

thing like this — at 1:45, 12 highly excited youngsters arrived at the pasture behind the school after weeks of preparation. Eek was transported to the scene, along with his female companion, Meek, by Lou Ann Erdel and the frantic last-minute arrangements began.

An orange and white four-foot launching tower was moved into position in the middle of the field as some 25 or 30 interested spectators watched.

ELECTRIC STARTER

Next, a 12-volt battery was brought out to provide the electric charge needed to fire the rocket. Recovery men moved into positions around the field as the rocket was fenced off with cord, a safety requirement of the Federal Aviation Administration (necessary since the launch site is less than three miles from the airport).

Eek was taken from the ready-room, a small wire cage and placed gently by Lou Ann into the custom fitted nosecone.

1:55 — The rocket is placed on the launching pad and the countdown begins. 10-9-8 — (young faces tensed as the big moment drew near) — 7-6-5 — George Erdel Jr. prepared to fire the rocket by wires from a safe distance — 4-3-2-1—BLAST OFF.

The rocket hurdles cleanly away at 550-m.p.h., 3,000 feet into the air.

Now trailing light smoke, the rocket nosed over and started earthward. After 200 feet, the parachute popped open and Eek floated down as all recovery men raced wildly toward the

landing spot some 50 feet from the launching tower.

George was one of the first there, along with Jerry Donaldson and Rick Cox, and he exultantly declared Eek safe and sound. Eek let out a few happy squeaks.

This completed a very happy day for the club members as they had been many weeks building up to this. They now have dozens of launchings to

their credit, but none as successful as this. Several times they've tried putting grasshoppers into orbit, but they mysteriously disappeared in flight.

George and his companions, light-headed with happiness, speculated that their next project is to launch twin "fishtra-nauts." The boys (and Lu Ann) feel they can fit a nosecone with a small plastic water container and loft the fish in that.

Astromouse 'Eek' Does Space Sprint



HELLO, MARS!—Eek sticks his head out proudly as he squeaks a bewildered greeting to Lu Ann Erdel and Rick Cox. Two recovery volunteers, students at Bonny Oaks School, are in the background. Two of the key helpers of the project were Jerry Donaldson and Joel Smith. —(Staff photo by Bill Cooley.)