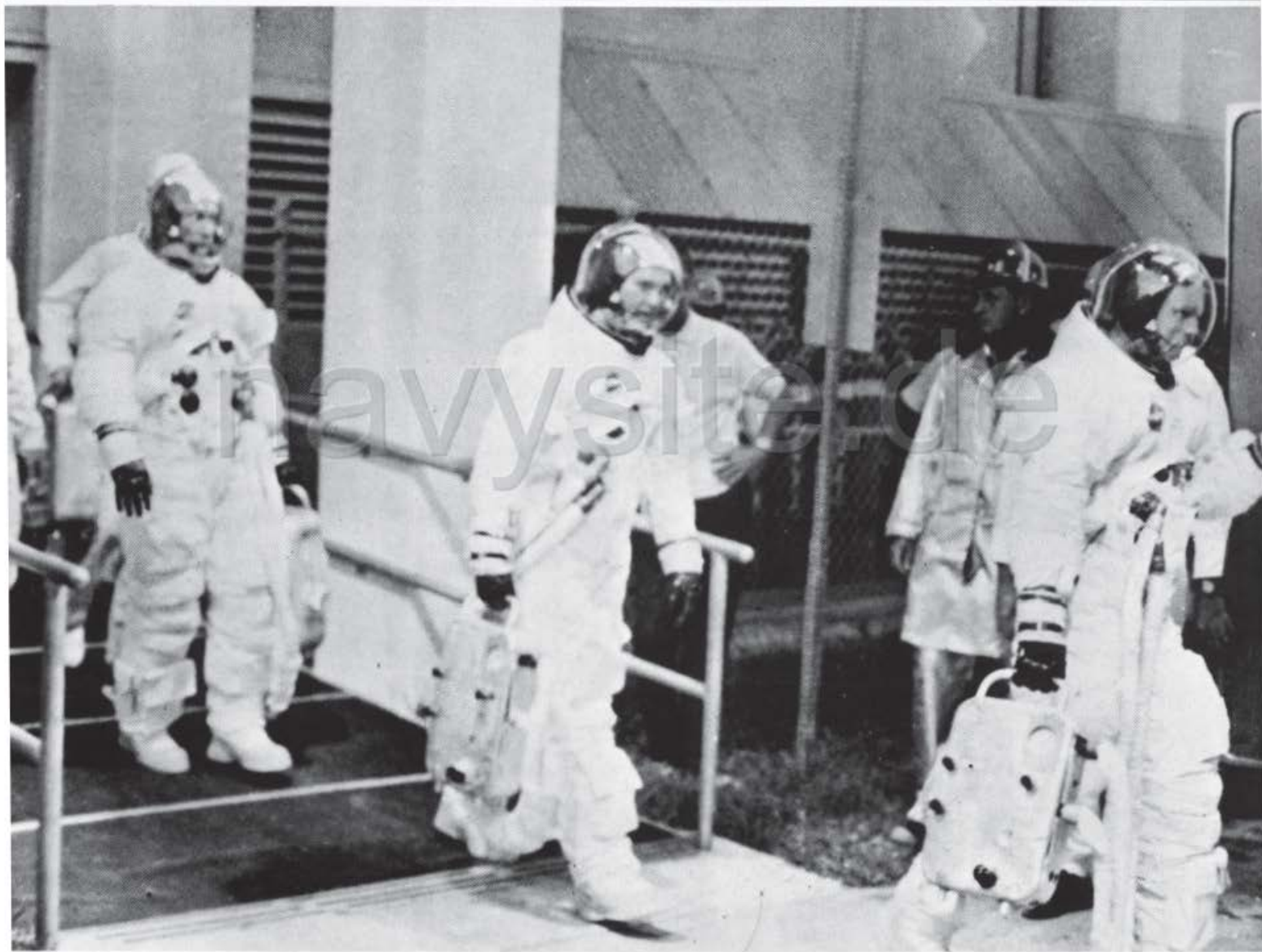
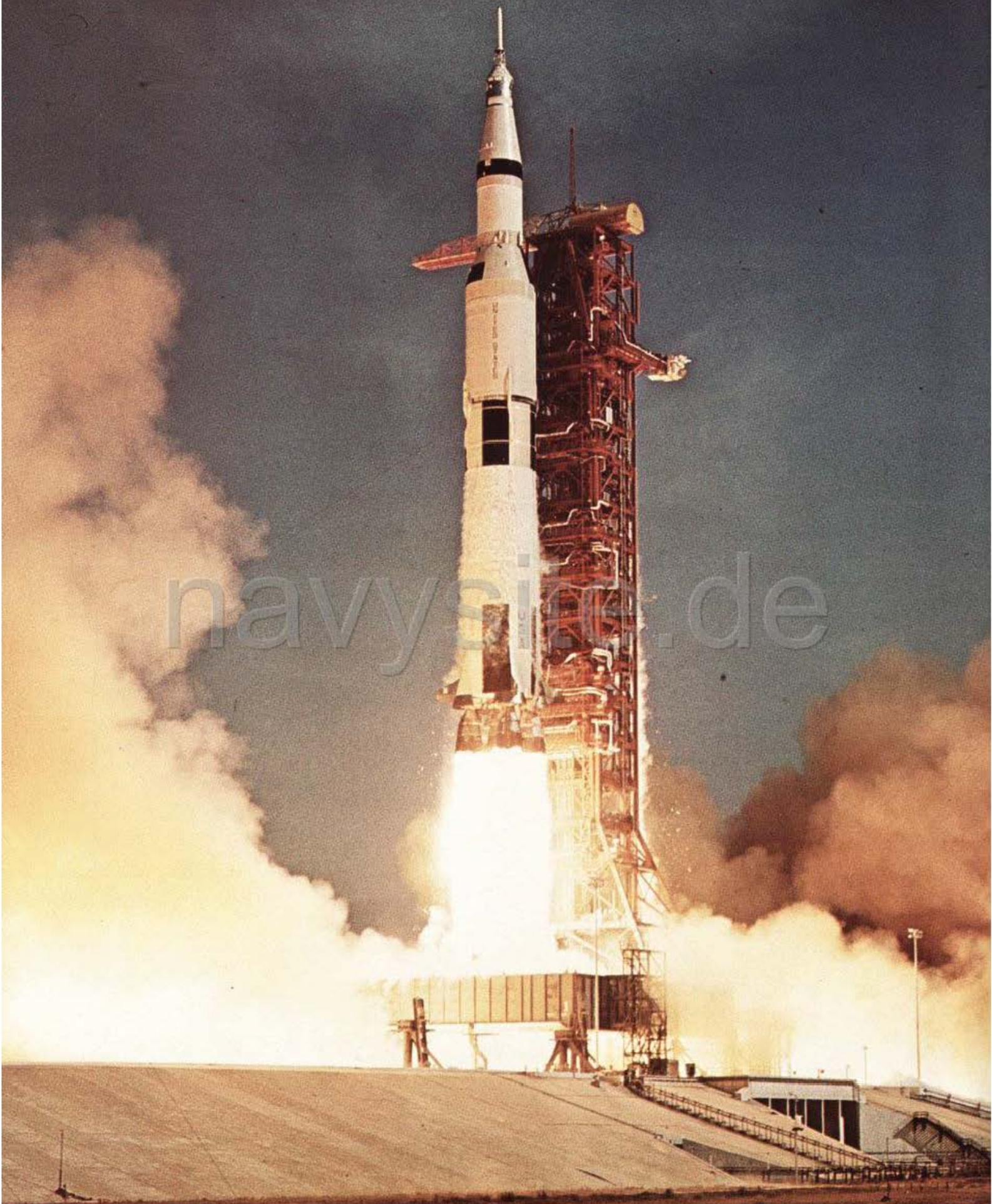


TODAY THE MOON ...





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As the anxious millions around the world watched and listened, the astronauts and the ground crews at the Cape and mission control in Houston busied themselves with the last minute preparations. The flight began smoothly as the towering Saturn V rocket rose from the pad amidst a billowing cloud of flames and exhaust.

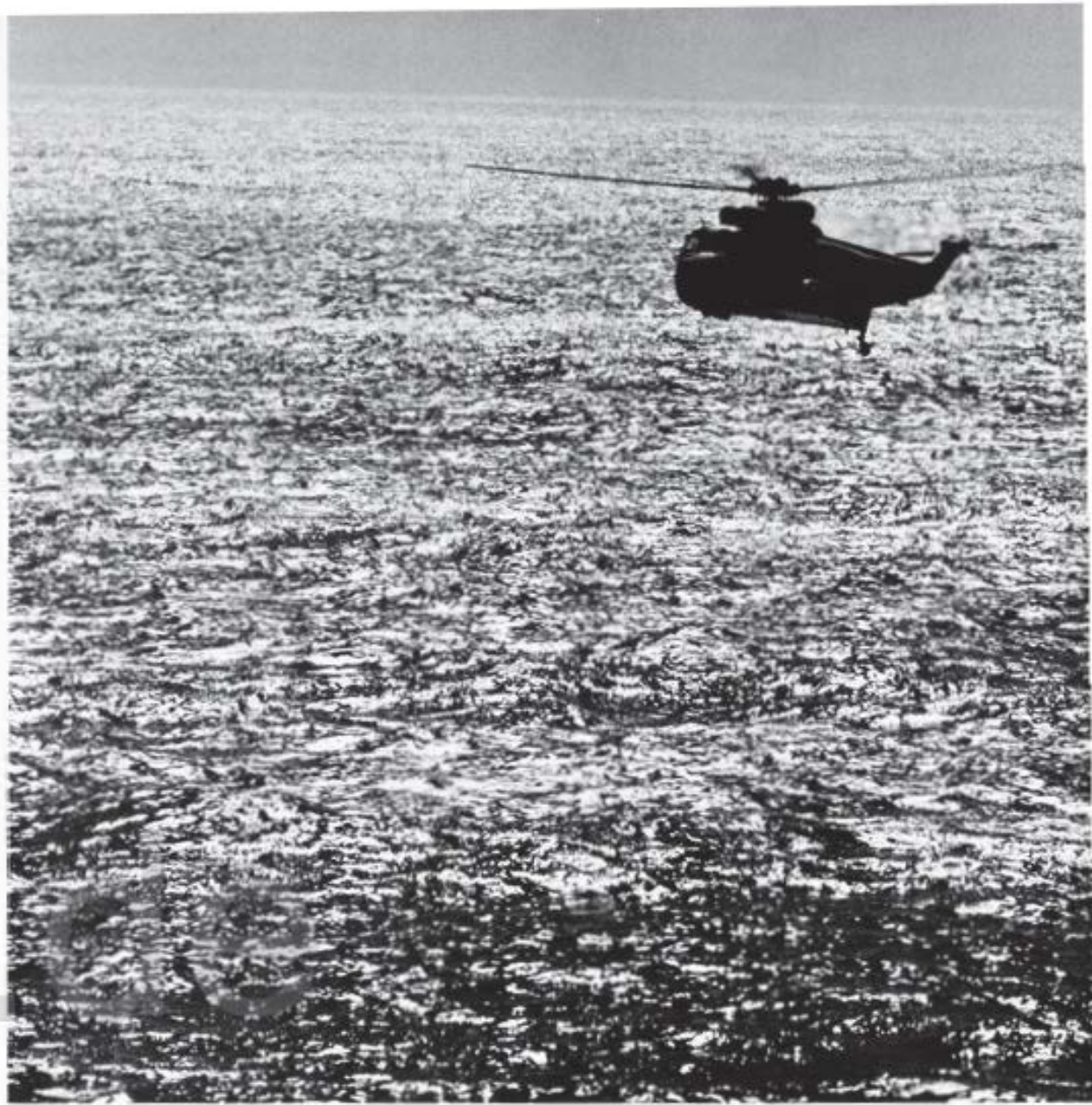
As the rocket hurtled the trio of Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins, and Edwin Aldrin into space, the men of USS HORNET waited patiently on station in the primary abort area some 1650 miles south, southwest of Hawaii.



In mid-May HORNET returned to Long Beach from her third Vietnam deployment which included a brief detour to the Sea of Japan as a result of the EC-121 incident. Her schedule called for several months in the shipyard for minor repairs, interspersed with occasional, short at-sea periods.

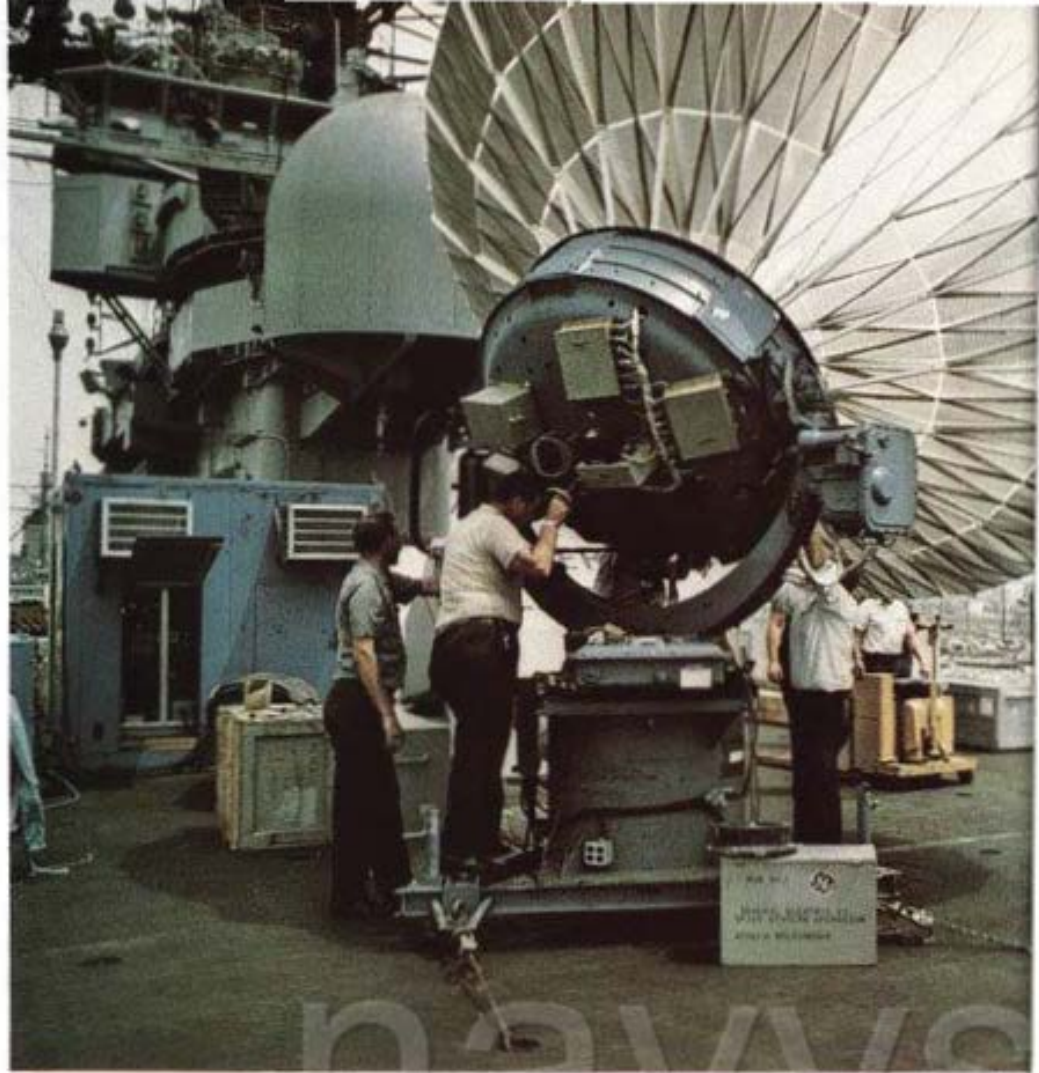
Later in May, after a week-long refresher training cruise in which rumors ran rampant that she would become involved in the Apollo program later that year, HORNET returned to the yards only to discover that she, in fact, had been selected as the Apollo 11 recovery ship.





## PREPARATIONS

A successful recovery mission requires close cooperation between the ship and civilian organizations. After several planning conferences with representatives of NASA, NELC, ABC, GE, and Western Union, HORNET began what was to be hectic weeks of preparation. After spaces had been allotted, special wiring installed, and equipment fitted out, HORNET assumed a new face and mission, that of a primary recovery ship for the first men to walk on the Moon.

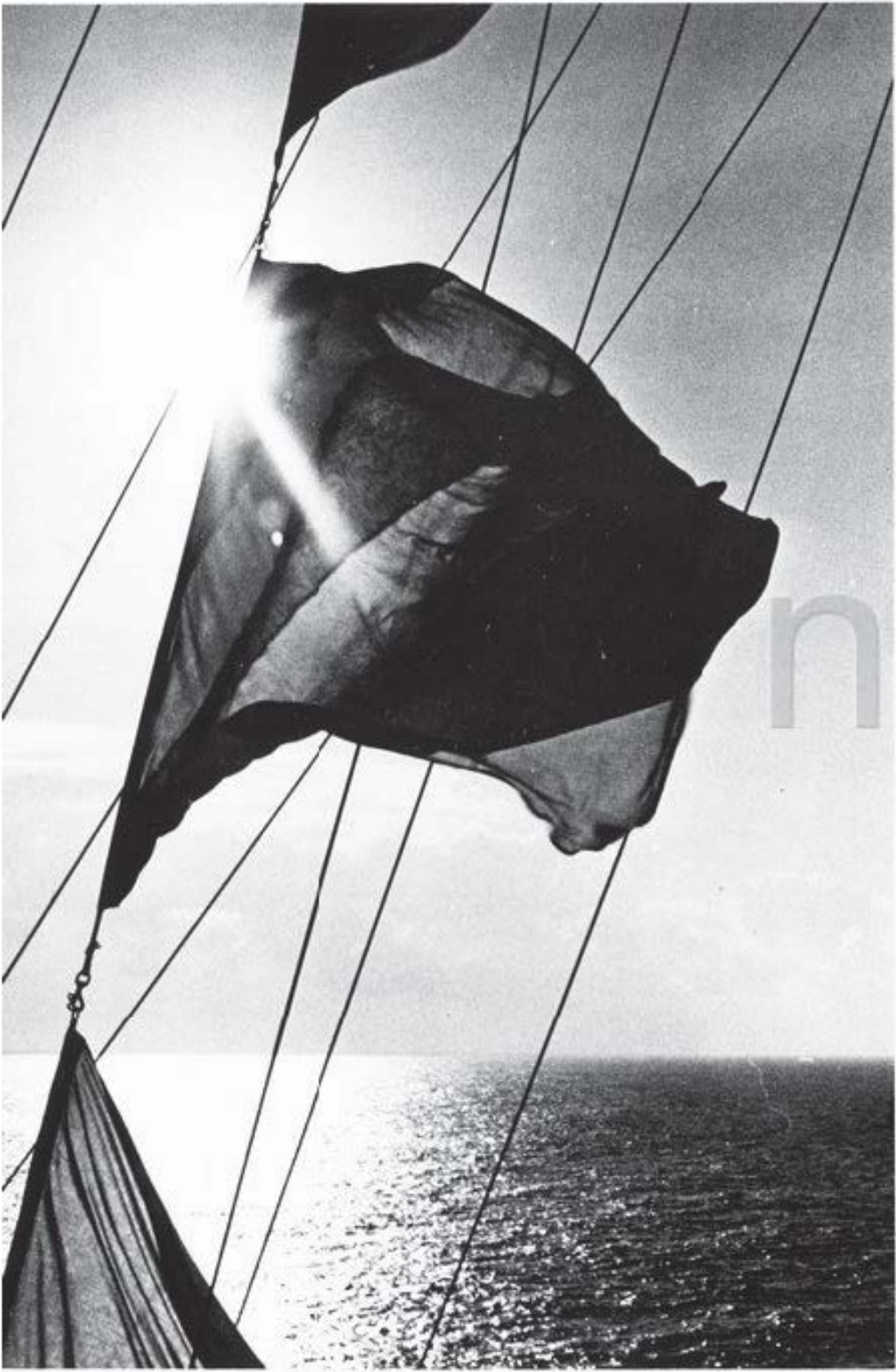




Before long HORNET'S flight deck was spotted with NELC's communications hut, Mutual's broadcast van, and GE's now traditional "bubble", which housed the satellite communications antenna. Hangar Bay #2 also became filled with two of ABC's imposing, white, broadcasting vans.

As HORNET steamed away from its homeport of Long Beach, it had readied itself outwardly for splashdown which was now less than a month away.





HORNET set her course for Hawaii. Each department prepared itself in support of HORNET's role as PRS, however, none lost sight of the necessary routine jobs. The unheralded majority of the crew worked on as usual.







# HAWAII

The hula girls and the local television stations were on hand to welcome HORNET to Hawaii. The magnetic appeal of Waikiki's beaches and nightlife drew the crew from the ship. For one week the crew relaxed on the sun-drenched beaches, eyed scant bikinis, and absorbed the panoramic beauty of isolated coves, pounding surf, and luxuriant, green hills,

Few wasted any liberty, for all knew that there would be little idle time in the next four weeks.

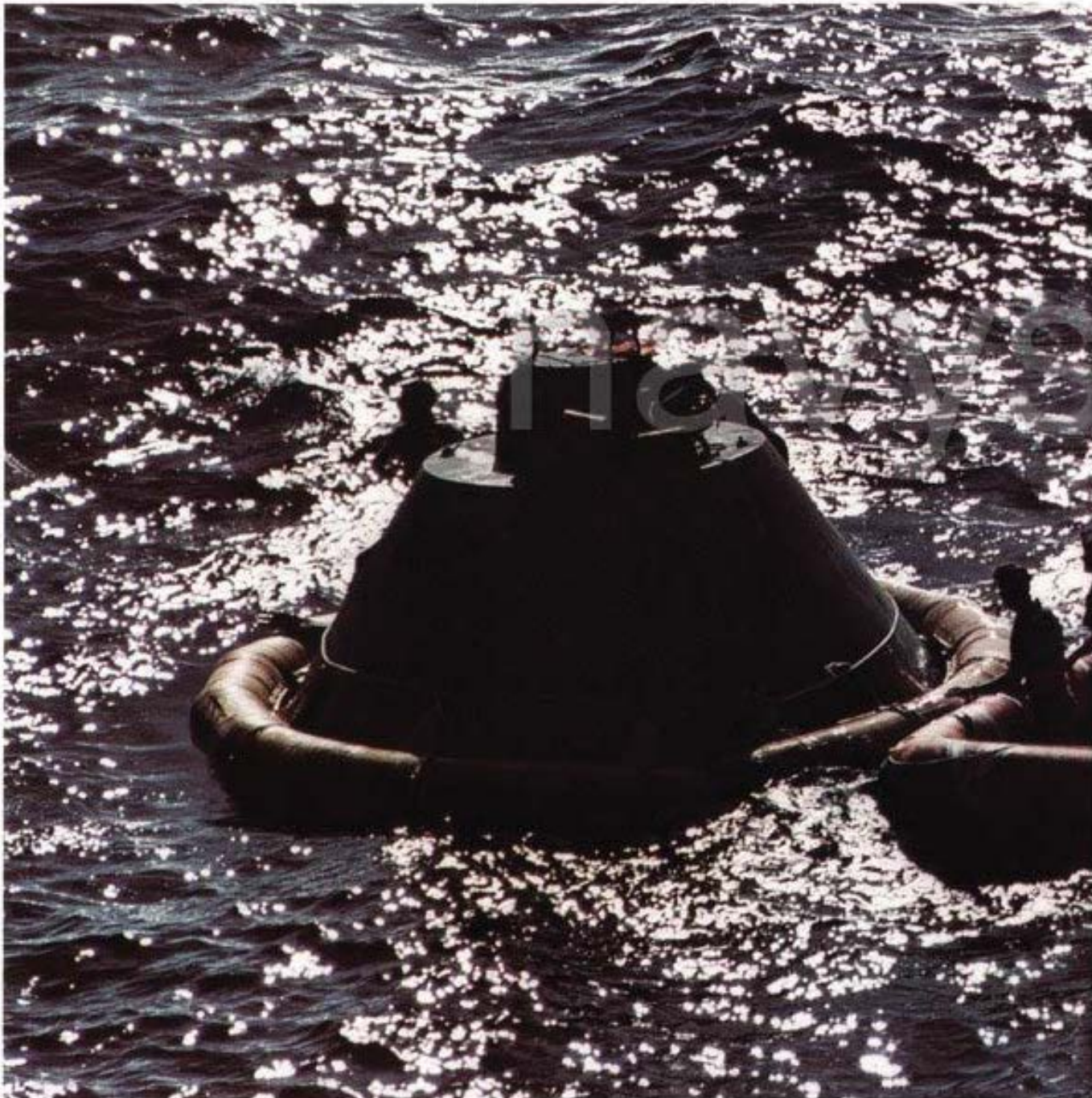


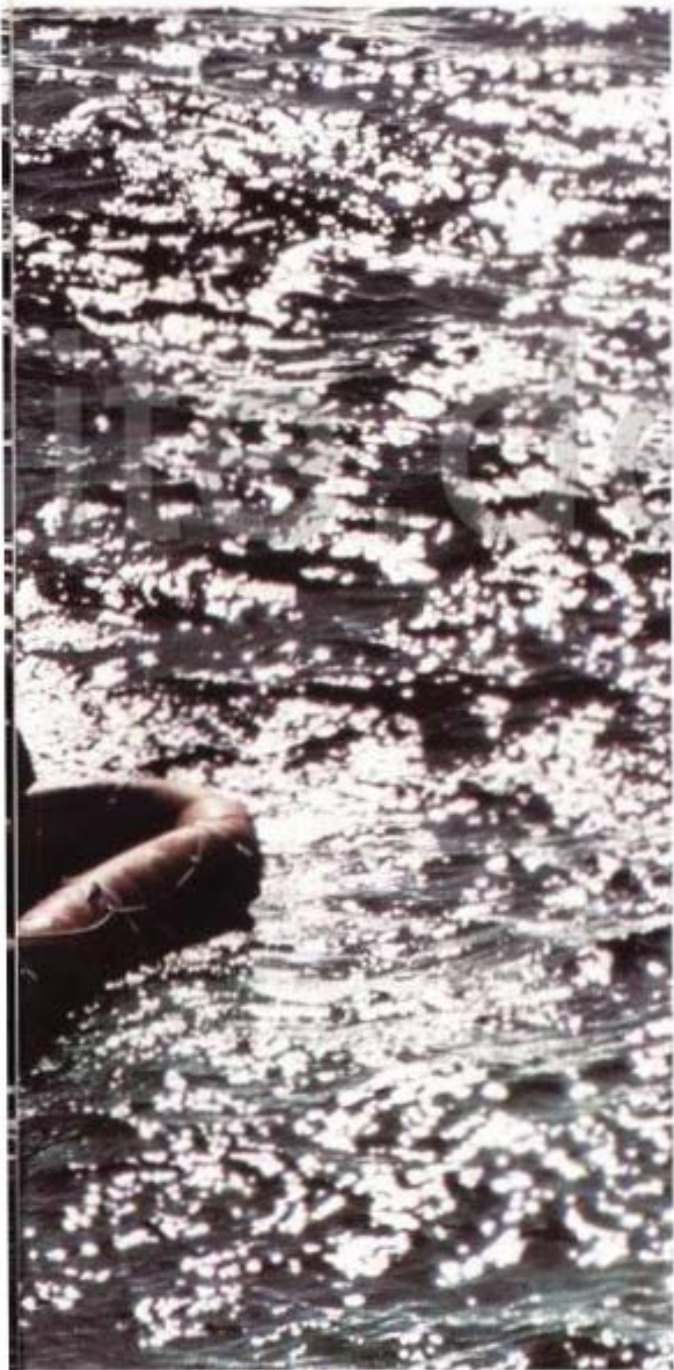
During the short respite in Pearl HORNET on-loaded the last two pieces of equipment needed for the mission: the NASA boilerplate, the mock-up of the command module with which she would practice recovery operations and the two, sleek Mobile Quarantine Facilities in which the astronauts would be isolated. Moreover, this week allowed crewmembers to get acquainted with the more than 120 personnel from NASA, GE, and ABC who would embark in HORNET as part of the recovery crew.



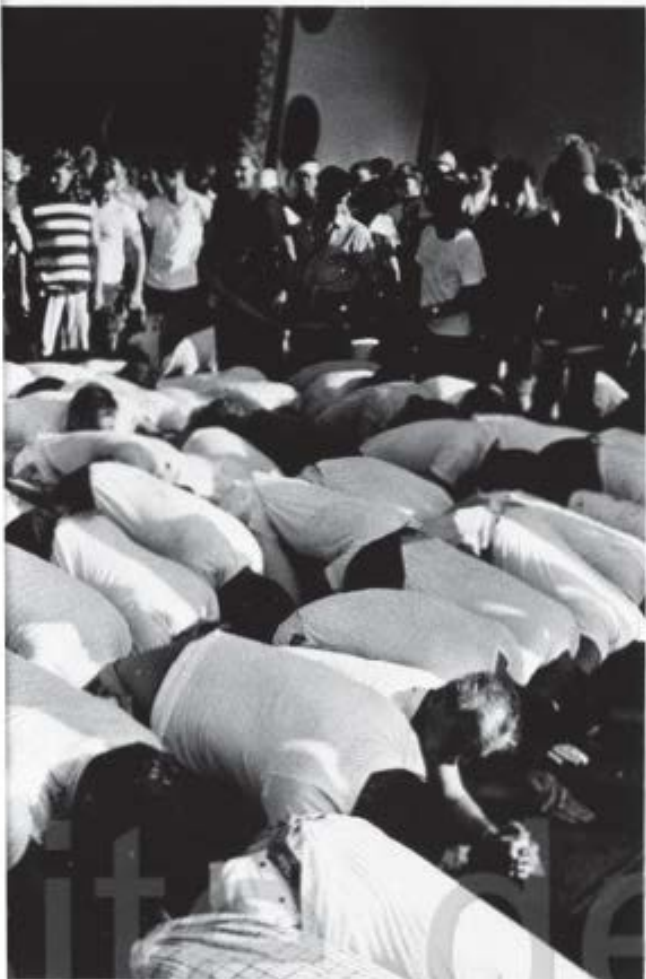


While operating within the local Hawaiian waters, HORNET undertook its first simulated exercise (SIMEX), complete with boilerplate, swimmers, and lifeboat crew. The initial attempts at recovering the module showed the need for improvement and training in all aspects. Through continual practice, however, the problems of maneuvering the 44,000 ton ship at slow speeds, attaching the flotation collar, and manipulating the recovery crane were ironed out.









Two days after departing Pearl Harbor, HORNET crossed the Equator and entered the Domain of Neptunus Rex, the Ruler of the Raging Main.

Having renewed his old friendship with HORNET's commanding officer, Captain Seiberlich, Neptunus and his loyal following of trusted shellbacks began the traditional initiatory rites upon the apprehensive hordes of lowly pollywogs. The gaily costumed shellbacks, brandishing their cudgels, and the variety of pungent odors struck the naive pollywogs as anything but benign. As the ceremonies came to a close the Royal Order of Shellbacks had increased their fold by over 600, some of whom were seen sporting new hair cuts and beauty marks.

As the crew returned to their work, their thoughts turned away from the crossing and to the mission and the three astronauts who were gliding through space on their way to becoming the first men on the Moon.



# MOONBOUND

As astronauts Collins, Aldrin, and Armstrong sped through the empty void of space, a spectacular array of breathtaking beauty opened before their eyes. A sight witnessed only by a handful of space pioneers, the Earth and the Moon assumed new dimensions in size and color.





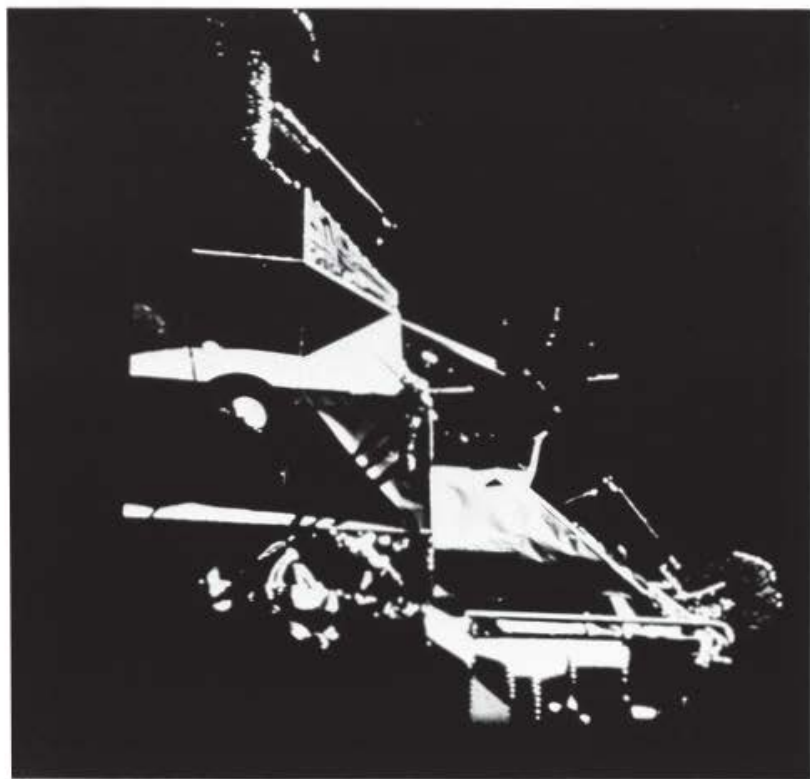
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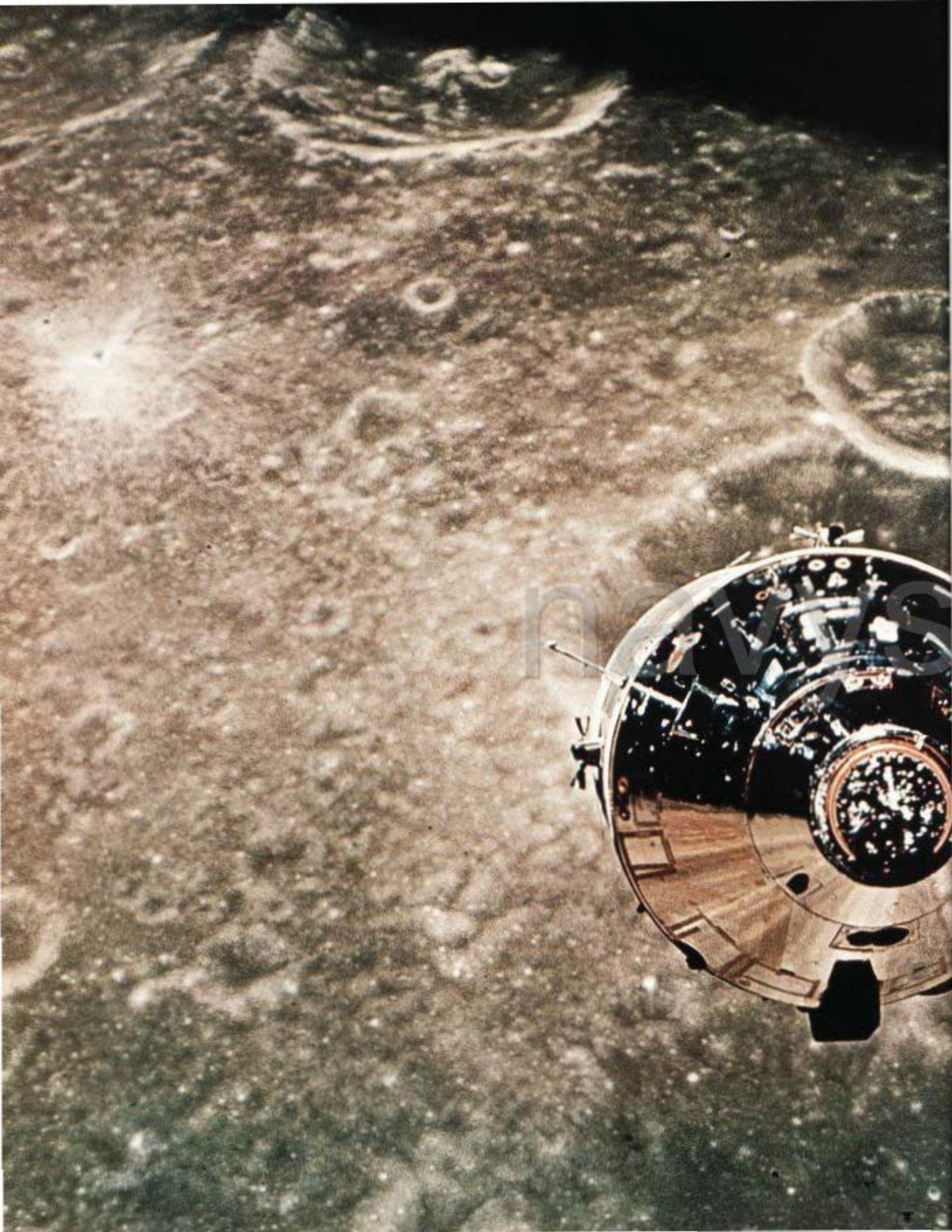






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As the LEM separated from the CM and made its descent to the projected landing area within the Sea of Tranquility, it captured these sights in photographs.

A quarter of a million miles away in the Pacific Ocean HORNET like the rest of the world waited and listened to hear progress reports of the flight.





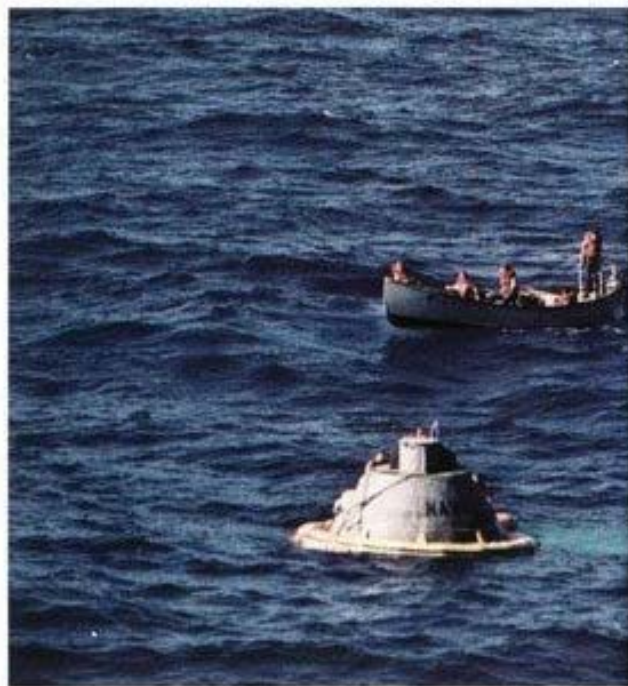
## SIMEX

In addition to the civilians and the normal ship's company awaiting splashdown day were 250 members of three specialized recovery teams. Helicopter Anti-submarine Squadron 4, veteran of Apollo 8 and 10, provided the pickup capabilities; whereas, Early Warning Squadron 111 acted as the vital communications relay from the command module to the ship and to Hawaii. Handling the recovery operations from the sea was the task of Underwater Demolition Team 11, whose members were responsible for stabilizing the spacecraft after splashdown, assisting the astronauts' egress from the command module, and initiating the decontamination procedures prior to the astronauts' 21 day isolation period.





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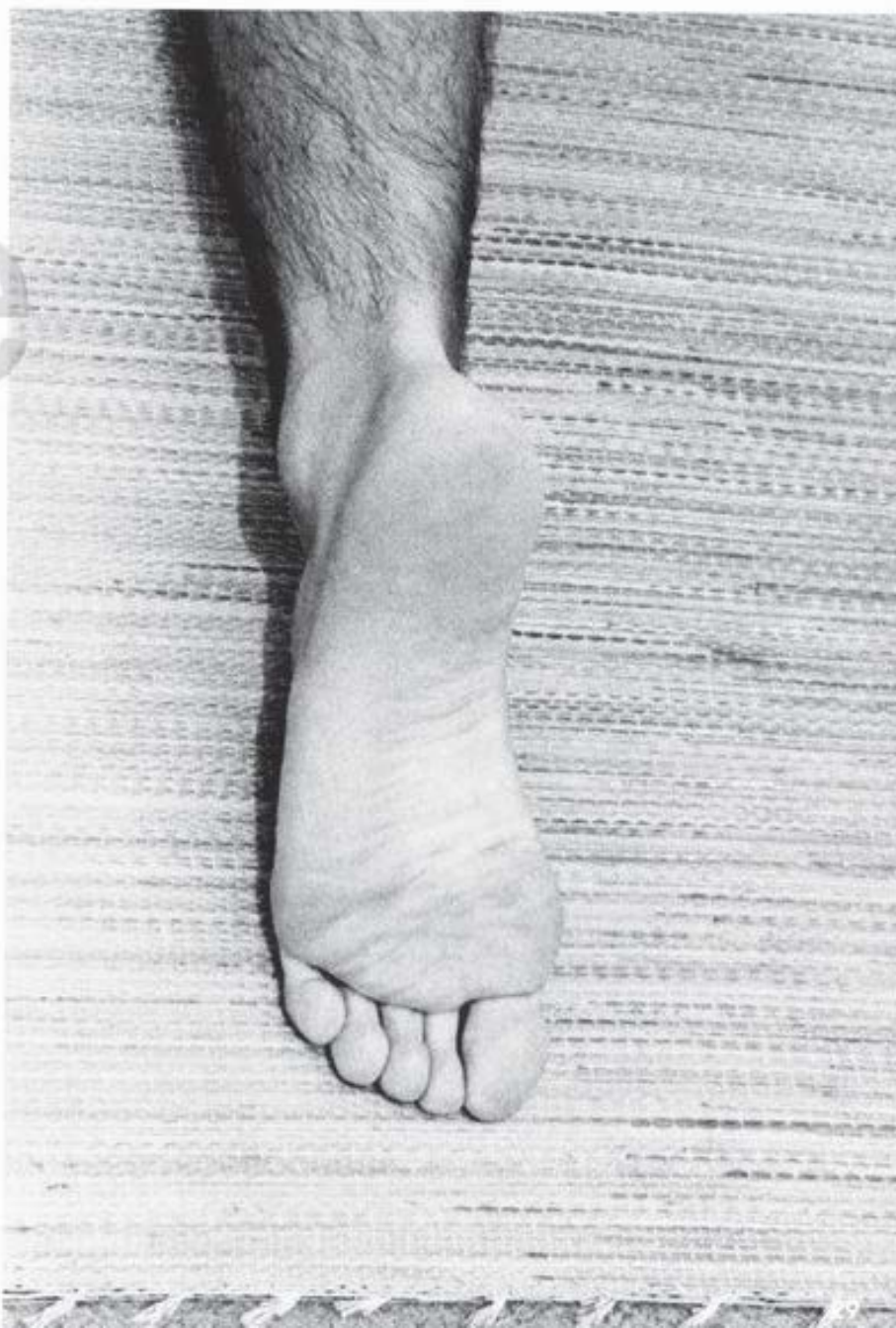
HORNET and her recovery teams showed constant improvement over the initial SIMEX period. Captain Seiberlich imposed a rigorous training schedule in which night and early morning operations were not uncommon. HORNET trained under every possible sea condition and at every conceivable hour of the day so that she had trained for any contingency that might arise. Furthermore, in addition to the primary recovery teams, HORNET trained two complete backup teams in the event of sickness or casualty.



On this mission work took on various forms. If it was not the strenuous training sessions, then it was an underway replenishment, necessitated by the lengthy period of independent steaming.



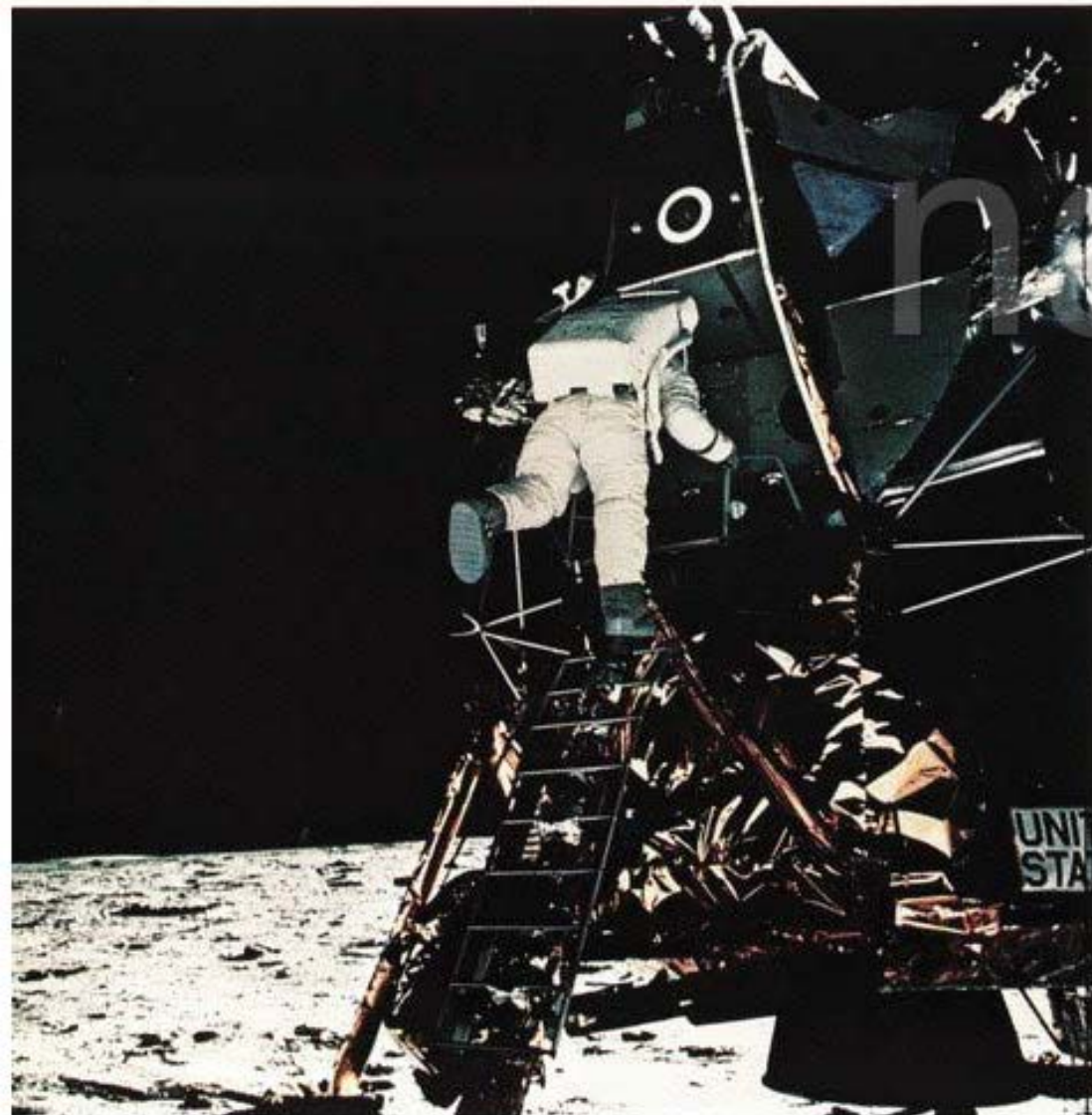
Despite the gruelling work load, most found time to siesta on the flight deck and catch a few rays of the warm, relaxing equatorial sun.



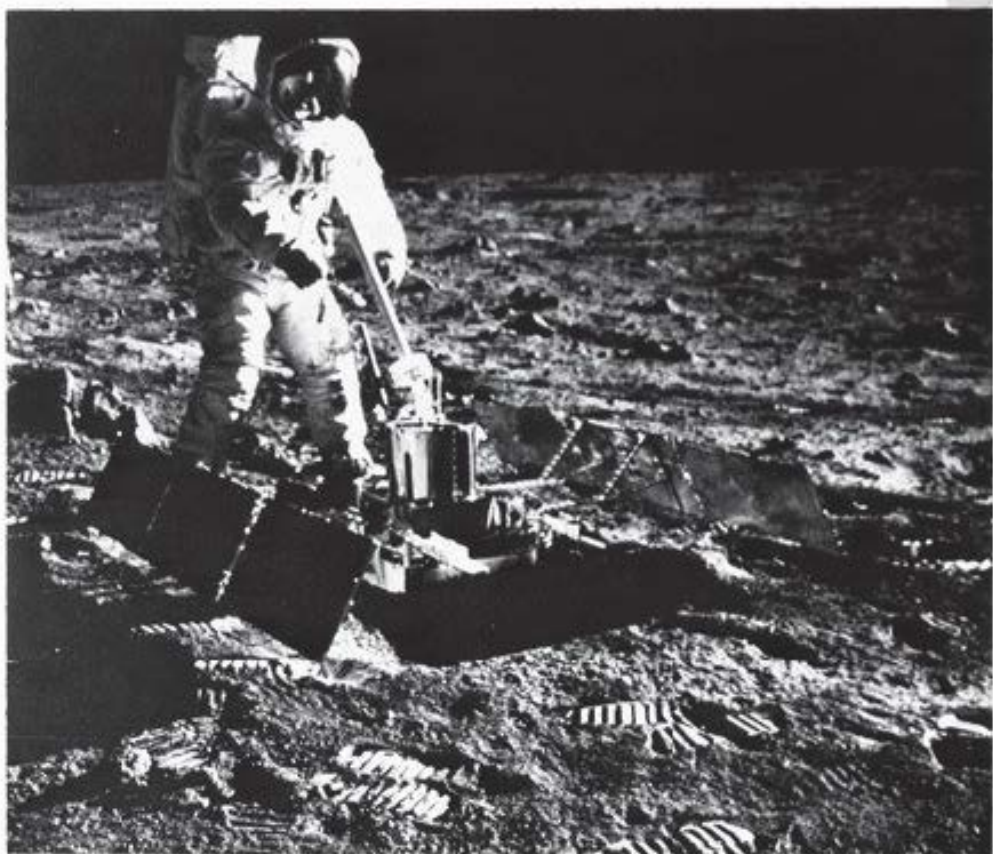
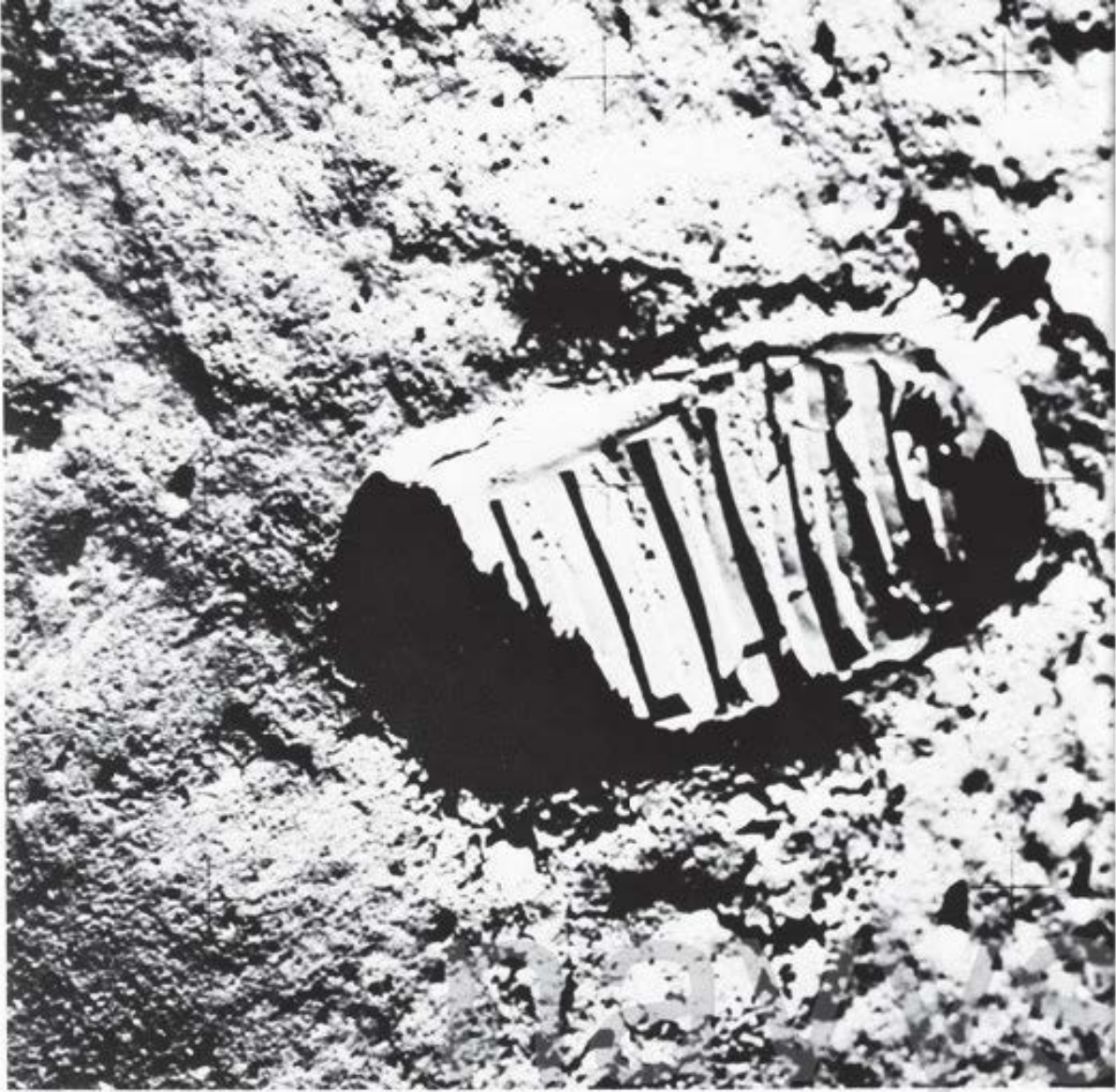
## MOONWALK

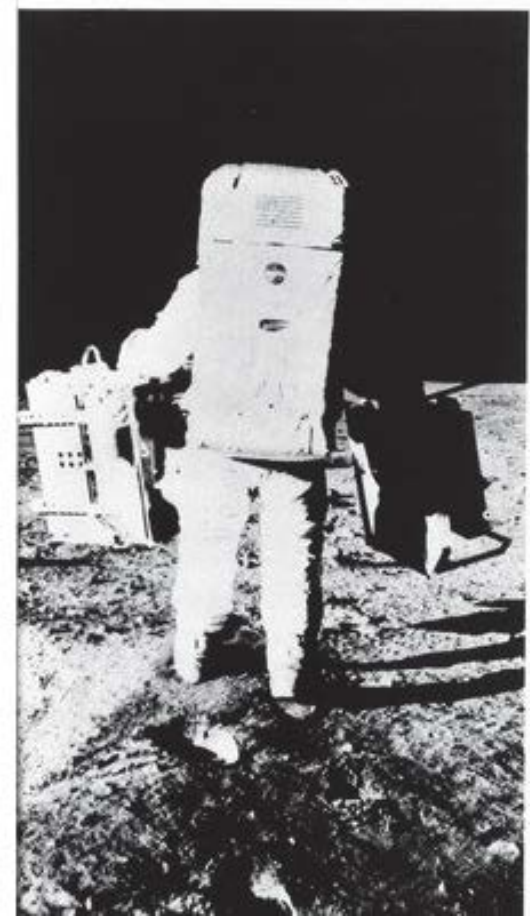
While the world waited and listened, astronauts Aldrin and Armstrong piloted the LEM on its rendezvous with immortality. The suspense mounted as the hovering spacecraft churned up clouds of lunar dust. Finally the words, "Tranquility base, the Eagle has landed," echoed back to Earth. With an intense feeling of pride for the astronauts, individuals around the world breathed a silent "Well done!"

As astronaut Armstrong descended the ladder and gingerly stepped onto the lunar surface, he no longer represented NASA or the United States but rather mankind and its age-old desire to conquer the unknown which the Moon symbolized.







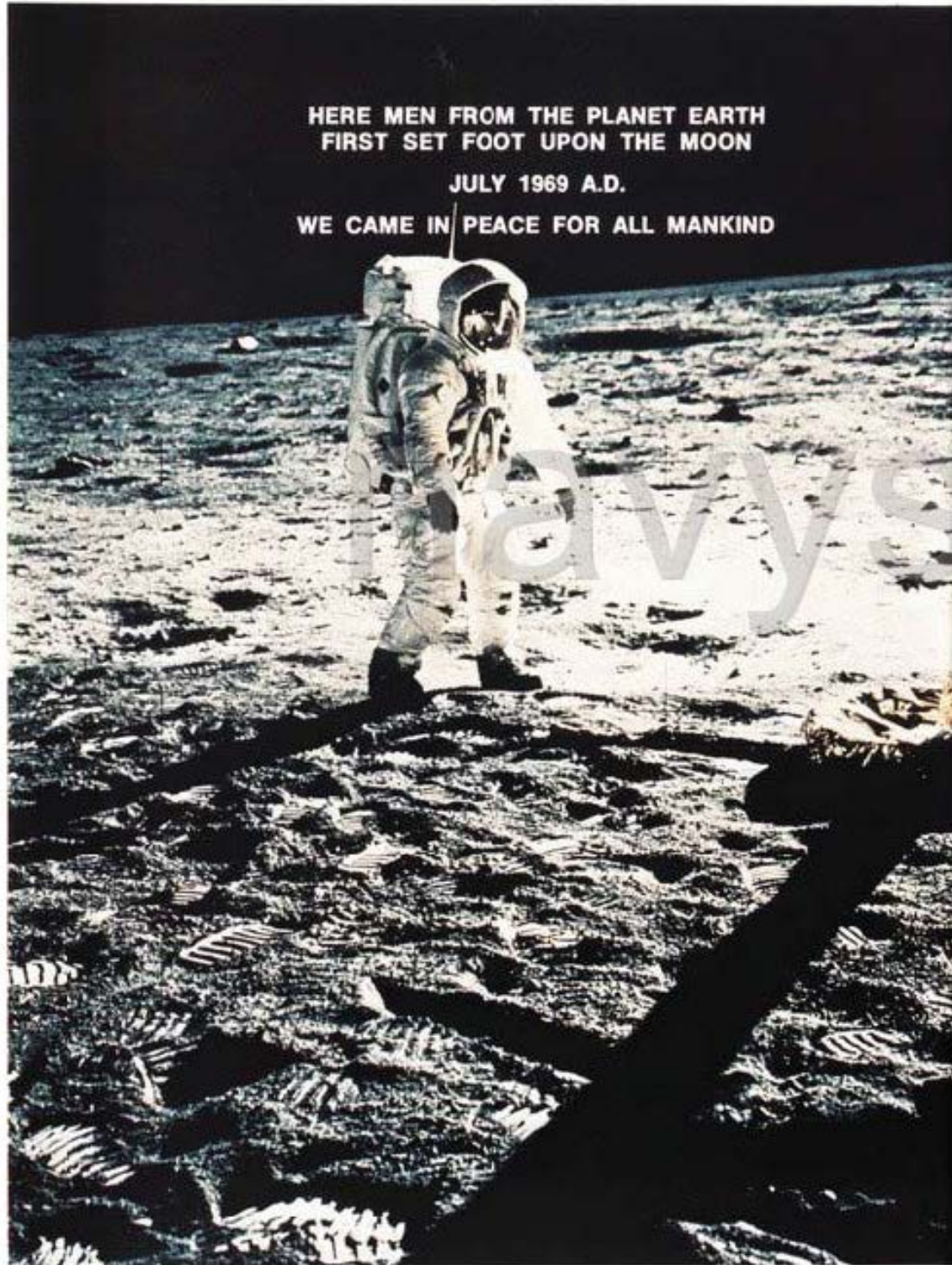


Once the astronauts' pulse and heart rates calmed from the excitement of the landing, Aldrin and Armstrong turned their attention to the scientific considerations of the mission. In their brief stay on the Moon they were able to set up equipment for measuring the effect of solar winds, as well as a seismograph for detecting possible Moon quakes. The astronauts were also able to initiate a study of the lunar surface, taking samples of the silty outer layer and core samples of the deeper base rock.

Having performed their scientific duties, the astronauts took time to pay tribute to the nation that supported them on their voyage. Unfurling the American flag held waving by thin wires in the airless void, astronauts Armstrong and Aldrin then spoke to President Nixon in the White House.

A small plaque commemorating the historic occasion was left on the lunar surface, displaying the signatures of three astronauts and the President and bearing the inscription:

**HERE MEN FROM THE PLANET EARTH  
FIRST SET FOOT UPON THE MOON  
JULY 1969 A.D.  
WE CAME IN PEACE FOR ALL MANKIND**





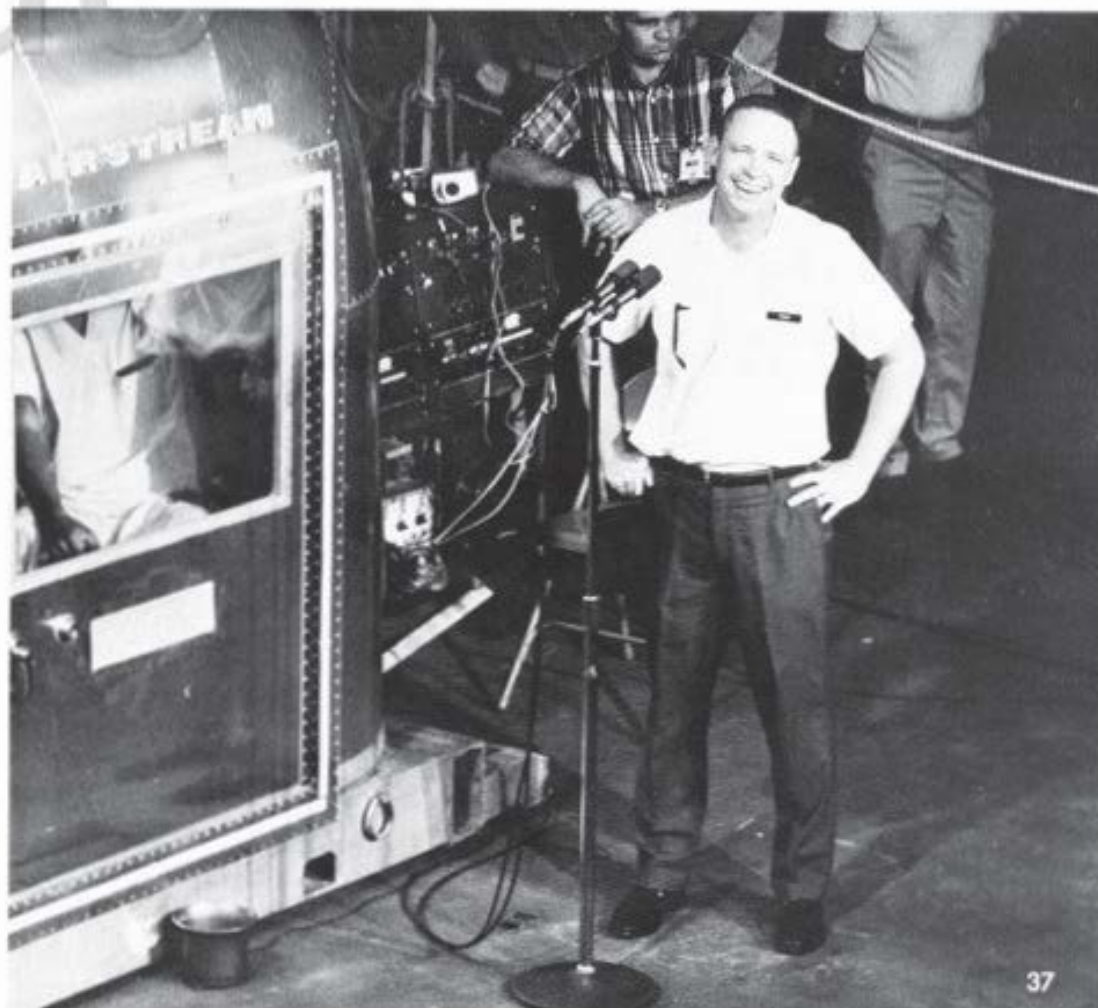
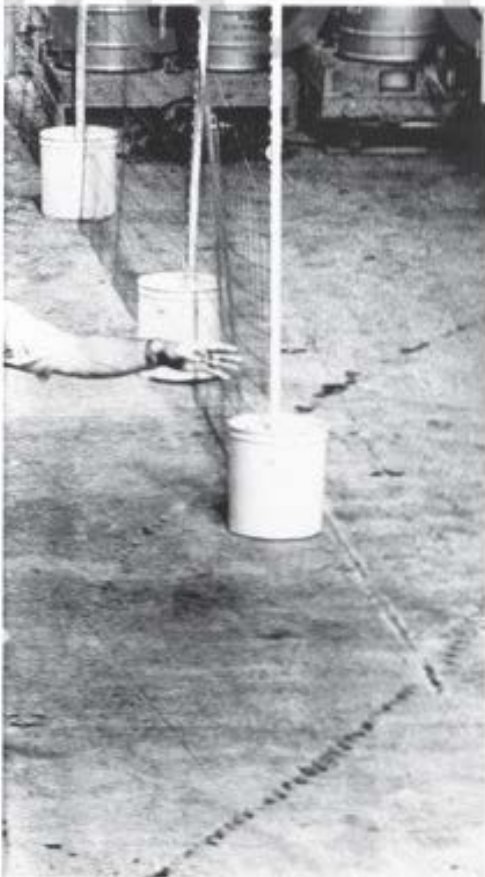




With the knowledge that the astronauts, having completed their lift-off and docking procedures, were speeding back to Earth, HORNET finalized preparations for splashdown day, July 24. Although HORNET had 16 SIMEXES under her belt, two days of dress rehearsals were necessary to place the various aspects of the recovery in perspective.

Considerations such as security for the arrival of President Nixon, decontamination of the astronauts both in the water and on board, and even the placement of lights for the television cameras were discussed and analyzed.

The final rehearsals were exact in every detail, complete with Chaplain Piirto acting the part of the President. Their aim was to ensure that all participants were thoroughly versed in their duties.



The morning of July 24 found HORNET on station nearly 1,000 miles southwest of Hawaii. By 4:00 A.M. the ship was bustling with activity as the entire crew anxiously awaited the arrival of President Nixon. HORNET was the first stopover for the President in his world-wide goodwill tour.

At 5:12 A.M. the announcement over the 1MC, "United States arriving, flight deck," signified to most that recovery day was indeed here. President Nixon was greeted by Admiral McCain, Commander-in-Chief Pacific, Rear Admiral Davis, Commander Task Force 130, Captain Seiberlich, and Dr. Paine, NASA administrator.

After a brief explanation of the MQF by Dr. Stonesifer, assistant NASA project officer, the President was led to the flag bridge from where he would witness the splashdown and recovery operations.





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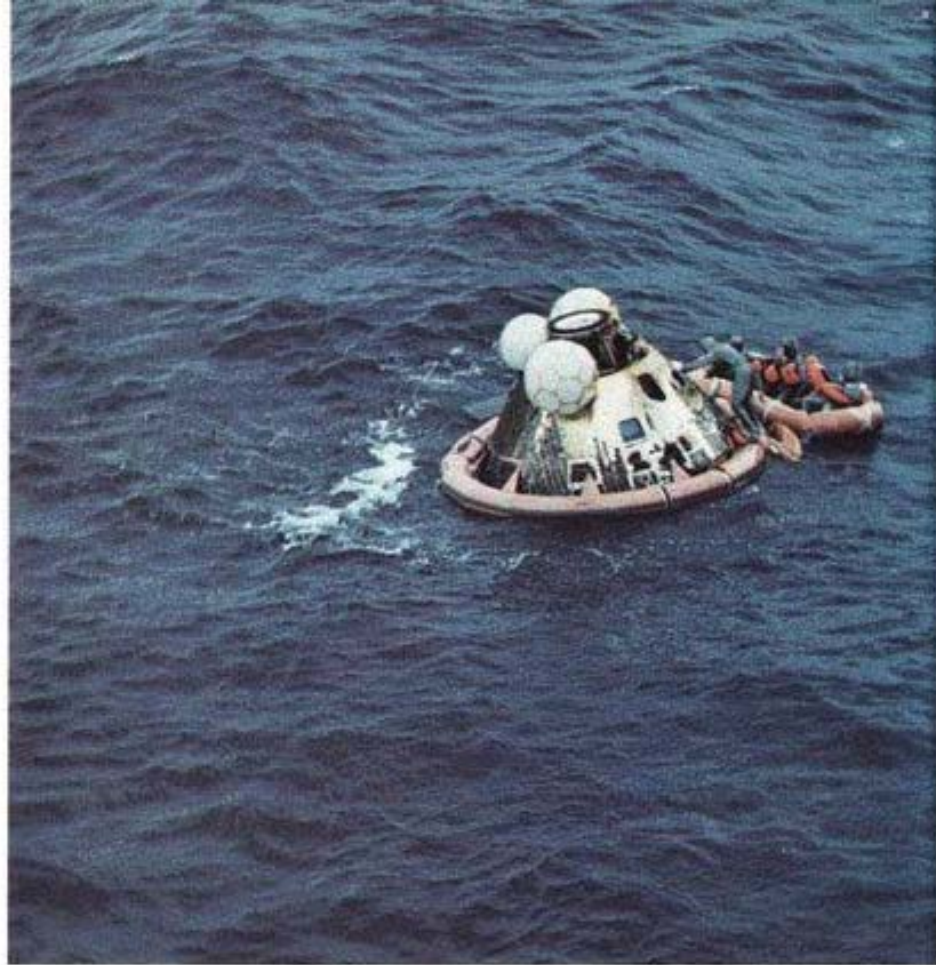
As the command module propelled itself toward Earth, the trio of astronauts made their final preparations for re-entry into the atmosphere. The narrowing of the gap between them and their eventual splashdown point in the Pacific caused a gradual reversal in the dimensions they had so recently adopted while standing on the Moon. The Earth appeared to regain its former magnitude while the Moon grew smaller with each passing minute. For them and those who would follow, however, the dimensions would never retain their previous absolute character, for they had walked on the moon.

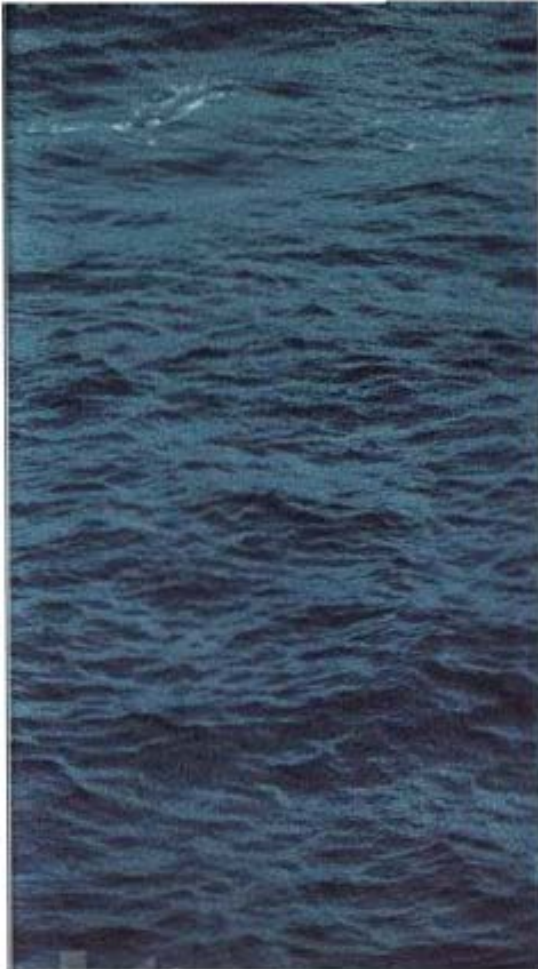




## SPLASHDOWN

Unfortunately for President Nixon and other observers on HORNET'S flight deck, the overcast, early morning sky obscured the majority of the spectacular re-entry burn. The command module, travelling over 25,000 miles per hour, entered the Earth's atmosphere and left a trail of flames nearly 200 miles in length as it slowed for its splashdown several miles from HORNET.





Splashdown occurred approximately forty minutes after the arrival of the President. The module landed in a stable two position, yet it righted itself immediately. The recovery helos were hovering above the module and the swimmers were in the water, attaching the flotation collar within minutes of splashdown.

After the completion of decontamination procedures in the raft, the three astronauts were hoisted by net into the primary recovery helicopter and transported aboard HORNET.



## HORNET PLUS THREE



As the astronauts emerged from their helicopter in their biological isolation garments, they were greeted by Dr. Stullken, NASA's project officer, and an exuberant throng of HORNET crewmembers. They immediately entered the MQF, which was their temporary home until their arrival in Houston.

Their presence aboard HORNET represented the fulfillment not only of years of research and training but moreover of HORNET's motto, HORNET PLUS THREE, Captain Seiberlich's pledge that HORNET would return safely, carrying the three astronauts.





Obviously pleased by the recovery of the astronauts, President Nixon officially welcomed the trio back to Earth. Congratulations were in order as the President and the assembled crowd gave the space pioneers a rousing ovation. The joviality of the ensuing conversation was surpassed only by the intense feeling of pride for being an American.

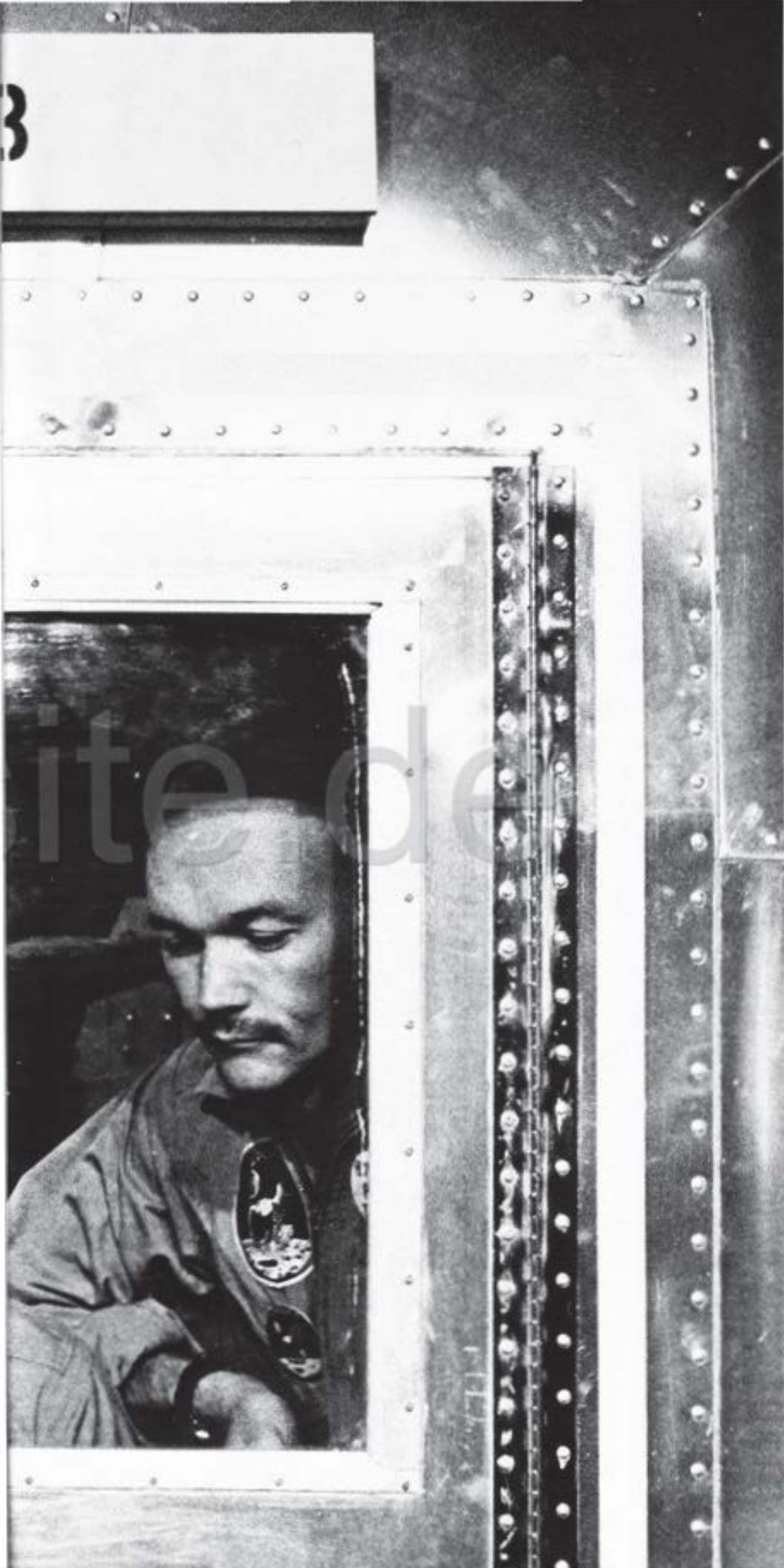




Photo by PHCS Robert Lawson

# HORNET +





Even while the astronauts were receiving the plaudits of the President and dignitaries aboard HORNET and the millions of viewers around the world, they did not forget that their accomplishment was the outgrowth of great sacrifice on the part of others besides themselves. They asked that a moment of silence be observed in order to pay tribute to the astronauts who lost their lives in a flash fire at Cape Kennedy Jan. 27, 1967.



After a short prayer, delivered by Chaplain Piirto, and a few parting remarks to the astronauts, President Nixon was led to the flight deck.



Topside the President chatted briefly with Captain Seiberlich, congratulating him and his crew for their letter-perfect recovery of the astronauts. President Nixon evoked consternation from his security escort as he broke away from his entourage and personally congratulated members of HORNET's

flight deck crew.

As the presidential helicopter cleared HORNET'S flight deck to continue its world-wide tour, HORNET readied itself for the delicate task of plucking the command module with its priceless lunar samples from the ocean.

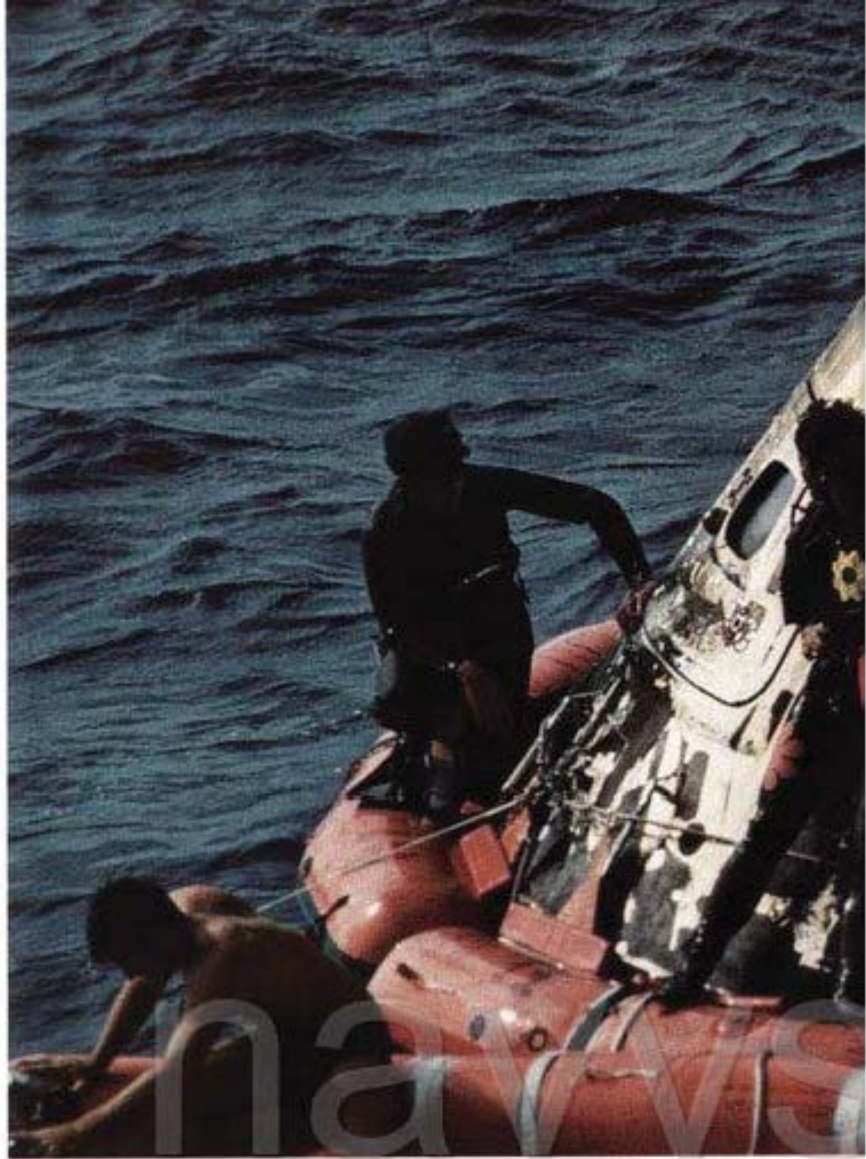




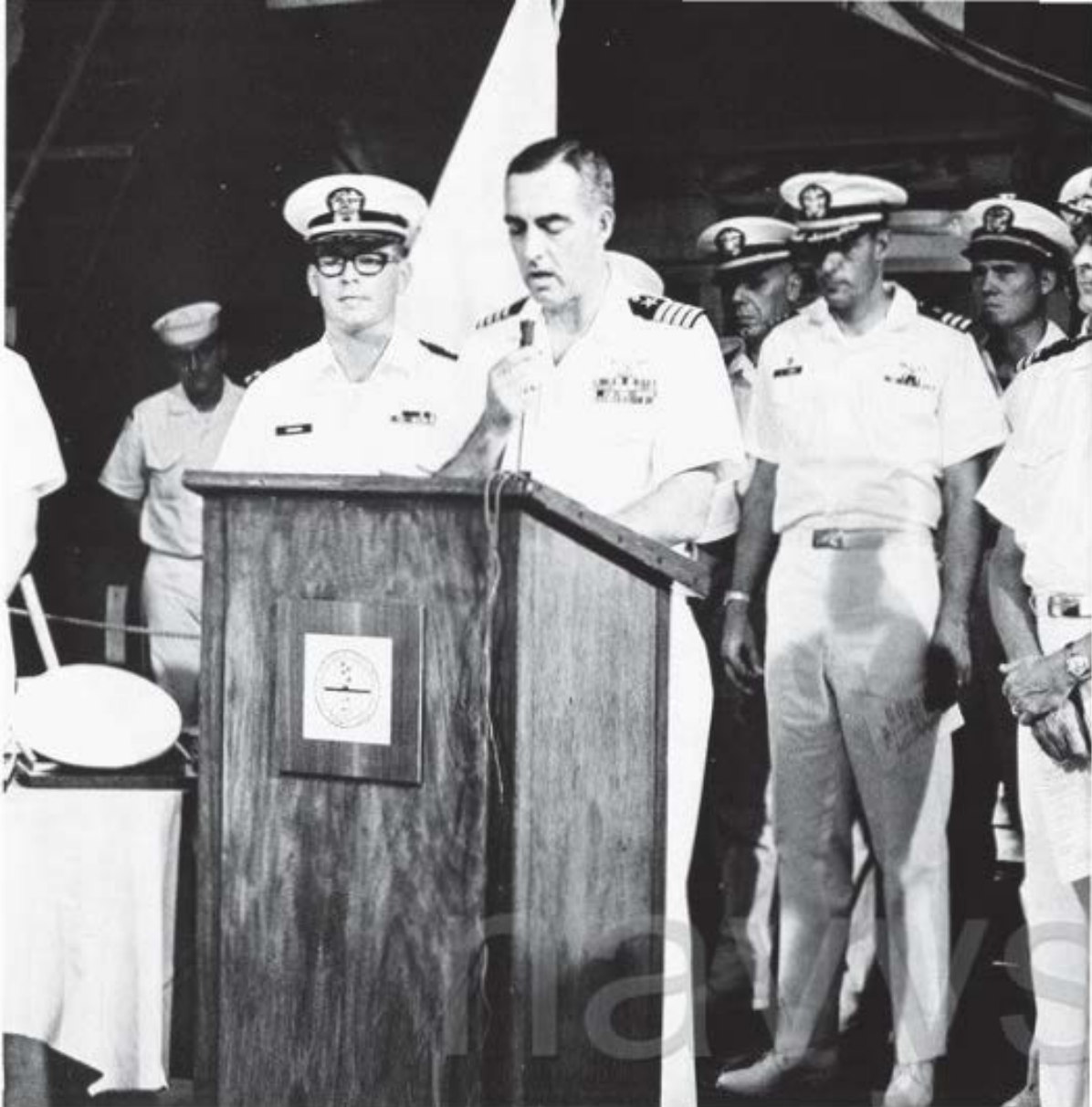
## RECOVERY

Cooperation was the keynote to the success of the Apollo 11 mission. In the concluding phase of the recovery, the pickup of the module, the necessity for teamwork among the swimmers, crane operators, and the deck force on elevator #3 was paramount.

After the swimmers had attached the resilient nylon line to the module, the crane hoisted the spacecraft onto the deck with the assuredness that comes from constant practice. The crane lowered the module without a hitch into the awaiting cradle in which it would rest until it reached Houston. As the module nestled into the cradle, all breathed a sigh of relief as the weeks of anticipation and training came to a close.







After a pleasant night's sleep in the MQF, the astronauts participated in the shipboard ceremonies held in HORNET's hangar bay. Despite the glass barrier which isolated them from Admiral Davis and Captain Seiberlich, the astronauts were welcomed aboard by the Captain, who presented the trio with several commemorative gifts. The astronauts reciprocated by officiating at the re-enlistment of four HORNET crewmembers.







A broomstick, signifying a mission well done, flew from the mast as HORNET steamed into Pearl Harbor. From an aerial view the sailors in their freshly-pressed, white uniforms appeared as a border of white trim around the ship as they stood in the flight deck parade. HORNET proudly boasted her success by displaying the command module on the flight deck.

On the pier a crowd of over 2,500 awaited to greet the veteran carrier and her unique passengers.

Once HORNET had moored alongside and off-loaded the MQF, Captain Seiberlich joined the pierside ceremonies with Admiral McCain and Governor Burns, who welcomed the astronauts to Hawaii and commended HORNET and her crew for their outstanding recovery. Admiral McCain followed and once again expressed his personal congratulations.





## MISSION ACCOMPLISHED



From the pier-side ceremonies a motor caravan escorted the MQF to Hickam Air Force Base, where a C-141 was waiting to transport the astronauts back to Houston on the last leg of their journey which had begun two weeks earlier. Three weeks of exhaustive tests and examinations lay ahead of the astronauts. Scientists desired to determine whether the astronauts had, in fact, carried any harmful germs back from the Moon. At the same time geologists would analyze the composition of the lunar samples in order to unlock the mystery of the Moon's origin.

Meanwhile, HORNET crewmembers longed to return to Long Beach, where they would be reunited with their families after their historic six week mission.





navy



... TOMORROW THE STARS

# HORNET APOLLO ELEVEN RECOVERY CRUISEBOOK

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SPECIAL APPRECIATION TO NASA  
AND NORTH AMERICAN ROCKWELL  
FOR PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE ASTRONAUTS  
AND THE MOONWALK



TAYLOR PUBLISHING COMPANY