

Reflections on Friendship 7

Chris Kraft

Friendship 7 Flight Director



February 20, 1962 still lives as one of the finest days of manned space flight.

After struggling to launch Friendship 7 – having counted the launch down to T-2 minutes and scrubbing the count on numerous occasions and to everyone involved what seemed to be an eternity – we finally got to do what we had worked so hard to achieve. It was certainly worth the wait. From John Glenn to all of those participating around the world, it was a day we will never forget.

The people in Australia provided marvelous support to the successful conclusion of this first human orbital flight by the free world. It was accomplished in full view of the world and millions of people followed its course throughout the four and one-half hours that it took place.

At the time, the tracking station at Mucnea was extremely important to determining the correct spacecraft orbit and it initiated a time period of continuous cooperation between the US and Australia in many historic spaceflights throughout Mercury, Gemini and Apollo. And we still recall with joy the people of Perth who turned their lights on as we flew overhead.

In 1967, following the tragic Apollo 1 fire, Tecwyn Roberts and I had the privilege of spending 17 days travelling around Australia to visit all of the stations preparing to participate in the Apollo Program. We met and talked to everyone of the wonderful engineers, technicians and other supporters who were to be involved. It was one of the greatest experiences of my life.

Please give everyone “down under” my sincerest congratulations for their contribution to our success – we could not have done it without them.

With admiration for a great group of human beings and friends,

Chris Kraft

Friendship 7 Flight Director.

Retired Director

NASA Johnson Space Center.