

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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National Space Society

NSS Salutes John Glenn on 50th Anniversary of Friendship 7 Space Flight

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The National Space Society salutes former astronaut and member of the NSS Board of Governors, John Glenn, Jr., on the 50th anniversary of his historic flight as the first American to orbit the Earth. On February 20, 1962 Glenn boarded his Mercury spacecraft – dubbed *Friendship 7*, honoring his fellow “Mercury Seven” astronauts – and rocketed into space, further opening the new frontier.

Soaring on the call of “Godspeed, John Glenn” from mission control, Glenn orbited the Earth three times over the course of the five-hour mission. The flight was not without its problems, however, as Glenn addressed issues with his control and re-entry systems, which led flight controllers to believe the capsule’s heat shield and landing bag had moved to an unlocked position. Rather than risk a catastrophic event, the controllers ordered Glenn to leave the capsule’s retrorocket pack in place, a decision that resulted in a dramatically fiery, yet successful, re-entry.

“A true American hero, Glenn ushered in American orbital spaceflight 50 years ago and brought the U.S. into the space age in earnest,” said NSS Executive Director Paul E. Damphousse. “His service to this nation reminds us of the bravery, determination, and excitement needed to achieve these ambitious goals – we hope his example will serve to further motivate our progress in space.”

Following his years with NASA, Glenn went on to serve four terms as a United States Senator from the state of Ohio. In 1998 at age 77 he became the oldest person to travel to space as he joined the crew of STS-95 aboard the Space Shuttle Discovery for a nine-day mission, marking his second space flight.

“As a member of the NSS Board of Governors, we are proud to call John Glenn one of our own,” Damphousse said. “We expect to build upon his legacy as we advance our goals in space over the *next* 50 years.”

About The National Space Society (NSS): NSS is an independent, educational, grassroots, non-profit organization dedicated to the creation of a spacefaring civilization. Founded when the [National Space Institute](#) and the [L5 Society](#) merged in 1987, NSS is widely acknowledged as the preeminent citizen’s voice on space. NSS has over 10,000 members and supporters, and over 50 [chapters](#) in the United States and around the world. The society publishes [Ad Astra](#) magazine, an award-winning periodical chronicling the most important developments in space.

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