

PSYCHOLOGY

Astronauts Well Adjusted

Although "superbly well-adjusted," the astronauts might have difficulty adjusting to not being able to travel in space, Lillian Levy reports from Cape Canaveral.

► ONE EXPERIENCE to which the "superbly well-adjusted Mercury astronauts" might not adjust would be not having a chance to fly in space, Dr. Robert B. Voas, psychologist and training officer for the astronauts, told SCIENCE SERVICE in an exclusive interview.

Dr. Voas, who considers each of the seven pioneer space pilots "a man in a million" in intelligence, training and maturity, said, "if any one did not get a chance to fly, this would be a bitter disappointment. Nothing could be more discouraging to any of these men than not getting into space."

The pilots could more easily accept a space try that ended fatally for one of them, Dr. Voas indicated, since "their previous military experience and training have prepared them for this."

Three years' training for a space mission has also geared them to understand and accept the hazards involved, even death, Dr. Voas explained. But it has not trained them to accept as a real possibility the fact that one or more of the team might not be launched into outer space.

"If a fatal accident should occur in a space try, the reaction would be increased determination to get on with the job," the psychologist said.

Dr. Voas assisted Project Mercury management in the selection of the nation's astronauts. He has supervised and coordinated the three-year program that has brought the seven space pilots to their present high level of efficiency. The program has developed their ability to adjust to any eventuality except not getting a chance to test their training in a space environment.

In the three years in which he has worked with and observed these men in minute detail, he has not noticed any basic change in character or personality, he said.

"Their qualities of intelligence and maturity merely have sharpened, and the limelight under which they operate has made them more restrained. They also have learned generally to conceal annoyance," Dr. Voas said.

"Sitting around and waiting annoys the men most. They are men to whom activity is essential and are not inclined to be philosophical about anything that makes them wait. But they have learned to be somewhat philosophical about weather delays," he observed.

Although the astronauts function and coordinate superbly as a team, they are men, not machines, and each has his own individuality, the training officer said.

U. S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Malcolm S. Carpenter is more inquisitive than the other astronauts. He is not one to readily accept generalities unless they can be backed up

with sufficient specifics. He is the most athletically inclined and enjoyed being weightless more than the other spacemen. Cmdr. Carpenter is the most even-tempered of the Mercury astronauts.

He is, like his associates, easy to know and talk to, but he and Air Force Capt. L. Gordon Cooper Jr. are perhaps the most reserved members of the team.

Astronaut Cooper, the youngest of the spacemen, is the most fascinated with all aspects of flying. He is, in a sense, more patient than the other men about delays in flight schedules, perhaps because he is the youngest of the group and therefore does not feel the pressure of time.

Marine Lt. Col. John H. Glenn Jr. is, according to Dr. Voas, perhaps the most concerned of all the men with the broad political, as well as scientific, implications of our space program. He is the most sensitive concerning the reaction his actions or statements may have on the public, particularly children. He corresponds frequently with youngsters.

A recent statement of his asking the press to concentrate more on the scientific aspects of his scheduled orbit and less on his personal life is a reflection, Dr. Voas believes, of Astronaut Glenn's pronounced awareness of the science and engineering underlying the manned space effort.

Astronaut Glenn is extremely aggressive, tremendously hard-driving and hard-working. "I would not want to compete with

John on anything, tiddlywinks included," if he wanted to win, the psychologist said.

Dr. Voas described Air Force Capt. Virgil I. Grissom as the quietest of the group, although "among the group, he is about as outgoing as any of them." He has a puckish sense of humor.

Navy Lt. Cmdr. Walter M. Schirra Jr. is the most jovial of the group and an accomplished storyteller. He has a special talent for management and demonstrates an outstanding capacity for engineering design. He assisted in the development of the Sidewinder missile, and now works on the pressure suit for the astronauts.

Navy Lt. Cmdr. Alan B. Shepard Jr. has a talent for making friends and influencing people. He has a great deal of management skill, thinks quickly and has a knack for saying the right thing at the right time. This may be because he is cool and objective in his personal reactions to people and situations, Dr. Voas suggested.

Air Force Maj. Donald K. Slayton is, for Dr. Voas, the most frustrating of the astronauts to observe. "He is the coolest and least perturbable under stress, the most placid and easygoing in flight."

Although all the astronauts demonstrate unusual intelligence and ability, none could be classified either as genius or near-genius, Dr. Voas said. Their life is the broad area of space exploration and their range of interest is confined largely to this area.

Astronauts Glenn and Carpenter would make the best teachers; Shepard and Schirra, the best managers in business or corporate organization. Shepard also would do well in public relations. The other men share the characteristics that lead to success.

To sum up, Dr. Voas said that the Mercury astronauts, as a team and as individuals, do credit to themselves and the nation, and would succeed in whatever they tackled.

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ANTI-STATIC CHEMICAL makes records and other vinyl resin products permanently resistant to static. Flakes of cigarette ash are shown here being attracted to the underside of an ordinary record, with none going to a test record containing the anti-static chemical, made by Armour Industrial Chemical Co., Chicago