

SPACE CHIMP HOME AND DRY

This time it wasn't the missile itself that was the centre of attraction at Cape Canaveral - the Redstone is quite a missile - it was Ham that stole the headlines; Ham being the chimp they were going to send into space. They reckoned that if he could stand the strain, perhaps a man could, in a later experiment.

Rockets have been known to go wrong, of course, but Redstone is a very special one - the same kind that will be used to launch man into space - so as the chimp started on his advantage by being put into the rocket he was getting as much car as if he were a human being. Ham was on his way up now to the placed in the space capsule, at the top of the 83-foot missile. A man stood by to notify the firing crew when the chimp's container was properly fixed. Within seconds now would begin one of the crucial experiments of space-travel. Ham had often been in his container before, but this time it was the real thing.

100% success so far. This was the first stage of the rocket's flight, with the booster roaring away and behaving perfectly.

And off falls the booster, and little Ham is hurtling at 5,000 miles an hour, and subjected to forces 16 times greater than gravity. Out in the Atlantic the destroyer Ellison had spotted the capsule's parachute-descent into the water. It had hurtled 155 miles through space, and gone 40 miles higher than was intended. And now, a helicopter brought the capsule containing Ham on to the deck of a landing ship dock. Was the chimp still alive? They'd soon know. If heartfelt wishing could make him safe, he'd be all right.

How those seconds dragged out. To watchers it seemed as though they'd never get the container open. But they did, and, yes, there was Ham, alive and apparently none the worse for it. Little Ham has earned a place in the history of science - the chimp that took man a stage further in the exploration of space.