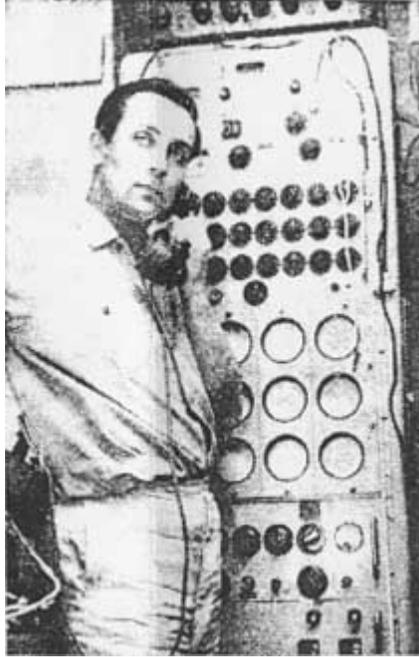


Any more for the moon lark?

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Mr. Searl in Flight Control Centre



Michael Hellicar calls at Swallow HQ council house with its own flying saucer

JOHN SEARL is master-minding Britain's effort to win the Space Race-from the tool shed behind his £3-a-week council house.

His six children play nearby in the early sunshine. A chicken scratches lazily for grit by the door.

Inside the shed, Mr. Searl, aged thirty-five, watches a bank of monitor screens as signals - " They're from my Space craft, 2,000 miles up" - flit across them.

He calls his semi-detached house Swallow Command H Q. The 8ft.-square shed is Flight Control Center and it is the registered office of Lunic Enterprises Ltd.

The local council know it better as 17. Stephen's close, Mortimer, Berkshire.

Mr. Searl and a dozen local enthusiasts are building a 14ft. flying saucer to be launched as an unmanned Moon probe - Swallow FII - on Sunday, May 5.

Swings

The launching pad has already been chosen. It is the village green with tennis courts, a pavilion and children's swings, half a mile down the road from Swallow Command H.Q.

If this flight is successful, says Mr. Searl, within the next eighteen months he will head a crew of four to take the first named saucer to the moon.

The unmanned Swallow FI is already in space, Mr. Searl claimed.

It has sent back a lot of photographs of the hidden side of the moon." he told me, when we talked in the lounge of Swallow Command H. Q. where electronic equipment stretches across the room between fish tank and radiogram.

A seventy-foot saucer will be built for the manned flight. It's code-named Swallow FM means Saucer With Automatic Launching, Landing, Orbiting, Watching, Facilities, Man. And 598? That's the number of center driving magnets, said Mr. Searl.

Take-off will be at nine o'clock one Saturday morning. It will take the saucer about twenty minutes to rise above the Earth's atmosphere, and only another 45 minutes to travel the 238,000 miles to the Moon.

That's right, 45 minutes, said Mr. Searl.

With him aboard Swallow FM 598 will be Mr. Tony Justice, twenty-five, a machine operator who is married and has a seventeen-month-old son.

Mr. Justice - "My wife is in full support, but I suppose who's a bit apprehensive in case she doesn't ever see me again" - will be second in command.

Genuine

Mr. John Judge, A freelance photographer from Sheffield, will be No. 3 on the flight. He is in his forties and unmarried.

The fourth crew member is also single - Mr. John Cower, twenty-eight, a radar tester who will be in charge of navigation and communication.

"We'll come back on the Sunday night," said Mr. Searl, "and drop off Mr. Judge near Sheffield on the way home."

We'll be back in time to go to work next day."

The sincerity and, indeed, much of the technical knowledge of Mr. Searl and his followers are absolutely genuine.

But I wanted to know how a group of Berkshire amateurs could undertake on a shoestring a project which costs Cape Kennedy millions of dollars each year.

Mr. Searl told me: "The Americans and Russians are sending up rockets because that is the method decided upon years ago by their top brass.

"Just because these men have a string of letters after their names no one questions their thinking.

"I have proved that rockets are crude and clumsy compared with flying saucers. We are using electricity to power them, so there are no problems about fuel storage.



*Mr. Searl conferring with Mr. Justice and Mr. Judge (right)
outside Swallow Command H.Q.*

Charge

"Once the batteries are given the initial charge to send up the craft, they are fed by generators, rather like a car."

Mr. Searl says that research and development so far must have cost Lunic Enterprises Ltd. about 1,000,000 pounds. But he could give no exact figures or say where the money had come from.

He says he also runs a Space tracking station with a permanent staff of twenty men "somewhere near Devizes, in Wiltshire." but declined to give further details.

"I put about 10 pounds a week into Swallow and that must account for about 2,500 pounds of the sum," he said. "I work a night shift as a machinist at a factory in reading so that I have more time during the day on this project."

"I also repair radio and T.V. sets to provide extra money."

Mr. Searl says his wife, Doris, puts up with low housekeeping money and a house full of electronic equipment "because she knows I've got the secret of successful Space travel and we'll all be rich soon."

"Mr. Searl's brother, Peter, 32, who's in charge of ground-to-air communications, told me: " Recently we were offered a sum of money to squash the whole idea by an agent acting for an international company.

Sincere

"This company had interests in rockets and conventional Space projects."

"I advised my brother to turn the offer down - anyway, the agent was talking in thousands and the secret is worth millions."

Mr. Searl took me to the monitoring unit he is building two miles away in the vicarage of the Rector of Burghfield, the Rev. Geoffrey Nicholson.

Mr. Nicholson told me: "Mr. Searl is a sincere man and I am very interested in what he is doing."

Peter Searl recalled the time John made his first flying saucer.

"We cycled miles into the country and then John dived under a hedge where he had hidden his invention." he said. " He brought out a 12-inch gramophone record with bits of electrical apparatus tied to it.

"There was a loud bang, and I saw it shoot off into the sky.

"I know my brother can make proper flying saucers."

Minutes

John Searl's plans include setting up a production line to make Swallow flying saucers at a cost of 2,000 to 3,000 pounds each. They will whisk 20 passengers at a time to America in a matter of minutes, he claims.

"The day we rise above Mortimer in Swallow FM 598," said Mr. Searl, "the Concorde will be obsolete."
