

SPACE MEN HAVE LANGUAGE OF THEIR OWN

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They say you can't follow a ball game without a score card.

It is even more true that you can't follow the space race without a dictionary. And most dictionaries, even the last editions, won't do. You have to get a special "space" dictionary. For space men have a language all their own. Otherwise, as you read their journals and listen to their testimony, you find that while they are talking English, it is Greek to you.

There are two main causes for the trouble: these space men use words and abbreviations quite outside the vocabulary of the average person. Some they actually make up as they go along, since a lot of the things they talk about, and the problems they run into, have no earthly precedent. They are not only exploring a new universe; they are writing a new language.

Then, they purloin a lot of words and phrases you and I have been used to, but give

them a special meaning, a space reference we are ignorant of. The result is that while they are talking our language they are not always getting their message across.

One of the interesting things to watch in the "space" hearings on the Hill is the way congressmen, members of the space committee, start using the space language of the witnesses. And some have become quite a little "show-offie," it seems, at times. Still it is logical: when in space speak as the spacemen do.

Below are some samples of this new language, some of the simpler examples, for the more difficult ones are too difficult even to define in everyday language.

There are those words you and I use, but which spacemen have given new meaning: auntie, beast, console, grain, ivory tower, limb, pad, Principia, saint, Sea-Scout, silo, sunflower, touchdown, umbilical cord, to list only a few.

"Auntie" is the term for antimissile missile not your mother's sister; "beast" is the way they describe a large rocket; when they use the word "console" they don't mean a TV set or the keyboard of an organ, they mean the master instrument panel from which

rocket and missile launchings and tests are controlled. "Grain," as these space men use it, is not the seeds or fruits, or grasses, but the body of a solid propellant used in a rocket; "ivory tower" is not a place for meditation (or an editorial writer's office) but the vernacular for vertical test stand.

"Limb" is not an arm or leg, but the outer edge of a celestial body; "pad" is not a cushion, a path, a highway robber, an easy-paced horse, nor a beatnik's hideaway, but the base from which missiles and rockets are launched. "Principia" is not a Midwest college or a volume by Newton, but the code name for a project in advanced solid propellants.

"Saint" is not a particularly religious or holy person, but an Airforce study on how to inspect or police satellites. "Sea Scout" is not a branch of the Boy Scouts, but a four-stage solid-fueled rocket being developed for vertical problems of space.

"Silo" is not a vat for fodder but a missile shelter, a hardened vertical hole in the ground. "Sunflower" is not that large yellow-petalled member of the aster family, but a program to develop a spaceborn system based on solar radiation to supply power.

"Touchdown" is not a football scoring term, but the landing of a space vehicle on the surface of a planet. And to space men "umbilical cord" is any one of the servicing electrical or fluid lines between the ground and an uprighted rocket missile before the launch. "Sputnik," as we all now know, is the Russian name for man-made moons or satellites; but the full Russian designation is *Iskustvenyi Sputnik Zewli*, "artificial companion of the earth."

This Washington article hasn't tried to get into that large range of words, expres-

sions, terms, peculiar only to space men: *brehmsstrahlung*, *azusa*, *cryogenics*, *dysbarism*, *emissivity*, *jetavator*, *magneto-hydrodynamics*, *mechanoreceptor*, *spatiography*, *terrella*, etc., etc., etc. But I can assure you there are people who know what these mean, and even use them glibly in conversation.

For still a few years, undoubtedly, our present earthy vocabularies will suffice for most of us. But the time is surely coming when space language will be an integral part of daily conversation. Then, today's language gap will have been closed.

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BLINDNESS

The sympathetic and inquisitive old lady at the seashore was delighted and thrilled by an old sailor's narrative of how he was washed overboard during a gale and was only rescued after having sunk for the third time.

"And, of course," she commented brightly, "after you sank the third time, your whole past life passed before your eyes."

"I presoom as how it did, mum," the sailor agreed. "But bein' as I had my eyes shut, I missed it."