

LIFE

SINATRA OPENS UP

He talks about
his music and himself



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Immersed in the Sinatra World

Apart from brief, flip and frequently acid comments to the press, Frank Sinatra has told little about himself and less about his singing. In this issue he is the author of an article about his singing and the engaging subject of an intimate picture essay-interview.

It was difficult to persuade Sinatra to do either. Last November Associate Editor Thomas Thompson had drinks with the singer in New York, but "he kept hopping up to talk to Jackie Gleason in Miami or Dean Martin in Hollywood and finally just muttered, 'Come see me on the coast.'" On the coast, Thompson cornered Sinatra on the set of *Fan Ryan's Express* and got him to agree to both. Thompson and Larry Photographers John Dominis soon found that even this was only a foot in the door; until they were fully accepted by Sinatra they would get no story. For two weeks they haunted the night-owl singer, whose favorite talking time is 2 a.m. till dawn. "Instead of taking pictures, I took lessons in staying up," says John Dominis, and Tommy Thompson wearily remembers, "Sinatra could sleep till 4 p.m. but I kept waking up at 3 a.m." Finally when they were accepted, the pace speeded up even more. One night during these frantic proceedings, Thompson pleaded total exhaustion and went to bed at 2 a.m. But at 5 the phone rang in his room and off he went again to Sinatra's suite. "He was having an all-night party with Joe E. Lewis," says Thompson, "and they couldn't stand my being asleep."

The late team spent another five weeks with Sinatra—between shows at Las Vegas, on sets in Hollywood and at his home in Palm Springs—as they immersed themselves in the Sinatra world. "I became fascinated with the depth of the man," says Thompson. "You could see that people watching us thought we were talking about girls and such. But he is a whiz at the stock market and can go on for hours about finance. He has a love for opera, and thinks Callas sings off key. He really wants to try conducting a symphony some day, if he can do it without it being a stunt. And he knows every boxing statistic there is in the file."

Tommy Thompson is a tall Texan who was city editor of *The Houston Press* at 25 and worked, for fun, as a stagehand in a small theater in Houston. He was drafted into a chorus job, fell in love with the pretty star of *Plain and Fancy*, married her in *Pajama Game* and was himself starring in *Damn Yankees* when a fellow actor whispered in his ear, "It's a boy." He joined our staff the next year, in 1960, has written and sold a screenplay, and is now working on a Broadway play and a novel. He has none of Sinatra's flair for high finance. At Las Vegas he watched the singer carelessly drop a \$100 bill on a blackjack table, win his bet, let it ride up to \$1,800 in 10 minutes and casually cash in his chips. When Sinatra graciously explained his system, Thompson tried it and lost \$40. Some system.



THOMAS THOMPSON

George P. Hunt

GEORGE P. HUNT, Managing Editor



Giant motor was ignited by an ingenious method. A tiny solid rocket, rising over the smoke cloud above, sat over nozzle. When it was launched, its fiery blast set off big motor. Flame rose 750 feet, burned 70 seconds.

U.S. sets off its biggest rocket

Dilemma of a Solid Success

Erupting with volcanolike sound and fury from a hole 10 stories deep near Brunswick, Ga., this spectacular pillar of fire gave the U.S. space program a new success—and, with it, a new dilemma. In its first static test-firing, the huge solid-fueled rocket motor generated over three million pounds of thrust—twice that of the liquid-fueled Saturn I, until now the world's mightiest known rocket. Yet the 40,000 tons of solid fuel burned so evenly that the well-insulated rocket case stayed cool enough to use over again. NASA Propulsion Chief A.O. Tischler called the test—conducted by Thiokol Chemical Corp., who developed the engine—an “unmitigated, unqualified, unequivocal, unadulterated success.” But it highlighted an ironic problem: NASA says it has no money to continue developing big solids and doesn't know what to do.

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had already killed its modest \$20 million-a-year program aimed at building 260-inch-diameter solid-fuel boosters, such engines may never get off the ground.

The U.S. hopes to land men on the moon by 1970, and it has a big and costly liquid-fuel booster—the 24-story-tall, 7½-million-pound-thrust Saturn V, which is nearing the test stage—to start the voyagers on their way. So why, NASA had to ask itself, build a comparable solid-fuel booster when we have a bird-in-hand?

The solid fuel advocates are looking beyond the moon. In the 1980s, they point out, the U.S. may send manned missions to Mars and other planets. Such feats could demand boosters that would dwarf the mighty Saturn V.

In one respect, big solids seem ideally suited for heavy weight-lifting. They require none of the complex plumbing that has to be built inside liquid-fuel boosters. Thus, because they are simpler, they are easier to build bigger. Moreover, solid motors of the type used in the tests in Georgia could be clustered to form an unearthly booster four times more powerful than Saturn V—whereas the complexity of liquid engines probably rules out such superscale clustering. For far-out space missions, a bigger liquid booster might have to be designed from the ground up.

ing process required for the liquids. But at the present stage of rocketry, solids do have one disadvantage for space ventures. They provide less thrust per pound and therefore a solid-fuel booster would have to be bigger and heavier to do the same work as one using liquid fuel. Nonetheless, President Kennedy, in launching the moon program four years ago, ordered development of both liquid and solid boosters—"until certain which is superior." One company, Thiokol, poured one-fifth of its considerable resources into the test facility in Georgia. Another, Aerojet-General Corporation, laid out \$28 million for a similar test plant near Miami. But NASA's know-how—under the capable guidance of Werner von Braun—lay largely in liquid propulsion, and the Saturn V program is the result.

So that the big solids already fabricated (*below*) won't be wasted, NASA is scraping up funds to fire them—and pressure is mounting in congressional budget hearings to keep the project afloat another year. Most of it comes not from space scientists but from congressmen representing Georgia and Florida, the states most directly affected when the program was scrapped.

At a Pennsylvania shipyard, a workman climbs inside huge casing of Aerojet-General Corporation's 260-inch solid-fuel booster.

