Collection #
P0196
DVD0003

# GUS GRISSOM COLLECTION, 1960–1967, N.D.

Collection Information

Biographical Sketch

Scope and Content Note

Series Contents

Cataloging Information

Processed by

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Indiana Historical Society
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Indianapolis, IN 46202-3269

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## COLLECTION INFORMATION

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| VOLUME OF COLLECTION: | 1 box of photographs, 2 boxes of 4x5 color acetate negatives, 1 DVD stored with the photographs |
| COLLECTION DATES: | 1960–1967, n.d. |
| PROVENANCE: | Carl H. Armstrong, Indianapolis |
| RESTRICTIONS: | Negatives may be viewed with the assistance of Library staff. |

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RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 0000.0446

NOTES:

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Virgil "Gus" Grissom was born on 3 April 1926, in Mitchell, Indiana. He was the son of Dennis and Cecile Grissom. Dennis Grissom worked for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and the family, Gus, his two brothers Norman and Lowell, and his sister Wilma lived comfortably in a white frame house.

As a boy, Gus was active in Boy Scouts, delivered newspapers, and in the summer picked peaches and cherries from area orchards. Gus was not considered to be a "whiz" in school; he excelled in mathematics but in other subjects was considered "average". His high school principal said that Gus was an average solid citizen who studied just about enough to get a diploma. While in high school, Gus met Betty Moore and in July of 1945, Gus and Betty were married.

Gus attended Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana where he graduated in 1950 with a B.S. in mechanical engineering. After college, Gus enlisted in the Air Force with the intent to become a test pilot. He finished Air Cadet training and earned his wings.

Grissom was sent to Korea to complete 100 combat missions with the 334$^{th}$ Fighter-Interceptor Squadron. He earned an Air Medal with cluster and the Distinguished Flying Cross for his Korean service. Next, Grissom served as a flight attendant and received his test pilot credentials in 1957. He returned to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, to specialize in the testing of new jet fighters. At this point in time, Grissom received a "Top Secret" message to come to Washington, D. C. He was one out of a 100 military test pilots chosen to learn more about the space program and Project Mercury.

Eventually, Grissom was selected to be one of the final seven Mercury test pilots. Grissom was selected to be on the second American flight into space. He named his spacecraft the Liberty Bell 7. On 21 July 1961, the Liberty Bell 7 was launched into space. Fifteen minutes in space elapsed before the Liberty Bell 7 returned to Earth and splashed down into the Atlantic Ocean. After landing, the hatch door flew off and water flooded the cabin of the spacecraft. Gus was rescued but the capsule was too heavy to be transported by helicopter and was allowed to sink to the bottom of the ocean. Following this flight, Gus was presented with NASA's Distinguished Service Medal.

NASA began making preparations for another space program called Gemini. Grissom was chosen to be the command pilot on the first manned Gemini flight. John W. Young would be the pilot. The name Molly Brown was given by Gus to his new space capsule after the Broadway musical "The Unsinkable Molly Brown". On 23 March 1965, the Molly Brown was successfully launched into space with Grissom and Young at the controls. The purpose of this flight was to test all major operating systems, to see if controlled maneuvering of spacecraft was possible, and to test packaged space food. The Molly Brown performed well and splashed down at 2:15 p.m. after flying 80,000 miles and completing three successful orbits around the Earth. Grissom received his second NASA Distinguished Service Medal and was also the first person to fly into space twice.

Grissom's next assignment was as commander of the first Apollo Earth-orbit mission. The mission originally set for October of 1966, was then delayed until January 1967. On 27 January 1967, a flash fire in the spacecraft during a launch pad test at Kennedy Space Center, Florida, took the life of Gus Grissom along with fellow astronauts Edward White and Roger Chaffee. Gus was survived by his wife Betty and his two sons Scott and Mark. All of the hard work and effort by Gus was not in vain as evidenced by the later successes of the Apollo program. Gus Grissom was posthumously awarded the Congressional Space Medal of Honor. Currently, visitors to Spring Mill State Park near Mitchell, Indiana, can view the memorial dedicated to the life of Virgil "Gus" Grissom.

Sources:

Material in the collection.

Boomhower, Ray E. *Gus Grissom: The Lost Astronaut*. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, Indianapolis, 2004. General Collection: TL789.85.G7 B66 2004

"National Aeronautics and Space Administration." http://www.nasa.gov/

"The Apollo 1 Tragedy." http://nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov/planetary/lunar/apollo1info.html

"Virgil I. Grissom (Lieutenant Colonel, USAF)." http://www.jsc.nasa.gov/Bios/htm/bios/grissom-vi.html

"Virgil Ivan "Gus" Grissom." http://history.nasa.gov/40thmerc7/grissom.htm

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Series 1: NASA Photographs, Black and white photographs of Grissom and other astronauts from 1960 to 1967. Photographs were numbered on verso with descriptions supplied by NASA.

Series 2: NASA Color Transparencies, views of Grissom and other astronauts in space programs from 1960 to 1967. Documentation found with some of the transparencies is stored with the photographs. Most of the negatives were numbered with NASA numbers.

Series 3: NASA Film Clips, n.d. Three short film clips about Gemini Space Flights, Mariner IV, and the X-15 tests. The Gemini clip features Grissom.

Transparencies are negatives but with positive images. The negatives in the collection without NASA numbers are at the end of Series 2. They were numbered by the processor and are in square brackets.

## SERIES CONTENTS

## Series 1: NASA Photographs, 1960–1967

| CONTENTS | CONTAINER |
|---|---|
| L. Gordon Cooper, Jr., 1960<br>[Cooper trying on his space suit] | Photographs:<br>Box 1, Folder 1 |
| Project Mercury, July 1961<br>[Grissom suited and entering capsule Liberty Bell 7, for simulation and test flight. MR-4 is Mercury's second US manned sub-orbital flight. Photos show capsule sinking minutes after Grissom was recovered. also shown are John Glenn and Walter Schirra]<br>21 b&w photos | Photographs:<br>Box 1, Folder 2 |
| Mercury Flight MA-9, May 1963<br>[Astronaut Gordon Cooper, jr. checking out then entering Mercury Spacecraft No. 20, later named "Faith 7" USS Kearsarge spells out "Faith 7" on the day of the successful 22 orbit flight]<br>11 b&w photos, some duplicates | Photographs:<br>Box 1, Folder 3 |
| Gemini Flight GT-3, 1964<br>[Grissom and John Young selected as primary astronauts for the first manned Gemini flight, shown in spacesuits and being briefed at McDonnell Aircraft Plant, St. Louis, Missouri]<br>9 b&w photos | Photographs:<br>Box 1, Folder 4 |
| Gemini Flight GT-3, 1965<br>[Grissom and Young pilots for the GT-3 Mission Walter M. Schirra and Thomas Stafford, back-up pilots are in some frames. Photos show Titan II booster, pick up, and recovery by the ship USS Intrepid, families, and staff physicians, receptions with President Johnson at the White House, Mayor Wagner, NYC, and a ticker tape parade in Chicago. Folder includes 23 frames taken by Young showing the earth as they orbited. Space craft was called "Molly Brown"]<br>33 b&w photos | Photographs:<br>Box 1, Folder 5 |
| Apollo I (1966–1967)<br>[Astronauts for the first NASA manned Apollo mission: James, A. McDivitt, Roger B. Chaffee, Edward H. White, and command pilot Grissom] | Photographs:<br>Box 1, Folder 6 |

## Series 2: NASA Color Transparencies, 1960–1967, n.d.

| CONTENTS | CONTAINER |
|---|---|
| Project Mercury: Redstone 4 (Liberty Bell 7)<br>NASA's second man-in-space sub-orbital flight, | 4x5 Color<br>Acetate Negatives: |

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| manned by Astronaut Gus Grissom on July 21, 1961. Liberty Bell capsule sank during recovery.<br>28 color transparencies, MR4-1–MR4-29, incomplete run | Box 1,<br>MR4-1 – MR4-29 |
| Photo documentation for negatives in MR4 series | Photographs:<br>Box 1, Folder 7 |
| Project Gemini: GT-3 Mission, March 23, 1965 Astronauts Grissom and Young manned this successful flight. Capsule Molly Brown was recovered. Photos include Grissom and Young in space suits, and with President Johnson and Vice-president Humphrey after flight<br>17 color transparencies 65-HC-100 to 65-HC-557, incomplete run | 4x5 Color<br>Acetate Negatives:<br>Box 1,<br>65-HC-100 – 65-HC-557 |
| Apollo/Saturn Flight: 1966. Astronauts Grissom (command pilot), White and Chaffee preparing for first manned Apollo flight.<br>47 color transparencies 66-HC-127 to 66 HC1941 and 66-H-551, incomplete run | 4x5 Color<br>Acetate Negatives:<br>Box 1,<br>66-HC-127 –<br>66-HC-1941,<br>66-H-551 |
| Photo documentation for negatives 66-HC series | Photographs:<br>Box 1, Folder 8 |
| Apollo/Saturn Flight 204, 1967 Back up astronauts Eisele, Cunningham, and Schirra practicing; Astronauts Grissom, White and Chaffee in simulator; capsule after fire<br>25 color transparencies 67-HC-1-124, incomplete run | 4x5 Color<br>Acetate Negatives:<br>Box 1,<br>67-HC-1 – 67-HC-124 |
| Photo documentation for negatives 67-HC series | Photographs:<br>Box 1, Folder 9 |
| 460 pound geodetic Earth orbiting satellite GE0S-B during spin balance test<br>1 color transparency | 4x5 Color<br>Acetate Negatives:<br>Box 1,<br>68-HC-4 |
| Photo documentation for negatives 68-HC series | Photographs:<br>Box 1, Folder 10 |
| Views of Earth 1967<br>2 color transparencies | 4x5 Color<br>Acetate Negatives:<br>Box 1,<br>69-HC-229, 69-HC -664 |
| Photo documentation for negatives 69-HC series | Photographs:<br>Box 1, Folder 11 |
| Gemini GT-3 Mission. Astronauts Grissom and Young in space suits | 4x5 Color<br>Acetate Negatives: |

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|---|---|
| 18 color transparencies, GT-3 1 –GT-3-21, incomplete run | Box 1, GT-3-1 – GT-3-21 |
| Gemini GT-3 Astronauts in space suits and blue suits in capsule, on approach platform, and NASA control room<br>9 color transparencies, GT-3-22 – GT-3-38, incomplete run | 4x5 Color Acetate Negatives: Box 2, GT-3-22 – GT-3-38 |
| Gemini GT-3 Views of space capsule, tower, rocket, survival kit, Astronauts Grissom and Young in space suits and training in pool with space capsule<br>17 color transparencies GT-3 41-56, several duplicates, incomplete run | 4x5 Color Acetate Negatives: Box 2, GT-3- 41 – GT-3-56 |
| Gemini GT-3 Astronauts Grissom and Young and Schirra in space suits, training and in capsule<br>22 color transparencies GT-3 58-84, incomplete run | 4x5 Color Acetate Negatives: Box 2, GT-3-58 –GT-3-84 |
| Gemini GT-3 Helicopters and navy divers retrieving capsule from ocean, views of earth from space capsule, Grissom and Young with Mayor Daley in Chicago, ticker tape parade<br>23 color transparencies, GT-3-85–138, incomplete run, some duplicates | 4x5 Color Acetate Negatives: Box 2, GT-3-85–GT-3-138 |
| Photo documentation for negatives GT3 series | Photographs: Box 1, Folder 12 |
| Group of 10 astronauts in Arab garb standing in desert, Neil Armstrong in group, number 132,<br>1 color transparency | 4x5 Color Acetate Negatives: Box 2, 132 |
| GT-3, 1965 NASA technical staff working on capsule, Astronauts Grissom and young, in space suits with capsule in training and before launch of GT-3<br>21 color transparencies, [1] to [21] | 4x5 Color Acetate Negatives: Box 2, GT-3 [1] – [21] |
| GT-3, 1965 Crowd watching launch and retrieval of capsule; Grissom and Young with families after successful flight<br>10 color transparencies, [22] – [31] | 4x5 Color Acetate Negatives: Box 2, GT-3 [22] – [31] |
| GT-3, 1965 Grissom with President Johnson and Vice-President Hubert Humphrey receiving awards; also with Mayor Daley and other Chicago dignitaries receiving honors after the space flight<br>9 color transparencies, [32] –[40] | 4x5 Color Acetate Negatives: Box 2, GT-3 [32] – [40] |
| Views of Earth from space capsule windows, smoke trails from launch, 10 color transparencies | 4x5 Color Acetate Negatives: Box 2, |

[41]–[50]

## Series 3: NASA Film Clips, n.d.

| CONTENTS | CONTAINER |
|---|---|
| NASA films transferred to DVD 0003<br>“Gemini Two-Man Space Flights Next”<br>“Mariner IV Heads for Mars”<br>“X-15 To Begin New Tests” | Photographs:<br>Box 1, Folder 13<br>DVD 0003 |

## CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog: http://opac.indianahistory.org/
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, P0196).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.