

# **FLIGHT TEST TO MOON SHOT: The NACA, the Astronauts, and the Culture of Experiment, 1959–1969**

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**July 18, 1958**

**MEMORANDUM for Dr. James R. Killian, Jr.,  
Special Assistant to the President for Science  
and Technology**

**SUBJECT: Manned Satellite Program**

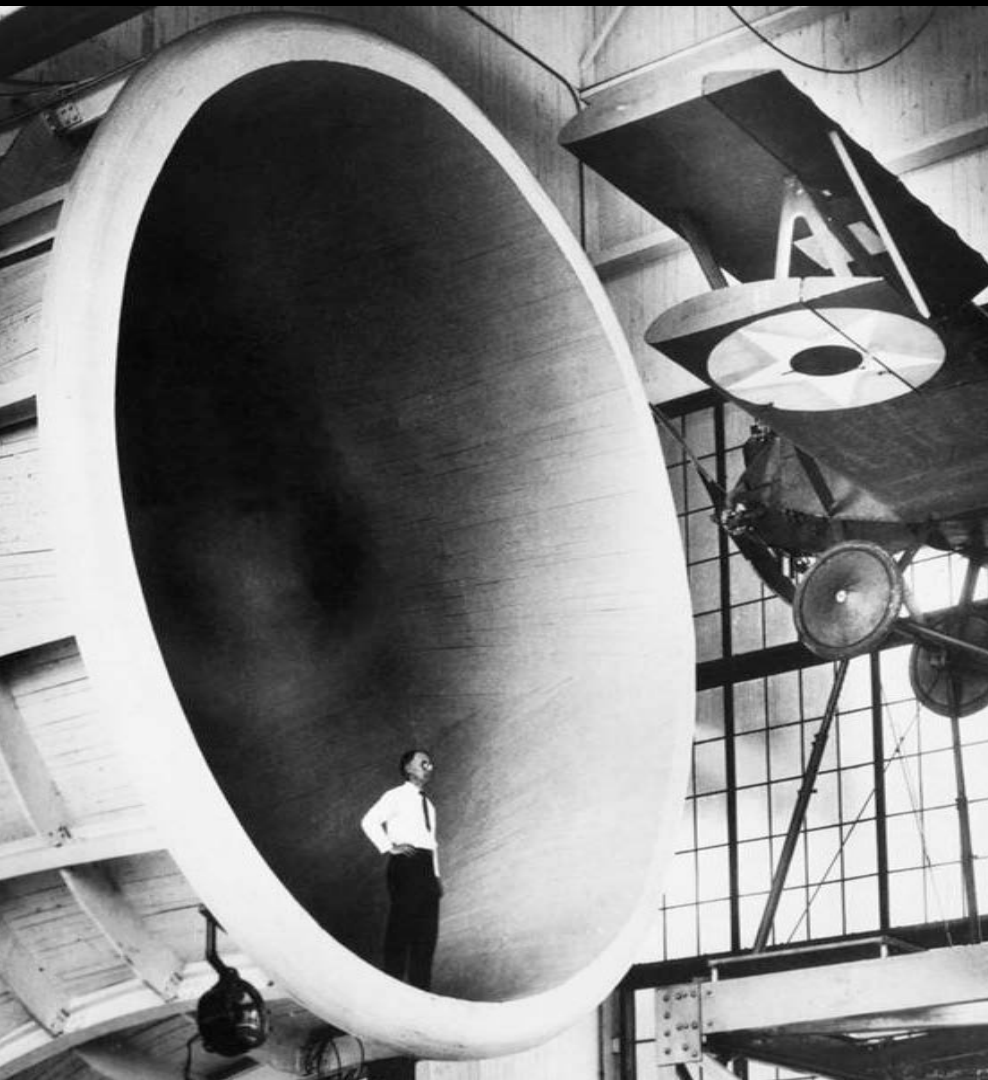
... [the] NACA has the technical back ground,  
competence, and continuing within-government  
technical back-up to assume this responsibility ... .

For a number of years, the NACA has had groups  
doing research on such items as stabilization of ultra-  
high-speed vehicles, provision of suitable controls,  
high-temperature structural design, and all the  
problems of reentry. More recently, the NACA  
research groups have been working on these  
problems with direct application to manned satellites.

...



**Hugh L. Dryden  
Director, NACA**



June 11, 1963

M. A. FAGET ETAL  
SPACE CAPSULE

3,093,346

Filed Oct. 16, 1959

4 Sheets-Sheet 1

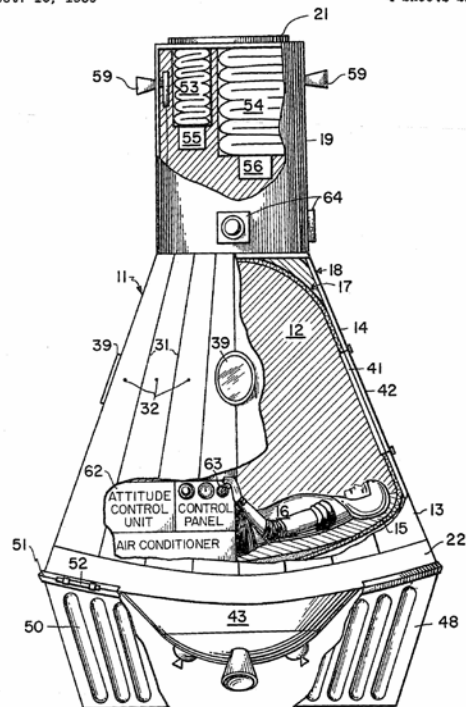


FIG. 1

INVENTORS  
M.A. FAGET W.S. BLANCHARD, JR.  
A.J. MEYER, JR. A.B. KEHLET  
R.G. CHILTON J.B. HAMMACK  
C.C. JOHNSON, JR.

BY

*J. O. Bresnahan*  
ATTORNEYS

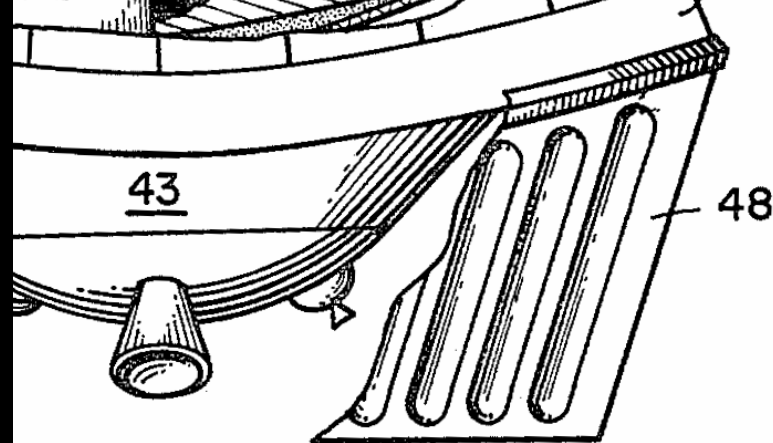


FIG. 1

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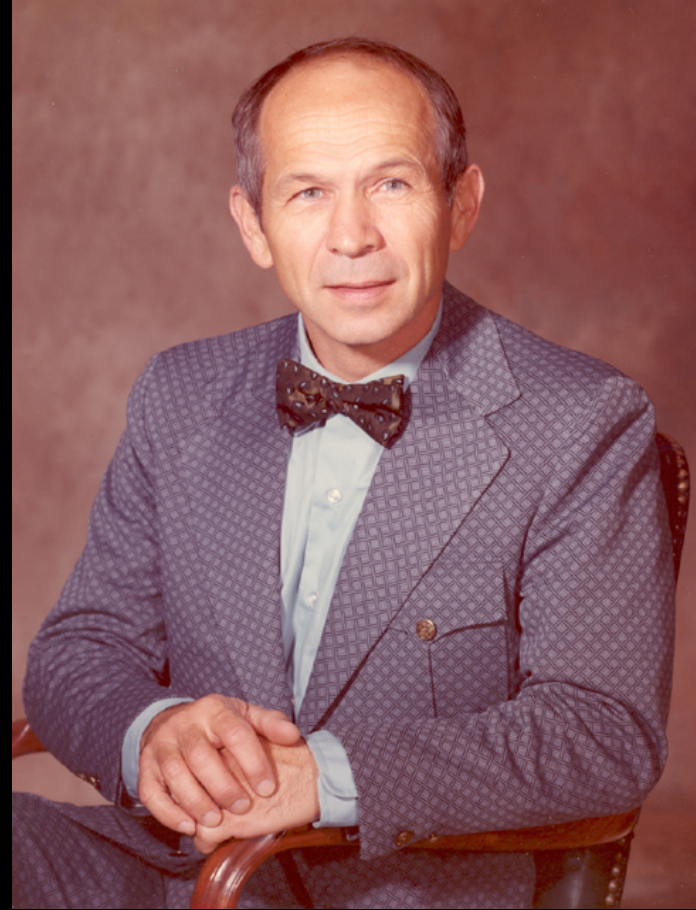
BY

*J. O. Bresnahan*  
ATTORNEYS





**Charles Donlan, Robert Gilruth, and Max Faget  
inspect Mercury Capsule Model (1959)**



**Max Faget**







**Neil Armstrong**  
**NACA test pilot**  
**(1955–1958)**



**Robert Gilruth**



**George Low**





**Christopher Kraft, Robert Gilruth, and George Trimble (1968)**



NACA  
L MAL 42612







**Mercury Astronaut Press Conference (April 9, 1959)**



**“[W]e decided that since we were the test pilots who would be flying the thing, we had a right to stir things up a bit. That is what they had hired us for.”**

**—Donald P. “Deke” Slayton, *We Seven* (1962)**

**Project Mercury Capsule #2 at  
the NASA Lewis Research  
Center (formerly NACA Aircraft  
Engine Research Laboratory)  
(1959).**









# **Acknowledgments**

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**University of Southern California**

**Huntington Library**