

in the normal way. Even then no one could be sure they would survive. The capsule's parachutes might have been damaged in the explosion, and without them to slow it down the capsule would be destroyed as it hit the surface of the Pacific Ocean.

During re-entry, radio contact with the crew is always lost for several minutes. Observers on the ground can only look out for the tiny capsule and keep their fingers crossed that everything will be OK. After a few tense minutes someone spotted it high above the ocean. Seconds later its three red and white parachutes were seen to open as normal, and shortly afterwards the capsule splashed down into the sea.

After nearly six days in space, the crew was safe. Jim, Jack and Fred may not have reached the Moon, but they had survived against seemingly impossible odds. A combination of teamwork, ingenuity and raw courage had brought them back home, and nearly fifty years later these three men still hold the record for travelling further away from Earth than anyone in history: 248,655 miles – and back again.

After a few tense minutes someone spotted the capsule high above the ocean