Committee: Apollo 13

Role: Deke Slayton

Delegate: Alyssa Gaylard

At 46 hours and 43 minutes Joe Kerwin boasted about the current state of the spacecraft and how everyone was “…bored to tears down here”. This would be the last time any of us mentioned the idea of boredom for quite some time. A sentence I expect to become famous in years to come sent panic through our bodies within a split second: “Okay Houston, we’ve had a problem”. With the possibility of oxygen tanks one and two being completely dismantled or at least severely damaged, every step we take from here on is crucial in bringing our boys back home.

The goal of the Apollo 13 mission was to put three men on the moon and just North of Fra Mauro, but at this point our goal is merely a thing of the past. The idea of Lovell, Swigert, and Haise landing on the moon is no longer of any sort of importance. Getting them home is the only thing we need to be focused on at this time. Reentering the Earth’s atmosphere on a normal, non-problematic Apollo mission is difficult enough. But, planning a return home in just around two hours will create yet another set of obstacles. There are three major things that our whole crew is going to need to take into consideration; besides the fact that we’ve lost our ability to utilize the service module. These things are: oxygen levels, lithium hydroxide, and water. Since our only option for the service module is to jettison it, we are going to have to rely on Odyssey and Aquarius to fulfill these needs. Oxygen levels are becoming hazardously low and carbon dioxide control will just become increasingly difficult to manage without a large supply of lithium hydroxide. Although, water is really one of my leading concerns at the moment. Without a suitable amount of water (or oxygen and hydrogen), our crew will have slim chances of returning home safely. Not only do they need drinking water but they also need water to circulate and cool the module upon return to home. Yet another concern is how we are going to get these boys back home, and what they will be seated in upon arrival.

As the director of flight crew operations, I think that it’s important that we consider all the variables in this situation. I plan on approaching the scenario in an open minded light. Time is of the utmost essence and we must all remain calm, cool, and collected. The flight home isn’t going to be an easy one and drastic measures will be taken. Getting our men back to Earth is a mathematically engineered process and will take risk and a little bit of human intuition, but what they will travel back in is a whole other story. As a team, it will be crucial to weigh out the pros and cons of fitting three highly trained astronauts into a two-man spacecraft. Although in any other circumstance this might seem absurd, Aquarius may be our only hope. Before we take this giant leap, we are going to have to account for any small (or large) complications that could occur. We are going to have to make countless sacrifices that in the short term, may not be the best for our in-flight crew and may cause them discomfort and stress. But, in the long term will allow them to return to Earth and deem this mission as a successful failure.