

# Launching of Astronaut May Take Place Today

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Florida skies cleared yesterday to make it a better than 50-50 chance that astronaut Alan B. Shepard Jr., will be the first American shot into space this morning.

The final countdown is slated to begin at 12:30 a.m., EST, if a midnight weather conference decides that seas and skies are right for the shot.

# Congress Adds 73 Judgeships

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress today passed and sent to the White House a bill to create 73 additional federal judgeships.

The House approved the measure first and the Senate quickly followed, both by voice vote.

In the House, passage followed a plea by Republicans that President Kennedy avoid partisanship in appointing the new judges, 10 in the circuit courts and 63 in the district courts.

Rep. Emanuel Celler, D-N.Y., chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, agreed the judgeships should not be prizes for deserving Democrats.

He added: "Being a realist, candor impels me to say that being a Democrat will not hurt one's chances for appointment."

# Jewish Veterans Testify

JERUSALEM (AP) — Battle-scarred veterans of desperate Jewish underground struggles in the ghettos of Lithuania and Poland confronted Adolf Eichmann from the witness stand yesterday.

Dr. Aaron Peretz, an Israeli physician who worked in the Jewish hospital at Kovno, Lithuania, said that in 1942 a Nazi order forbade Jewish women from becoming pregnant and having children.

# New Agency--

(Continued from page one) Eisenhower established during his second term.

Killian, former president of Massachusetts Institute of Technology and now chairman of the MIT Corp., headed the board under Eisenhower.

# McGuire Considers Switch

NEW YORK (AP) — Frank McGuire, basketball coach at the University of North Carolina, would agree to coach the New York Knickerbockers next year if he also is named general manager of the NBA club.

—Not too many years ago, Pennsylvania had a group of law enforcers called the Pennsylvania Mounted Police. Four troops were stationed in the state: at Punxsutawney, Reading, Wyoming and Greensburg.

# U.S. Balloon Ascends To New Record

ABOARD AIRCRAFT CARRIER ANTIETAM IN GULF OF MEXICO (AP)—Two Navy balloonists ascended about 21½ miles above the Gulf of Mexico yesterday. This was the greatest height above the earth's surface ever reached by a manned balloon.

One balloonist was fatally injured in the forced landing. The second naval scientist escaped injury.

Lt. Cmdr. Victor A. Prather, Bethesda, Md., the scientific observer on the flight, died aboard the carrier Antietam about one hour and 20 minutes after the crash.

Prather, a 34-year-old medical officer, apparently slipped from a helicopter sling as he was being lifted into the rescue craft.

The huge plastic balloon was launched just off the mouth of the Mississippi River from the flight deck of the carrier. It reached its maximum altitude of approximately 113,500 feet two hours and 36 minutes later at a point about 136 miles south of Mobile, Ala.

The huge balloon landed about 1½ miles off the port bow while Antietam was maneuvering to land it on the flight deck.

At launching, the elongated balloon stood as tall as a 40-story building.

# Ambassador to Belgium

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AP) — The new U.S. ambassador to Belgium, Douglas MacArthur II, arrived yesterday. He was ambassador to Tokyo. He replaces William A. M. Burden.

# Laos Military Representatives To Attend Front-line Conference

VIENTIANE, Laos (AP)—The government accepted ex-Premier Souvanna Phouma's invitation to a front-line peace conference today but will send only military representatives.

Souvanna proposed that political leaders also attend to discuss formation of a coalition government. The Cabinet flew 150 miles north to the royal capital of Luang Prabang yesterday without taking action on this.

Premier Boun Oum issued a proposal as a step toward full peace talks. But the government is insisting that political issues be held in abeyance until ceasefire details are agreed upon. The government tried to get the

military phase started Wednesday in a frontline meeting with rebel officers. The government delegates proposed the two sides draw up armistice lines and work out other details. The rebels refused, saying all these matters must be settled in conferences with Souvanna Phouma.

Boun Oum said the government's delegation will be headed by Brig. Gen. Sing Rattanasamay, inspector-general of the royal armed forces who is considered a staunch anti-Communist.

The first phase of the countdown began at 7:30 a.m. yesterday. It was proceeding perfectly. But postponement can come at any time, should the weather picture change.

Minor equipment troubles found in the space capsule after last Tuesday's bad-weather postponement have been cleared away.

"We have no concrete assurance at this time that the weather will be perfect," a space agency spokesman said. But another added: "The weather, here, now, is most suitable for launching."

It was expected to hold up through the critical morning hours today when Shepard rides up to the third level of the huge gantry and boards the Redstone rocket's space capsule.

From 7 a.m. on, the rocket can at any moment take Shepard on his 15-minute, 115-mile-high ride to a rendezvous with waiting recovery ships 290 miles out in the Atlantic.

The weather support group for Project Mercury said there would be "fair weather in the Cape area today" and partly cloudy skies with a few widely scattered showers in the recovery area down-range.

Winds and seas in the Cape area were moderate. The condition of the wind and the waves are essential because they influence the recovery of the capsule from the sea.

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Screenplay by GEORG HURDLER

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