

# SPACE FLIGHT...

## WHEN?..

By Gerry de la Ree

Featuring the results of the 1946 Peowulf Flight

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"Man has conquered space; a successful round trip to the moon has been made..." The detelire of that story?...Perhaps 1980, Fantastic? Go ahead, smile...

One year ago -- August 6, 1945 -- the development and use of the first atomic bomb was announced to a startled world. But to the fans and authors of science fiction the realization of atomic power came, not as a shock, but merely as a surprise.

The natural procedure for those fans and authors was to turn to the nearest person -- preferably a skeptical relative or friend -- and say, "See, I told you so!"

And they had told them so, over and over in dozens of science fiction yarns and articles which for some 20 years flooded pulp magazines throughout the United States and the British Empire. These scientifiotionists, or perhaps dreamers would be a better word, had been met with scorn and laughter at the mere mention of "harnessing the force from which the sun draws its power", and yet when President Truman used that identical phrase in his announcement of the atom bomb there were few, we imagine, who laughed. And if they did, the events of the ensuing days -- the rear-chliteration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the end of the war -- no doubt did much to wipe away that skepticism.

It was with all this in mind that we undertook to ascertain from these fans and authors, who have for years dreamed of the future and of things far remote from the mind of the average man, just how long they figured it would take for the next great step forward -- the accomplishment of space flight -- to be realized.

A trip to Luna, Earth's only satellite, has been the subject of many tales since the days of Edgar Allen Poe. While Poe wrote of such a trip as a mere hoax, other authors in the latter years of the nineteenth century, notably Jules Verne and H. G. Wells, went at the idea with more force and realism. Since the turn of the century, literally thousands of trips to the moon have been put on paper.

The authors of the twentieth century have gone far beyond the dream of a trip to the moon, however. The eight other planets of the Solar System, their satellites, the asteroids, and dozens of worlds which revolve about other suns than our own in galaxies many thousands of light years distant, have been the scenes of numerous science fiction stories.

And now man feels that he is on the brink of realizing the first step forward in the conquest of this new frontier -- a frontier far vaster than any man can conceive.

And how do the fans and authors of science fiction feel about this possibility? What do they feel that the first stride into outer space will be taken?

Of the 67 fans, authors, and editors contacted, all but one believe that it will be accomplished. As to when, the variety of answers was great, with dates ranging from 1948 to 2145 being mentioned. But over half of those voting stated that they felt it would be by 1960.

The one negative vote was cast by Raymond A. Palmer, one-time fan and for the past eight years editor of Ziff-Devis' string of pulp magazines. Palmer, who is editor of Amazing Stories, has projected to his readers hundreds of interplanetary voyages, including some written by himself, did not attempt to explain his stand.

Among those taking the more optimistic viewpoint was John W. Campbell, Jr., editor of Street and Smith's Astounding Science Fiction. Campbell listed 1950 as the year for the first moon flight and suggested as a possible sponsor of the trip, a movie company. Fantastic? Perhaps, but it's the opinion of a man who has studied the problem for many years.

Ferris J. Ackerman of Los Angeles and Bob Tucker of Bloomington, Ill., who for over 10 years have litted it out for the rank of "top science fiction fan", also selected the year 1950. The most optimistic answer, however, came from Joseph H. Wrzes, Newark, N. J. fan, who picked 1948. Gus Dallas, a fan from Cleveland, was next in line with 1949.

Halp Hira Farley of South Milwaukee and Theodore Sturgeons of New York City, both well-known authors, listed dates about 10 years in the future. Said Sturgeons: "A flight around the moon by a robot craft equipped with cameras and various instruments for measuring surface temperature, etc., will probably be made between 1950 and 1960, providing another war does not intervene."

Several fans had similar ideas about a robot craft being sent to the moon before human beings attempt the trip. R. E. Swisher of Winchester, Mass., figures there will be un-manned target contact with the moon in 1955, but that the manned round trip won't be made until 2000. Francis L. Lacey of Los Angeles says radio controlled rocket will make the trip by 1956 and that a ship with crew will attempt the journey in 1976.

Willy Ley, one of the foremost rocket experts in the United States, former science editor of PM, and author of the recent book "Rockets", gave the year 1960 as his selection. In the selection of this date he was agreed with by 16 people. Ley, a charter member of the British Interplanetary Society and a pioneer rocket experimenter in Germany 20 years ago, was tabbed by a number of voters as being the man destined to take a large part in the initial space

flight. Mr. Sturgeon summed up this viewpoint with: "Not enough people realize that Mr. Fey is one of the most remarkable men alive."

Hugo Gerritschek, often referred to as the "Father of Science Fiction", took a more conservative view by selecting 1975. Gerritschek, currently the publisher of Radio-Craft magazine and President of Redcraft Publications, Inc., instigated the first science fiction magazine, Amazing Stories, back in 1926.

Also taking a conservative view were three top science fiction authors, I. Sprague de Camp, Manly Wade Wellman, and Otto "Ferdie" Binder. All selected the year 1975.

Alfred Africero, former President of the American Rocket Society, picked 1976. It is interesting to note that Africero, an authority on rockets, agreed with majority of voters in predicting that atomic power will motivate the first space craft.

David Speaker, who wrote quite a bit of science fiction some 15 years back, and who currently is a radar expert, picked 1977.

Three fans chose the year 2000, among them Dr. A Langley Seerles, instructor of chemistry at New York University. Only three dates over the year 2000 were selected, the most pessimistic being 2145, picked by Darrell C. Richardson, a pastor's assistant from Louisville, Ky.

#### OTHER RESULTS

The poll gave evidence that, in the opinion of the scientificists, Venus and Mars are the only planets of the Solar System, outside of Earth, capable of supporting life as we know it. Venus, with 48 votes, proved even more popular than Mars, which received 45 tallies. While the great planet Jupiter received only two votes, its moons were mentioned by seven people as possibly able to sustain life.

When we asked which planets were believed capable of supporting an alien form of life, we didn't realize how all-enveloping the word alien can be. Suffice to say, the majority named all the planets, although Mars and Venus again led by a slim margin.

The majority also seem to believe that a government will sponsor the first space flight. Twenty-five voted for a government, with 19 selecting an independent group. A combination of the two was suggested by 11 voters.

Thirty-eight of those contacted expressed the opinion that they would be willing to go along on the first attempt at reaching the moon, although given only a 50% chance of returning. Twenty-three didn't think too much of the idea, while six refused to give an opinion.

Atomic power was an overwhelming favorite as the motivating power for the space ship. The tabulation was 47 for atomic power, 14 against and 6 without any opinion. Some form of liquid fuel was suggested by eight people, while rockets received three votes. Several suggested that atomic energy would be used indirectly, with jet propulsion or rocket power also employed.

Asked to name a man or men who could possibly be to space flight, what the Wright Brothers were to air flight, the participants were, in the main, unable to suggest anyone. Forty-five had no definite opinion, although a number stated it would be the combined efforts of many, not the genius of one or two men. Willy Ley was named by seven voters, while the late Dr. Robert H. Goddard's name was mentioned by four. Dr. Goddard, one of America's rocket-pioneers, died over a year ago, but his discoveries and notes have been of invaluable aid to the Army specialists now conducting experiments in New Mexico. G. Edward Pendray of the American Rocket Society received three votes.

Opinion was split 50-50 on whether the average man still scoffs at space flight or whether he is resigned to its accomplishment. Personally we have found him to still be skeptical, but a number of voters were most emphatic in stating that man is resigned to almost any scientific possibility since the introduction of the atom bomb.

But if they want to scoff, let them; for when we walk on the surface of the moon, just remember "We told you so!"

## THE POLL

1. QUESTION: Do you believe that inter-planetary travel will eventually be accomplished? ANSWER: Yes 66; No 1.
2. QUESTION: If your answer to number one was yes, in what year do you think the first successful flight to the moon or another planet will be made? ANSWER: (See pages 6 and 7).
3. QUESTION: Of the nine known planets of the Solar System, which, if any, (outside of Earth) do you believe capable of supporting any form of life as we know it? ANSWERS: Venus 42; Mars 46; Moons of Jupiter 7; Mercury 4; Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto 2; Luna 1; None 8; No Opinion 2.
4. QUESTION: In the same vein as question number three, which planets do you believe capable of supporting life on an alien type? ANSWERS: Mars 42; Venus 46; Jupiter 43; Mercury 42; Uranus and Pluto 29; Neptune 32; Larger satellites 6; Asteroids 2; None 3; No opinion 6.
5. QUESTION: If space flight is accomplished within the next 50 years what type of an organization or group do you believe will back the expedition? ANSWER: A government 28; Independent group 19. OTHER ANSWERS: Combination of government and independent group 11; U. S. Army 2; World effort 2; Movie Company, secret organization, Philanthropist 1; No opinion 2.
6. QUESTION: As one interested in science fiction, given a 50% chance of returning, would you accept an offer to go along on the first attempt at reaching the moon or another planet? ANSWER: Yes 22; No 23; No Opinion 7.
7. QUESTION: Do you believe atomic power will be used to motivate the first space ship? ANSWER: Yes 47; No 14. If not what form of fuel do you think will be used? ANSWERS: Liquid fuel 11; rockets 3; electronic power 1; No opinion 6.
8. QUESTION: What men or men alive today, if any, do you feel have the opportunity of being to space travel what the Wright Brothers were to air travel? ANSWERS: Willy Ley 7; Rocket Societies 5; Dr. Robert H. Goddard 4; G. Edward Paraday 2; Army specialists 2; John Campbell, Dr. Isaac Leitzner, Dr. Verneer Bush 1; No opinion 48.
9. QUESTION: In your contact with that queer species known as the "average man", do you find that people still tend to scoff at space travel or have they become hardened to the fact that it will eventually be accomplished? ANSWERS: Still scoff 28; Are resigned 29; Are uninterested 7; No Opinion 3.

In what year do you think the first successful flight to the moon or another planet will be made?

Would you accept an offer to go along on the first attempt at reaching the moon, given 50% chance of returning?

1948	---Joseph H. Wrzsa, Newark, N.J.	YES
1949	---Gus Dallas, Cleveland, Ohio	YES
1950	---John Randolph, East Orange, N.J.	YES
1950	---John W. Campbell, Jr., New York City	YES
1950	---Farrest J. Ackerman, Los Angeles, Calif.	NO
1950	---Bob Tucker, Bloomington, Ill.	YES
1950	---Richard Alrutt, New Orleans, La.	NO
1951	---Eugene Perry, Durham, N.H.	YES
a1951	---Rick Sreary, South Gate, Calif.	YES
1952	---Sam Moskowitz, Newark, N.J.	NO
1953	---Lloyd Alpaugh, Schererville, N.J.	YES
a1953	---E. F. Greenleaf, Jr., New Orleans, La.	YES
1955	---Andy Lyon, Oxford, N. C.	YES
1955	---Jack Speer, Seattle, Wash.	NO
1955	---George Fox, Rahway, N. J.	YES
1955	---Henry Elserer, Detroit, Mich.	YES
1955	---Charles A. Belling, Harrington Park, N.J.	YES
1955	---Paul D. Cox, Columbus, Ga.	YES
a1955	---Harold W. Cheney, Little Falls, N.Y.	YES
1956	---Mrs. Virginia Lake, Pittsburgh, Pa.	YES
1956	---Ralph Milne Farley, So. Milwaukee, Wis.	NO
1957	---Gerry de la Rue, Westwood, N.J.	YES
a1957	---Theodore Sturgeon, New York City	YES
1960	---Willy Ley, Washington, D.C.	YES
1960	---Richard S. Shaver, McHenry, Ill.	YES
1960	---Thomas S. Gardner, Johnson City, Tenn.	YES
1960	---Bickey Slevin, Brooklyn, N.Y.	YES
1960	---William M. Evans, Corvallis, Ore.	YES
1960	---Willard Grimes, Columbus, Ga.	YES
1960	---Art Widner, North Weymouth, Mass.	YES
1960	---Dr. C.L. Everett, Bellefleur, Ohio	NO
1960	---Walter Dunkelberger, Fargo, N. D.	YES
1960	---John B. Correll, Graniteville, W. I.	YES
1960	---Alex Saunders, Ontario, Canada	YES
1960	---Van Splawn, St. Louis, Mo.	NO
1960	---Fred Rowland, Kenmore, N. Y.	YES
1960	---Richard A. Frank, Williamsport, Pa.	NO
1960	---Walter A. Coslet, Hulens, Mont.	YES
1960	---Robert C. Peterson, Denver, Colo.	YES
1963	---Irene Inmer, Ripley, Tenn.	YES
1963	---Ronald Christensen, Brooklyn, N.Y.	YES
1965	---D. B. Thompson, Alexandria, La.	NO
1969	---Ronald Maddox, McLean, Va.	YES
1970	---James D. Breckerridge, Westwood, N. J.	NO
1970	---Henry Werner, Jr., Hagerstown, Md.	NO
1972	---Hugo Gernsback, New York City	NO
1975	---L. Sprague de Camp, Lonsdale, Pa.	NO
1975	---Otto "Eerde" Birder, West Englewood, N. J.	NO
1975	---Merly Wade Wellman, Westwood, N.J.	YES

1975---Henry Kolbe, Detroit, Mich.....	YES
1975---Phillip A. Schumern, Milwaukee, Wis.....	NO
1976---Alfred Africano, Caldwell, N.J.....	YES
1977---David J. Specker, East Orange, N. J.....	YES
1976---Francis T. Loney, Los Angeles, Calif.....	NO
1980---John Wrase, Jr., Pen Argyl, Pa.....	YES
1980---Joe Kerredy, Dover, N.J.....	YES
1985---Clifford C. Hall, Camp Perry, Va.....	NO
1986---Harley Sachs, South Bend, Ind.....	YES
1990---Charles A. Lucas, Bridgeport, Pa.....	YES
1985---K. Martin Carlson, Moorhead, Minn.....	NO
2000---Dr. A. Langley Seales, New York City.....	NO
2000---R. E. Swisher, Winchester, Mass.....	NO
2000---Kurt Bone, Detroit, Mich.....	YES
2010---Steve Hirschman, Parkersburg, W. Va.....	YES
2100---Alex Gshetoff, Newark, N.J.....	NO
2145---Derrill C. Richardsor, Louisville, Ky.....	NO

--Denotes that date listed is an average one, derived from a period of years given by that individual.

#### SOE COMMENTIS

**THEODORE STURGEON:** Curiously enough, there seem to be few "men on the street" left who scoff at advanced technological ideas. I am at a loss to understand why otherwise intelligent people persist in opposing from the axiom that the public is actively opposed to inventive development. The public is often lethargic, it's true, but the reaction is more often "So what?" rather than "Don't be silly, you and your fantastic ideas." I have run across no flagrant scoffing at the idea of space travel; rather, a slightly hesitant acceptance of its inevitability without the least desire to do anything to bring it sooner. The public likewise accepts the inevitability of a cure for cancer, the elimination of unemployment, and the arrival of true love. Each seems to be ready to accept the benefits of these things as they arrive, each has to be poked and prodded to do anything about bringing them sooner.

**THOMAS GARDNER:** With a billion dollars a base can be established on the moon in five years. Actually, far from a military reason, any force Russia, England or the United States to establish one or two.

**HARRY WARNER, JR.:** I'll be disappointed if the answer to the sixth question isn't an overwhelming "no."; I doubt that there's a fan in the country with the moral stamina to accept a ticket to the moon if the chips were really down, and it will be interesting to see how many of them will give the theoretical yes as an answer.