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Gemini VII - Command Pilot Astronaut Frank Borman &
James A. Lovell, Jr.

Project Gemini was a two man space craft program and was named after the twin stars Castor and Pollux in the Constellation Gemini. The two man craft is wider (7.5), taller (11.5) and more than twice as heavy (7700 lbs.) as the Mercury spacecrafts.

The life-supporting cabin of the Gemini craft is double-walled with an inner shell around the crew's pressurized compartment and an outer shell as the craft's external hull.

Between these shells is a storage space for electronic gear and other apparatus, a technological improvement over the Mercury craft whose components (parts) were "stacked" one upon another inside the crowded pilot's compartment. In contrast, much Gemini equipment is in the double-walled storage area, where it can be easily checked, adjusted and replaced even when Gemini is in place on the launch pad.

The Gemini launch vehicle is a modification of the Titan 11. Fueled by stable and storage propellants, it is 10 feet wide and 89 feet long (first stage booster 70 feet). The combined Gemini Titan stands 108 feet high.

The fifth manned mission of the Gemini program was launched on December 4, 1965, in the spacecraft shown here. The Command Pilot was Astronaut Frank Borman and the Pilot was Astronaut James A. Lovell, Jr. The successful completion of this mission 14 days after launching was the final vital step in the attainment of the long duration of the Gemini program.

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Astronauts Borman and Lovell piloted Gemini VII through 330 hours, 35 minutes and 31 seconds; 206 revolutions and 5,129,400 miles. A first controlled re-entry was flown, landing the craft within 7 miles of the carrier WASP in the Atlantic Ocean. Just 32 minutes after landing, Borman and Lovell were landed on the deck of the WASP by helicopter.

On December 15 Command Pilot Thomas P. Schirra, Jr. and Pilot Thomas P. Stafford were rocketed into space in the Gemini VI for an historic rendezvous with Gemini VII, at that time Gemini VII was about 185 miles above the earth.

A series of maneuvers, beginning with Vi's first pass over the United States, culminated with the rendezvous of the two spacecraft about five hours and 50 minutes after the liftoff of Vi. The rendezvous was considered accomplished following a braking action by Vi which brought the two spacecraft to within about 120 feet of each other.

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The VI spacecraft then closed in on VII and gradually got to the point where only one foot separated the two craft.

Several hours before retrofire, during a pass over the States, Schirra made the following report to Mission Control:

"This is Gemini VI. We have an object, looks like a satellite, going from north to south, up in a polar orbit. He's in very low trajectory....looks like he may be going to reenter pretty soon. Stand by... it looks like he's trying to signal us."

This transmission was immediately followed by "Jingle Bells", played by harmonica and bells. The tiny harmonica belonging to Astronaut Schirra and the jingle bells played by Astronaut Stafford on this mission may be seen in the Space Display located on Platform B.