

# Recovery Operations Contributions of Tom Holt

By John Stonesifer

I remember Tom as a very loyal friend and a devoted worker in all he did to make recovery operations efficient and safe.

Tom distinguished himself during his service as liaison with the Navy organization at Pensacola as we required a redesign of the flotation collars from Mercury to Gemini then on to Apollo. Tom followed every step along the way and was prominent in his leadership as he led test efforts as the collars were built. Testing these collars was a big effort as Tom led training of many of the pararescue teams and navy swimmers around the world.

Never will we forget the unfortunate event in one of the pararescue operational training exercises. Tom served as an observer during a training exercise near Bermuda and his position was in one of the rescue / observation boats. The pararescue plane and a photo aircraft crashed in mid-air and there was a loss of life and many bodies in the water had to be retrieved by the personnel in the boats. We received thanks and praise from the Air Force for Tom's help in the events after the loss.

A very important operational procedure for recovery of the Apollo spacecraft and crew from a water landing was the technique to accurately drop the pararescue people to a drifting spacecraft. Tom worked very closely with the Air Force units as they concluded numerous exercises and successfully documented a procedure followed by all units during the Apollo program. He briefed many of the follow-on units the details.

Tom was always willing to support whatever problems arose in the many years of spacecraft recovery. He can be remembered for his devoted participation in the success of the NASA manned flight programs.

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Thomas Earl HOLT, age 88, of Burnet, Texas passed away on Thursday, December 30, 2021. Thomas was born August 6, 1933.