

# *An American Speaks For Us All...*



*"I know I still get a real hard-to-define feeling down inside when the Flag goes by—and I know that all of you do, too."*



*Lieutenant Colonel John H. Glenn addresses joint meeting of Congress, February 26, 1962*





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## The Seven Astronauts



John H. Glenn, Jr.  
Lt. Colonel, U. S. Marine Corps



Alan B. Shepard, Jr.  
Lt. Commander, U. S. Navy



Virgil I. Grisson  
Captain, U. S. Air Force

At 1 o'clock and 13 minutes p.m., the Doorkeeper announced Lieutenant Colonel Glenn. Lieutenant Colonel Glenn, accompanied by the committee of escort, entered the Chamber and stood at the Clerks desk. (Applause, the Members rising.)

The SPEAKER. Members of the Congress, it is a privilege, and I deem it a high honor to present to you a brave, a courageous American, a hero in World War II and in the Korean conflict, who recently in a most notable manner added glory and prestige to our country, the first U. S. astronaut to have achieved orbital flight. Lt. Col. John H. Glenn, Jr., U. S. Marine Corps. (Applause, the Members rising.)

Lieutenant Colonel GLENN. Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, Members of the Congress, I am only too aware of the tremendous honor that is being shown us at this joint meeting of the Congress today. When I think of past meetings that involved heads of state and equally notable persons, I can only say I am most humble to know that you consider our efforts to be in the same class. (Applause.)

This has been a great experience for all of us on the program, and for all Americans, I guess, too. And I am certainly glad to see that pride in our country and its accomplishments are not a thing of the past. (Applause.)

I know I still get a real hard-to-define feeling down inside when the Flag goes by—and I know that all of you do, too. As we rode up Pennsylvania Avenue today from the White House and saw the tremendous outpouring of feeling on the part of so many thousands of our people I got this same feeling all over again. Let us hope that none of us ever loses it. (Applause.)

The flight of Friendship 7 on February 20 certainly involved much more than one man in the spacecraft in orbit. (Applause.) I can think of many people that were involved in this, but I can think of none more than just a few sitting in the front row right up here. I would like to have my parents stand up, please. (Mr. and Mrs. John Glenn, Sr., stood and received the rising applause of the Members.)

My wife's mother and Dr. Castor. (Dr. and Mrs. H. W. Castor stood and received the rising applause of the Members.)

My son and daughter, David and Carolyn. (David and Carolyn Glenn rose and received the rising applause of the Members.)

And the real rock in our family, my wife Annie. (Mrs. John H. Glenn, Jr., rose and received the applause of the Members.)

There are many more people, of course, involved in our flight in Friendship 7; many more things involved, as well as the people. There was the vision of Congress that established this national program of space exploration. Beyond that, many thousands of people were involved, civilian contractors and subcontractors in many different fields; many elements—civilian, civil service and military, all blending their efforts toward a common goal.

To even attempt to give proper credit to all the individuals on this team effort would be impossible. But let me say that I have never seen a more sincere, dedicated, and hard-working group of people in my life. (Applause.)

From the original vision of the Congress to consummation of this orbital flight has been just over 3 years. This, in itself, states eloquently the case for the hard work and devotion of the entire Mercury team. This has not been just another job to those of us on the project. It has been a dedicated labor such as I have not seen before. It has involved a cross-cut of American endeavor with many different disciplines cooperating toward a common objective.

Friendship 7 is just a beginning, a successful experiment. It is another plateau in our step-by-step program of increasingly ambitious flights. The earlier flights of Alan Shepard and Gus Grisson who are over here—(Applause.) were steppingstones toward Friendship 7. My flight in the Friendship 7 spacecraft will, in turn, provide additional information for use in striving toward future flights that some of the other gentlemen you see here will take part in. (Applause.)

Scott Carpenter here, who was my backup on this flight; Walt Schirra, Deek Slayton, and one missing member, who is still on his way back from Australia, where he was on the tracking station, Gordon Cooper. A lot of direction is necessary for a project such as this, and the Director of Project Mercury since its inception has been Dr. Robert Gilruth, who certainly deserves a hand here. (Applause.)

I had planned to introduce Walt Williams, but I do not see him here . . . oh, there he is, up in the corner. (Applause.) As well as being Associate Director of Project Mercury, Walt has the unenviable position of being the Operations Director. And he's the character, no matter how you look at him, who says 'hold the count' occasionally, for poor weather and one thing and another.

With all the experience we have had so far, where does this leave us?

There are the building blocks upon which we shall build much more ambitious and more productive portions of the program.

As was to be expected, not everything worked perfectly on my flight. We may well need to make changes—but these will be tried out on subsequent 3-orbit flights, later this year, to be followed by 18-orbit, 24-hour missions.

Beyond that, we look forward to Project Gemini—a two-man orbital vehicle with greatly increased capability for advanced experiments. There will be additional rendezvous experiments



in space, technical and scientific observation—then, Apollo orbital, circumlunar and finally, lunar landing flights.

What did we learn from the Friendship 7 flight that will help us attain these objectives?

Some specific items have already been covered briefly in the news reports. And I think it is of more than passing interest to all of us that information attained from these flights is readily available to all nations of the world. (Applause.)

Data from the Friendship 7 flight is still being analyzed. Certainly, much more information will be added to our storehouse of knowledge.

The launch itself was conducted openly and with the news media representatives from around the world in attendance. (Applause.) Complete information is released as it is evaluated and validated. This is certainly in sharp contrast with similar programs conducted elsewhere in the world and elevates the peaceful intent of our program. (Applause.)

But these things we know. The Mercury spacecraft and systems design concepts are sound and have now been verified during manned flights in space. We also proved that man can operate intelligently in space and can adapt rapidly to this new environment.

Zero G or weightlessness—at least for this period of time—appears to be no problem. As a matter of fact, lack of gravity is a rather fascinating thing.

Objects within the cockpit can be parked in midair. For example, at one time during the flight, I was using a hand held camera. Another system needed attention; so it seemed quite natural to let go of the camera, take care of the other chore in the spacecraft, then reach out, grasp the camera and go back about my business.

It is a real fascinating feeling, needless to say.

There seemed to be little sensation of speed although the craft was traveling at about 5 miles per second—a speed that I too find difficult to comprehend.

In addition to closely monitoring on-board systems, we were able to make numerous outside observations.

The view from that altitude defies description. I had listened earlier to Al and Gus both describe this, and was eagerly looking forward to it, and in their wildest use of adjectives, they didn't describe what it's like, even. Nor can I describe it.

The horizon colors are brilliant and sunsets are spectacular. It is hard to beat a day in which you are permitted the luxury of seeing four sunsets.

I think after all of our talk of space, this morning coming up from Florida on the plane with President Kennedy, we had the opportunity to meet Mrs. Kennedy and Caroline before we took off. I think Caroline really cut us down to size and put us back in the proper position. She looked up, upon being introduced, and said, "Where is the monkey?" (Laughter.)

And I did not get a banana pellet on the whole ride. Seriously, though, I feel we're on the brink of an area of expansion of knowledge about ourselves and our surroundings that is beyond description or comprehension at this time.

Our efforts today and what we have done so far are but small building blocks in a large pyramid to come.

But questions are sometimes raised regarding the immediate payoffs from our efforts. What benefits are we gaining from the money spent? The real benefits we probably cannot even detail. They are probably not even known to man today. But exploration and the pursuit of knowledge have always paid dividends in the long run—usually far greater than anything expected at the outset. (Applause.)

Experimenters with common, green mold, little dreamed what effect their discovery of penicillin would have.

The story has been told of Disraeli, Prime Minister of England at the time, visiting the laboratory of Faraday, one of the early experimenters with basic electrical principles. After viewing various demonstrations of electrical phenomena, Disraeli asked, "But of what possible use is it?" Faraday replied, "Mister Prime Minister, what good is a baby?"

That is the stage of development in our program today—in infancy. And it indicates a much broader potential impact, of course, than even the discovery of electricity did. We are just probing the surface of the greatest advancements in man's knowledge of his surroundings that has ever been made, I feel. There are benefits to science across the board. Any major effort such as this results in research by so many different specialties that it is hard to even envision the benefits that will accrue in many fields.

Knowledge begets knowledge. The more I see, the more impressed I am—not with how much we know—but with how tremendous the areas are that are as yet unexplored.

Exploration, knowledge, and achievement are good only insofar as we apply them to our future actions. Progress never stops. We are now on the verge of a new era, I feel.

Today, I know that I seem to be standing alone on this great platform—just as I seemed to be alone in the cockpit of the Friendship 7 spacecraft. But I am not. There were with me then—and with me now—thousands of Americans and many hundreds of citizens of many countries around the world who contributed to this truly international undertaking voluntarily and in the spirit of cooperation and understanding.

On behalf of all those people, I would like to express my and their heartfelt thanks for the honors you have bestowed upon us here today.

We are all proud to have been privileged to be part of this effort, to represent our country as we have. *As our knowledge of the universe in which we live increases, May God grant us the wisdom and guidance to use it wisely.*

Thank you, gentlemen. (Applause, the Members rising.)



Malcolm S. Carpenter  
Lt. Commander, U. S. Navy



Leroy G. Cooper, Jr.  
Captain, U. S. Air Force



Walter M. Schirra, Jr.  
Lt. Commander, U. S. Navy



Donald K. Slayton  
Captain, U. S. Air Force