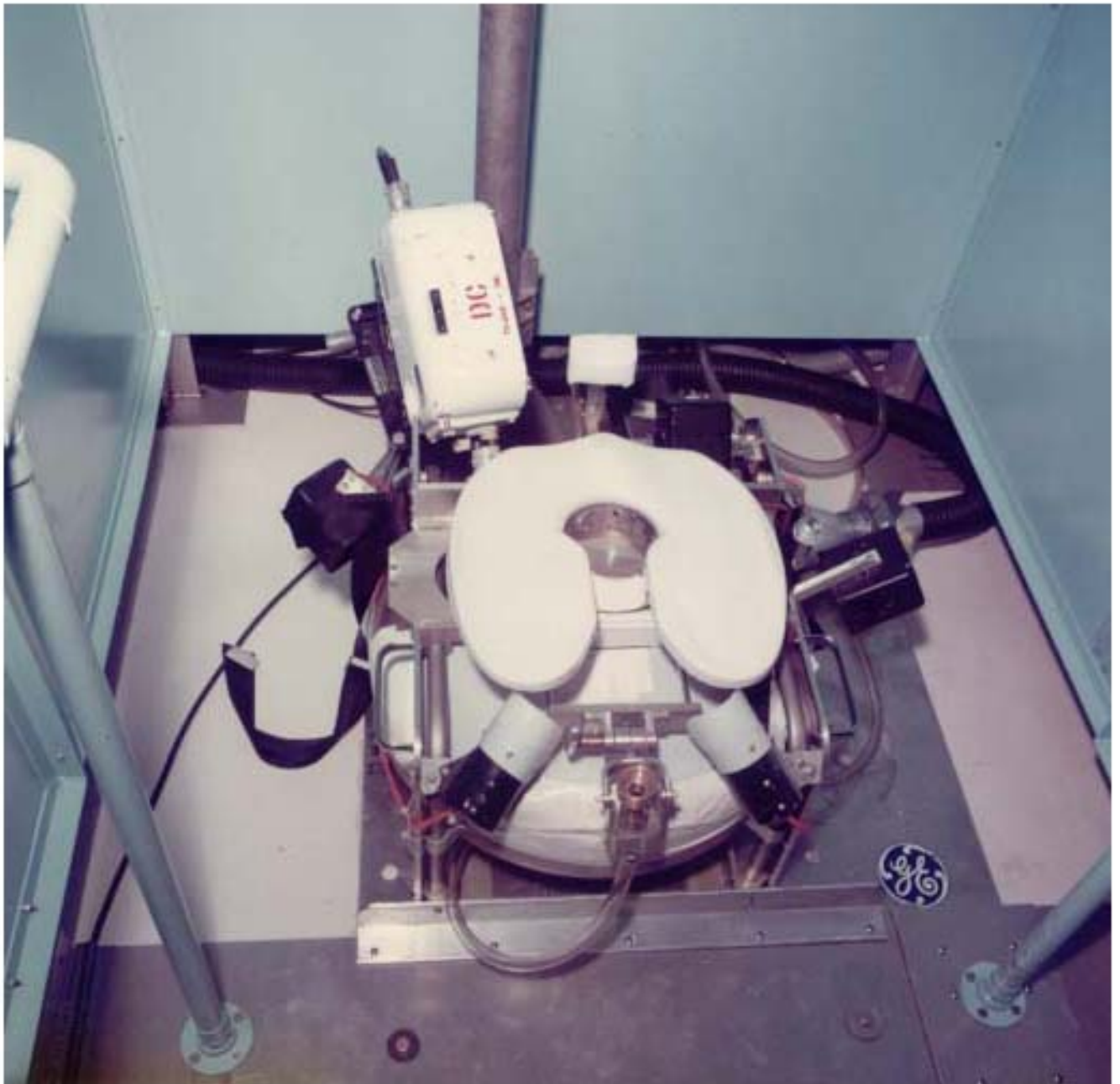


Photo 15
Female waste management studies



Photo 16
Mounted cameras on one of the pickup helicopters



Photo 17
Photographing a rocket launch



Photo 18
Photographers preparing work assignments

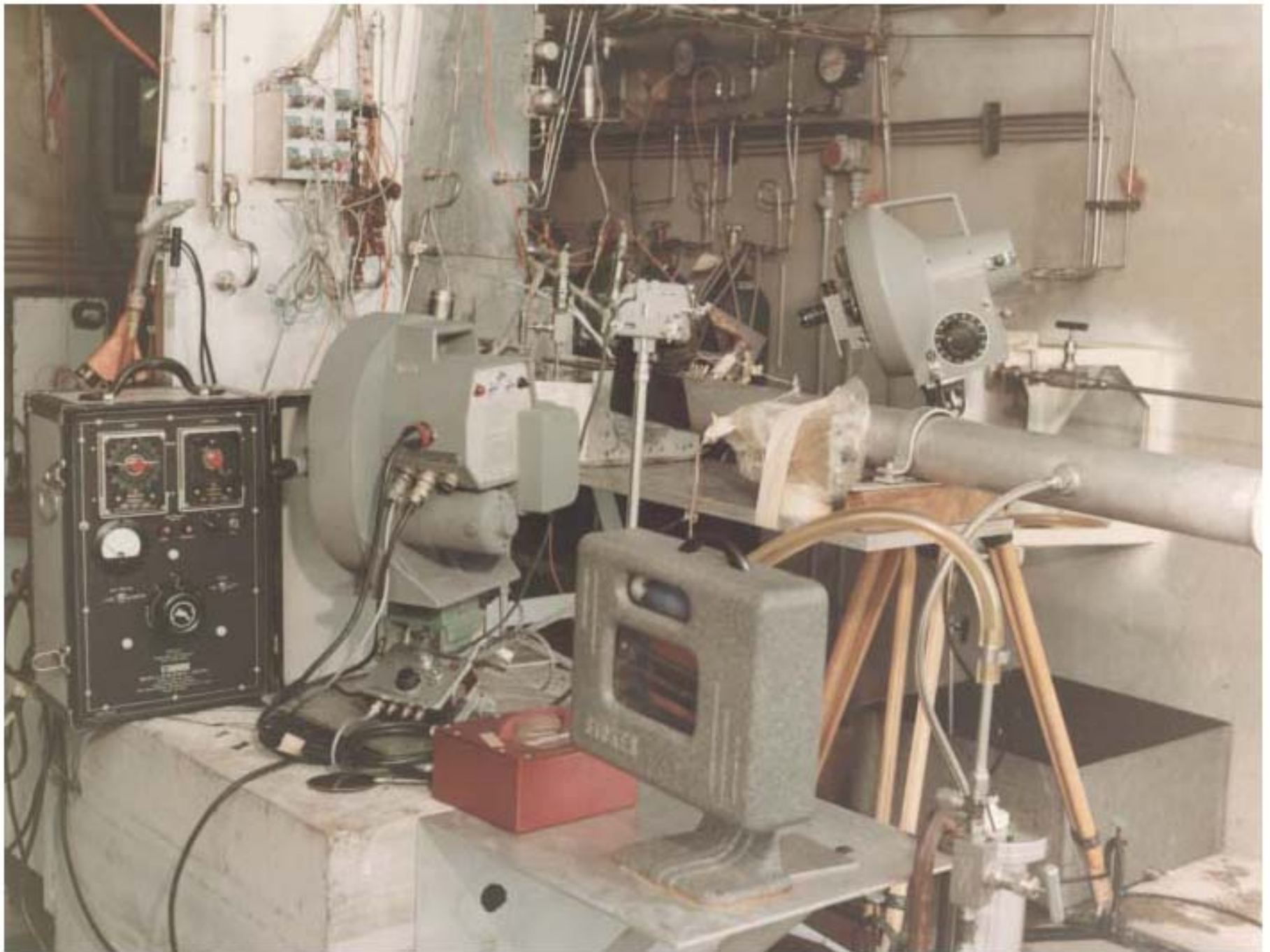
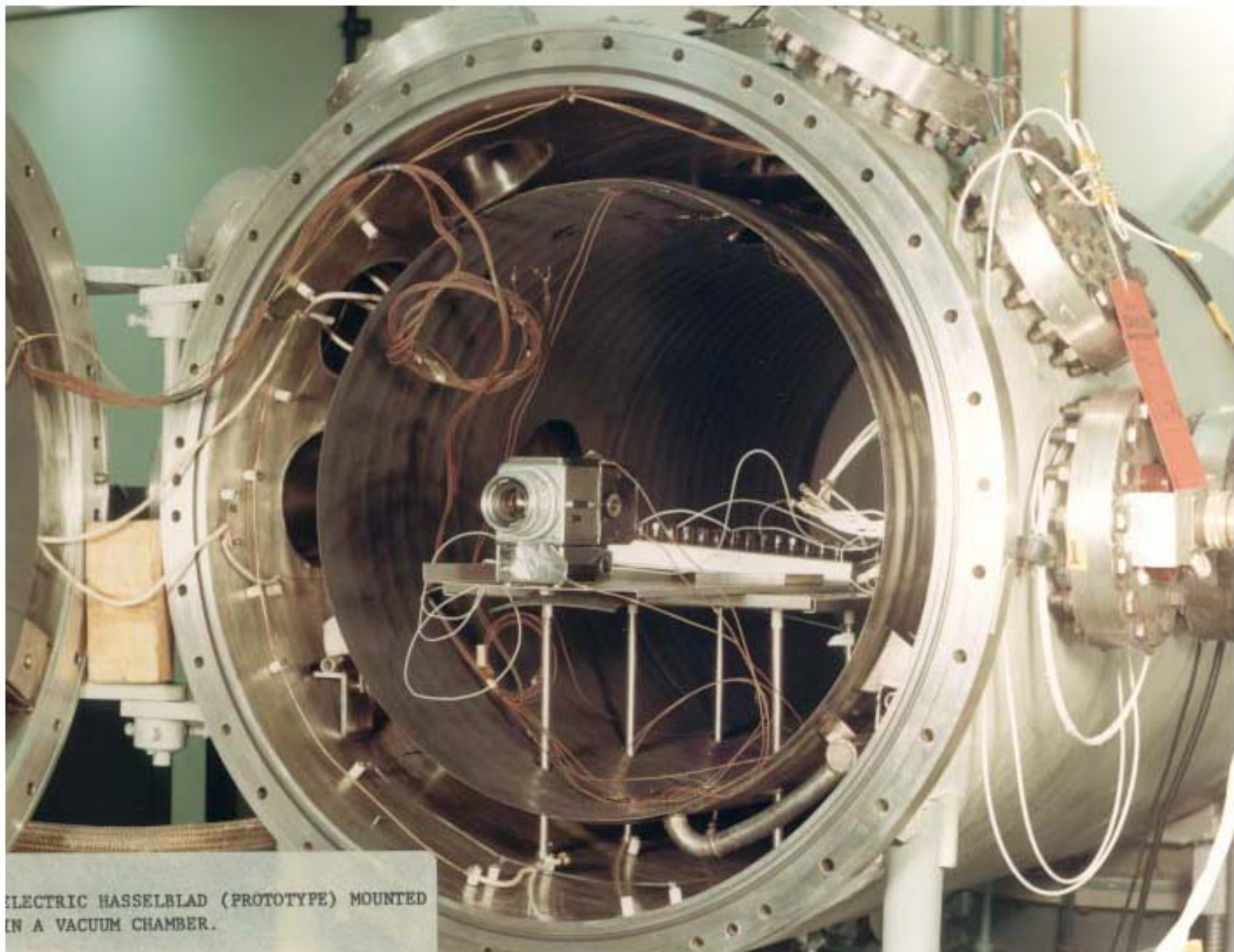


Photo 19
High Speed Fastex camera and control units



ELECTRIC HASSELBLAD (PROTOTYPE) MOUNTED
IN A VACUUM CHAMBER.

Photo 20
Electric Hasselblad (Prototype) mounted in a vacuum chamber



Photo 21
Photographer in back seat of T-38



Photo 22

Film for Apollo 11 mission being picked up at Eastman Kodak in Rochester, NY
(Edmonds facing camera)

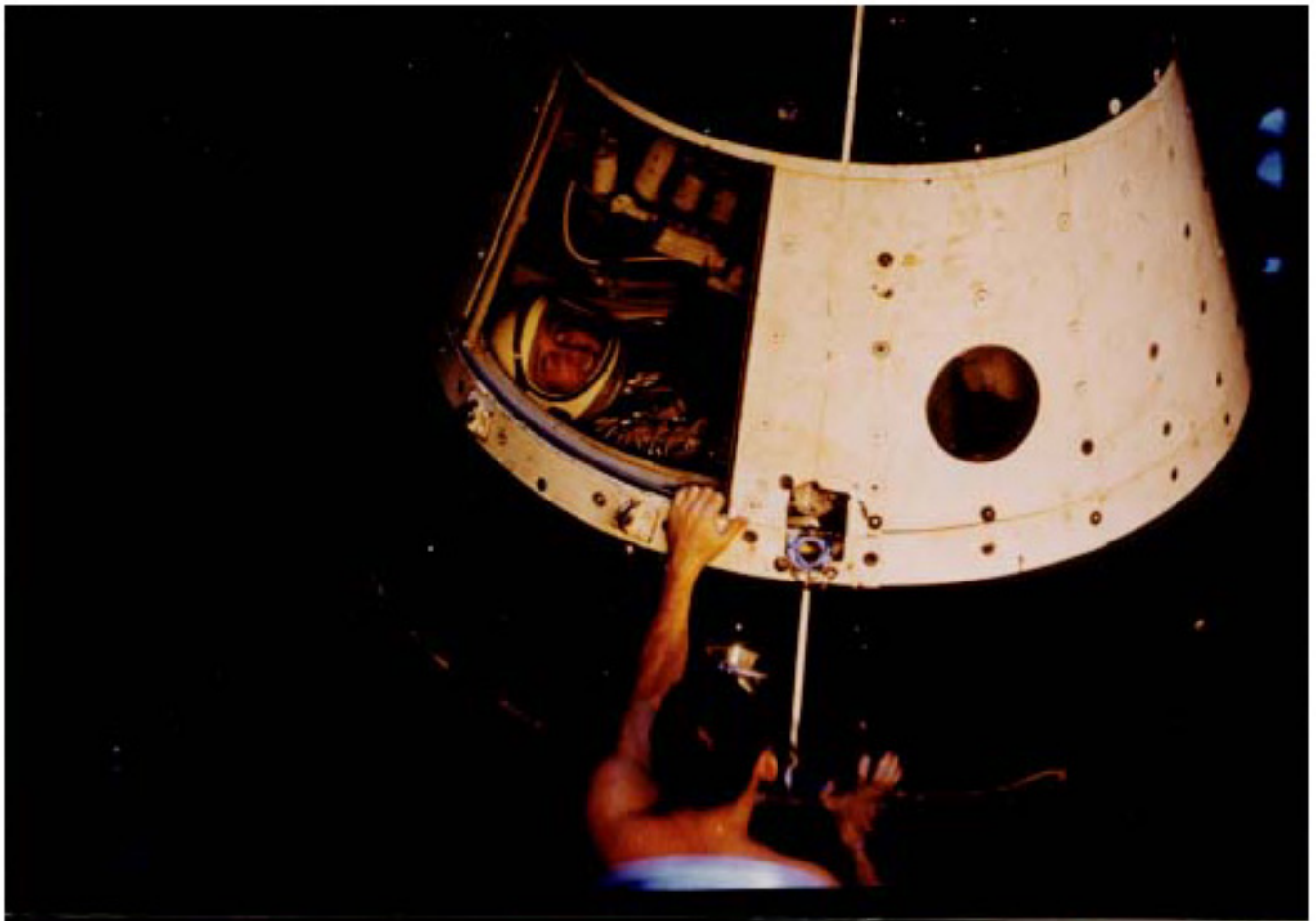


Photo 23

(Top) Virgil I. "Gus" Grissom in Mercury boilerplate capsule
(Bottom) Grissom's family and John Glenn



Photo 24
Astronaut stepping onto the surface of the Moon



Photo 25
Astronaut ejection seat training



Photo 26

Removing Apollo 11 mission flight items from the Lunar Receiving Lab
(Edmonds with items in his hands)

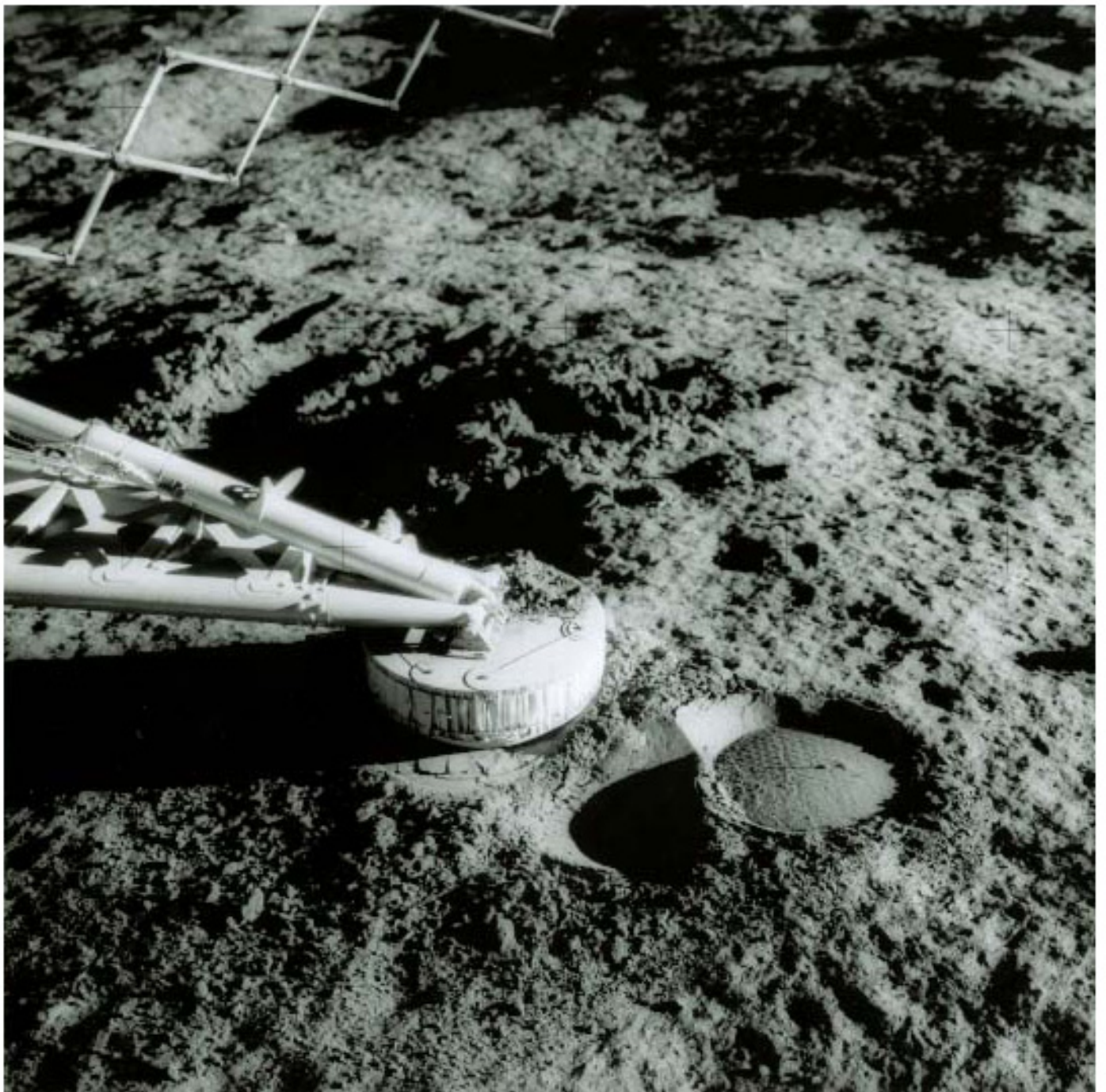


Photo 27
Surveyor Probe on the surface of the Moon



Photo 28

Apollo 11 Moon rocks returned to Houston (Edmonds in blue jacket)



Photo 29

Photo of the Earth taken from the Moon

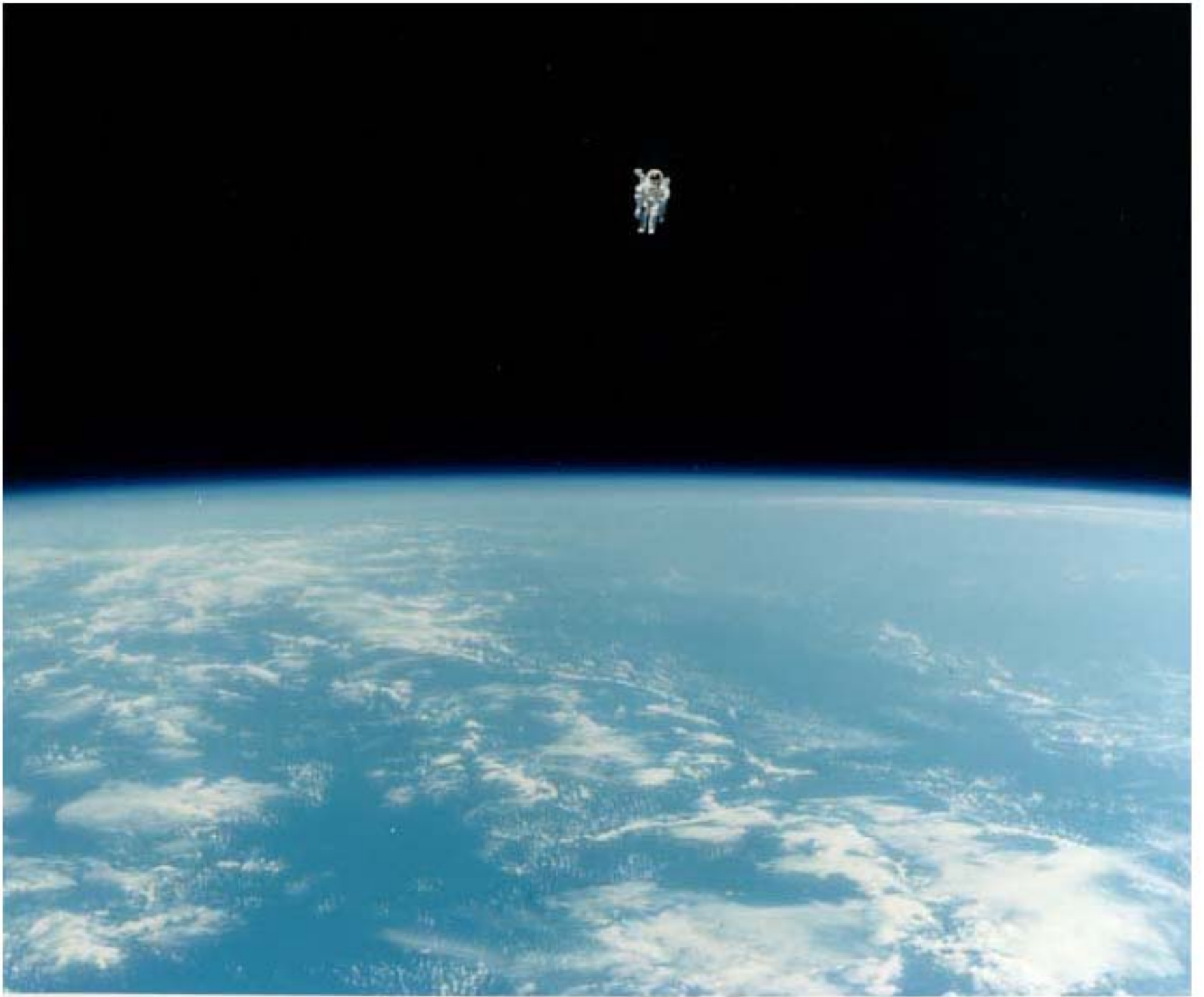


Photo 30

Astronaut Bruce McCandless during spacewalk



Photo 31

The zero G Program support aircraft - KC 135



Photo 32

Photographic Branch Chief - Eugene Edmonds

NASA JOHNSON SPACE CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
APPENDIX B

EUGENE G. EDMONDS
Memoirs