

From Jack Duperouzel of Villa 17

**20 Feb 1962 - 20 Feb 2022: the 60th anniversary of
USA Astronaut John Glenn's three earth Orbits and naming PERTH THE CITY OF LIGHTS**

John Glenn was the first American to orbit the earth during this Project Mercury. Jack has written this story of his West Australian involvement in Project Mercury at Muchea site 1961 to 1964.

My service in the RAN expired in November 1960 from Nowra NSW and I returned to Perth with my wife Jenny. I was recruited as a Technical Officer and started work at site, in Dec 1960. The facility was still being built and equipment being installed. Muchea was part of 16 tracking stations world wide. Systems were installed for Radar, acquisition aid, (I was the operator) Telemetry, air to ground voice.

All staff of 35 to 40 travelled from Perth every day. All staff were employed to operate and maintain the equipment, which had been designed and built in the US for special tasks.

We had a Dakota RAAF aircraft fitted with capsule equipment for training and tracking. Unfortunately this aircraft when flying back to Adelaide crashed into the hills killing the aircraft aircrew; there were three survivors.



The first single orbital flight on 29 November 1961 had a chimpanzee called Enos, was successful. This proved the network for the manned flight

John Glenn's flight was plagued by 82 days of delays to get FRIENDSHIP 7, the spacecraft off the ground. Finally he was launched at 10.47 PM Perth time on 20 February 1962

He was tracked at Muchea 50 minutes after launch for only nine minutes, the time to fly over. He saw the lights of Perth when he spoke to Gordon Cooper (another astronaut). Muchea tracking systems worked perfectly.

Three Missions followed - in May 1962 Scott Carpenter three orbits, next October 1962 Wally Schirra six orbits, and in May 1963 Gordon Cooper orbited 22 times lasting 34 hours. That was the last Mercury mission in the program. So on the 12 June 1963 the Mercury Project finished, achieving all goals set, and Muchea closed on February 1964 to make way for the Carnarvon Tracking station, and the two man Gemini program.

I was offered a job at Carnarvon but I knew it was a frontier town, and having lived in the country towns of Dowerin, Gingin and Wagin (my father was a policeman) Jenny & I chose to stay in Perth and had our family of Alex & Wendy, and went into business with my elder brother Ken and were distributors for STIHL products for thirty years.

I enjoyed my 12 years in the Navy, finishing as a Chief Petty Officer in the Fleet Air Arm, but the experience at Muchea was the highlight of my life. In 1990 our family visited Cape Canaveral where all the launches were made.

Hope you all enjoy my story.

Jack Duperouzel

PHOTO: **Jack Duperouzel** fixing the spiral antenna Muchea 1962

For a fuller story with pictures, go to website

https://honeysucklecreek.net/other_stations/muchea/index.html