



Smithsonian

National Air and Space Museum

Mercury-Atlas 6 (MA-6) Zanzibar Tracking Station Collection

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2025

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	Mercury-Atlas 6 (MA-6) Zanzibar Tracking Station Collection
Date:	1962
Identifier:	NASM.2025.0029
Source:	United States. National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Extent:	.01 Cubic feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	Audio recordings, negatives, and other archival materials created at the Zanzibar Tracking Station in relation to the 1962 Mercury-Atlas 6 (MA-6) flight.
Digital Content:	Image(s): NASM-9A20965-35: Zanzibar Tracking Station, circa 1960s

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Jeanne-Marie Kraemer, Gift, 2025, NASM.2025.0029

Processing Information

Arranged, described, and encoded by Amara Pugens, 2025.

Preferred Citation

Mercury-Atlas 6 (MA-6) Zanzibar Tracking Station Collection, NASM.2025.0029, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

No restrictions on access

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

Conducted by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) as part of Project Mercury, Mercury-Atlas 6 (MA-6) became the first United States manned orbital spaceflight on February 20, 1962, when astronaut John Glenn, onboard the *Friendship 7* capsule, circled the Earth three times. The official NASA audio recording of the

mission, captured from within the spacecraft, preserves Glenn's exchanges with various ground tracking stations across the globe.

At Zanzibar Tracking Station, positioned off the coast of East Africa, Telemetry Technician Harry A. Zajdel was hired to operate, maintain, and repair communications systems. From within the control room, Zajdel recorded Glenn's conversations with the capsule communicator posted at that site. Unlike the official NASA tapes, Zajdel's recording captures the ground communications as heard from the station itself.

Zajdel's path to Project Mercury began decades earlier. After serving in the U.S. Navy from 1943 to 1946, he earned a degree in Radio and Television Engineering from the American Television Institute of Technology in Chicago, Illinois in 1949. His technical acumen led to roles with pioneering aerospace firms including Bell Aircraft and Bendix, eventually placing him at the front lines of America's first orbital mission.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of correspondence, 35mm negatives, and audio recordings collected and maintained by Harry A. Zajdel, an Electronic Technician assigned to the Zanzibar Tracking Station during Mercury-Atlas 6 (MA-6). Negative photography depicts interior and exterior views of the Zanzibar Tracking Station. Two audio tapes (3" and 5" reels), along with three digital surrogates, capture ground communications between astronaut John Glenn onboard the *Friendship 7* capsule and the capsule communicator at Zanzibar, on February 20, 1962, during the first two orbits. The digital material contains two unique files while the third is a copy of the first two pieced together. Also included are two resumes of Zajdel.

Arrangement

Arranged by media type, thereunder by date.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Astronautics
Mercury Project

Types of Materials:

Photographs -- Black-and-white negatives -- 1950-2000
Sound recordings -- Audiotapes -- Open reel

Names:

United States. National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Container Listing

[Audio reels]

Audio: Mercury Atlas (MA-6) Flight Friendship 7 First and Second Orbit

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Scope and Contents:

NASM-9A20965-26 and NASM-9A20965-27: Interior view of racks of electronic equipment (possibly the Acquisition Console) in the Telemetry and Control Building of the Project Mercury Zanzibar Tracking Station, circa early 1962. (Images stained and severely blurred by camera movement.)

NASM-9A20965-28: Interior view of racks of electronic equipment (probably the Telemetry area) in the Telemetry and Control Building of the Project Mercury Zanzibar Tracking Station, circa early 1962.

NASM-9A20965-29 and NASM-9A20965-30: Interior view of the Mercury Command Console area during installation and set-up of equipment in the Telemetry and Control Building of the Project Mercury Zanzibar Tracking Station, circa early 1962. (Image NASM-9A20965 blurred by camera movement.)

NASM-9A20965-31: Unidentified man wearing a hard hat uses a small kitchen area in the Telemetry and Control Building of the Project Mercury Zanzibar Tracking Station, circa early 1962.

NASM-9A20965-32: Front view looking up from ground level of one of the two Acquisition Aid telemetry receiving antennae located outside the Telemetry and Control Building of the Project Mercury Zanzibar Tracking Station, circa early 1962.

NASM-9A20965-33: Side view looking up from ground level of one of the two Acquisition Aid telemetry receiving antennae located outside the Telemetry and Control Building of the Project Mercury Zanzibar Tracking Station, circa early 1962.

NASM-9A20965-34: Distant view of what may be the Ground to Air Transmitter site (with transmitting antenna and powerhouse) at Chwaka, a few miles to the east of the Project Mercury Zanzibar Tracking Station's receiving site at Tunguu; circa early 1962.

NASM-9A20965-35 and NASM-9A20965-36: Ground level view of the Project Mercury Zanzibar Tracking Station's Telemetry and Control Building compound, with its two Acquisition Aid telemetry receiving antennae and parked trucks and automobiles; circa early 1962.

NASM-9A20965-37: Distant view of antenna field and small equipment building; part of the Project Mercury Zanzibar Tracking Station; circa early 1962.

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