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Jack Thompson



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Three ex-servicemen help to put a man on the moon

For centuries the dream of putting a man on the moon has dazzled mankind, but until the successful flights of Apollo XI and XII the dream was realized only in poetry, novels, and Buck Rogers comic strips.

As Canadians, our only close contact with the Apollo flights came in the form of massive press and television coverage. For several days we were bombarded to the saturation point with new terms and concepts such as "launch window", "hybrid trajectory", "TLI", and "masscons".

There was an overwhelming impression that the men behind the program must surely be a new breed of super-beings. But three men who play important roles in the science-fiction-like space program are not super-beings, they are former Canadian servicemen and they attribute part of their success to their Canadian Forces background.

Jack A. Thompson hails from Toronto but you'd never know it to see or speak to him. His deep tan and

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slight southern drawl reflect satisfaction with his adopted country. During the Second World War Jack was an LAC fitter in the RCAF. He served in Yorkshire, England and upon discharge in 1945 joined his father in a pattern-making business in Toronto.

By 1956 Jack was a senior engineering planner on the *Avro Arrow* program but its cancellation in 1958 left him, and many other highly skilled personnel, unable to find employment in their chosen profession. Consequently Jack "knocked about doing one thing and another" until offered a job by Boeing Aircraft Corporation in 1961. Three years ago he, his wife Jeanne, and their three children were transferred to Cape Kennedy where Jack is now lead engineer of a planning group of 12 engineers. It is one of several groups that analyze project

engineering requirements and prepare instructions which outline production methods and materials for the contractors who have been selected to produce items of equipment for the space program. Jack Thompson's engineering team is involved with various items of space-age hardware, including the mobile launcher, the crawler transporter that carries the Apollo missiles to the pad, and the launch pads themselves.

Considering the expenses involved in all aspects of a missile program it is necessary to photograph all action involving critical missile components, whether they are simply being moved to different locations or are being used in an actual launch. An "instant replay" from many angles means malfunctions such as explosions can be analyzed to determine the causes.

Over 170 cameras were trained on the launch of Apollo XII. From cameras in nitrogen-purged, flame-proof boxes positioned directly in the flames