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## Cameras for a Space Shoot

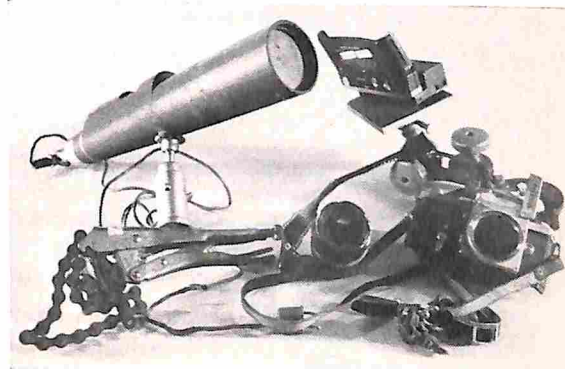
If the race for space has challenged man's ingenuity, so the coverage of it has tested ours. Over the years of the space decade we have often mounted cameras on rocket tails and gantries and umbilical towers and splash shields; they have been launched and smashed and drenched and melted. The "we," of course, refers to LIFE, but we have had a lot of help from the experts at NASA, RCA, Technicolor, the Air Force, and even friendly rivals.

The cover and first six pages of this week's lead story are a good example. The pictures of the missile in full flight were made by the Air Force with its remarkable radar-locked-in cameras. The only picture made with anything like everyday equipment is the round one on the cover showing the astronauts through a porthole.

In particular, the pictures on the story's first two pages point up the problems. For the first one, Ralph Morse, who has been in charge of photographing our space program since the beginning, wanted to show the astronauts approaching their spacecraft before the launch. Since no photographer is permitted within a mile and a half of the pad at this delicate moment, his camera would have to be remote-controlled. Furthermore, in the highly volatile atmosphere under the missile at this time a tiny spark made by a switch being thrown could cause an explosion. The electrical connection would have to be "sparkproof." The camera would also have to function within a casing which had been "nitrogen-purged"—filled with nitrogen, which is fireproof. Ralph put the problem in the hands of George Karas, head of our Photo Lab, and Al Schneider, his chief lighting and equipment technician.

"Al had a beat-up underwater camera housing in the office," says Karas. "He had it equipped with valves and fixed so it would hold nitrogen under pressure. Inside it he sealed a motor-driven 250-frame Nikon F. He bought a magnet and had it electrified. He put it on top of the box so that, when Ralph pushed the remote-control button, the magnet would lift a switch inside the box and start the camera. Pad Safety at NASA checked it out for us. It was sparkproof, and worked fine. We'll probably never need it again."

For the story's second picture, Ralph wanted to show the missile roaring up through its own smoke and flame. He decided to mount two cameras, one on each side of the flame-deflector under the missile. He picked a Nikon and a high-speed missile-tracking Hulcher, buried them in sandbags and protected their lenses with thick optical glass. "No spark problem with these," says Morse. "They were

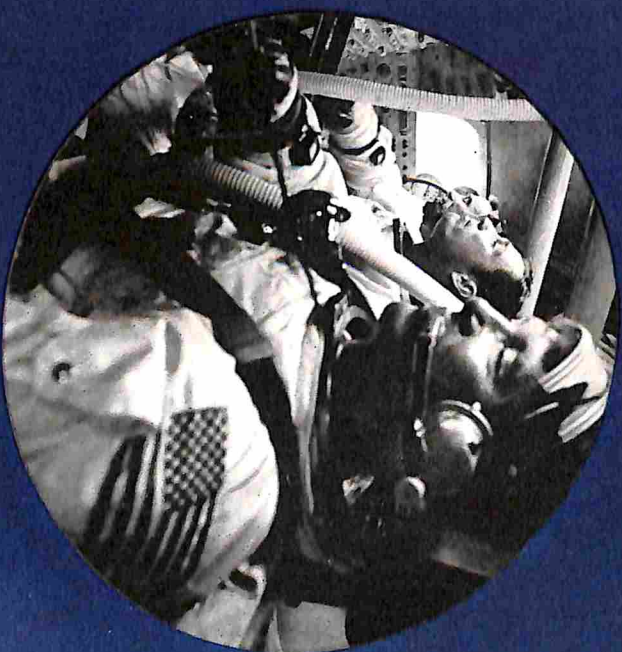


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## Schirra and Apollo 7

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