

40th anniversary of Americans in orbit

On Feb. 24, the four remaining members of the Mercury Seven Astronauts were honored in a daylong celebration at Kennedy Space Center to recognize the 40th anniversary of Americans in orbit. On-hand for the day's events were John Glenn, Scott Carpenter, Wally Schirra and Gordon Cooper – the ones responsible for the first U.S. orbital flights.

The celebration began with a press conference that included media from around the globe. The four then participated in a dedication ceremony to open the newly renovated Rocket Garden at the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex.

One of the rockets featured in the rocket garden is the Mercury Atlas, the same rocket that Glenn, Carpenter, Schirra and Cooper rode into space.

The day ended with a special event entitled "An Evening with the Mercury Astronauts." Held in the expansive Apollo/Saturn V Center under a 363-foot Saturn V moon rocket, Astronaut Jim Lovell served as the host for the evening.

The four men reminisced about their ground-breaking flights and life as one of the Mercury Seven Astronauts. The evening also featured an appearance by the comedian known as the Eighth Mercury Astronaut, Bill Dana.

Roundup editor Melissa Davis attended the events. Below, she provides a snapshot of that special day.



At left are the Mercury Seven Astronauts: Scott Carpenter, Gordon Cooper, John Glenn, Virgil 'Gus' Grissom, Walter Schirra, Alan Shepard and Donald 'Deke' Slayton. Above are the remaining members of the original seven: Cooper, Schirra, Carpenter and Glenn.

'We're not a bunch of guys, we're a bunch of brothers'

The applause was as spontaneous as it was surprising.

These days it's rare for the media to give such respect to the subjects of a press conference. However, emotions just took over when the four remaining Mercury Seven Astronauts walked into the room.

To say they still have the right stuff would be cliché. It would also be true. While the world has changed significantly since these men captured the headlines, their appeal is timeless.

Wally Schirra is still comedic.

John Glenn is still stately.

Scott Carpenter is still dashing.

And Gordon Cooper is, well, still Gordo.

"It's been 40 years now and it seems

like about 40 days," Glenn told the reporters from around the globe.

The four still know how to charm the press, which isn't known for its soft side. The men were showered with compliments. One reporter even stood and told the four he didn't have a question – all he wanted to say is that they are still American heroes.

He wasn't the only one who thought so. More than a thousand people showed up that day to catch a glimpse of the space pioneers.

Many astronauts and dignitaries attended at the evening's event – people who normally steal the spotlight.

However, this was a night reserved for four men who captured America's heart during the tense space-race era.

In the age of Space Shuttles and the International Space Station, it was fun to travel back in time to the beginning of America's storied space program.

"Project Mercury was just the start of where we're going to go in the future," Glenn said.

While they are proud of their past, the four still look forward. "Each flight, as it moves up, is the greatest flight because that's the one that's the cutting edge at the time," Glenn said. "That's the one that takes it just a little bit further."

True to their reputation, the day's events were filled with numerous wisecracks:

Schirra on NASA launching chimpanzees before humans

"The ASPCA kept sending us letters about the cruelty to animals, so we launched Al Shepard."

Cooper on Glenn's return to space in 1997

"I just want to say to John, that when I'm old I want to go to Mars."

Glenn on his return to space

"It's not true that I'm the only man to leave Florida in something other than a Winnebago."

Carpenter on speaking after Glenn

"I forgot how hard it is to follow John."

However, the gathering of these legends was just as sentimental as it was entertaining. The four made it known they are not complete without their deceased Mercury Seven brothers – Virgil "Gus" Grissom, Alan Shepard and Donald "Deke" Slayton.

Schirra got choked up when he spoke of missing them, and Glenn said, "Three people are not here with us now who were a very key part of this whole thing – Alan, Gus and Deke – and you can't help but think about them."

Only those seven know what they went through – physically and mentally. They were guinea pigs as much as they were heroes. They risked their lives during a primitive time in the space program to lay the groundwork for all that has followed their historic flights.

That is why a bond exists with the remaining four that can never be broken.

"We have the privilege of loving each other and teaching each other," Schirra said.

Carpenter agreed. "We have a camaraderie that is indestructible."

He added, "It is an honor to be a part of this group, dwindling as it may be. It is a great pleasure to be associated with you three guys."

Cooper echoed the same sentiments. "We're not just a bunch of guys, we're a bunch of brothers. I love you guys." ❖



When asked by a reporter if any of them still would like to go to space, the remaining Mercury Seven Astronauts gave an overwhelming response.

ISS gets the star treatment

IMAX® **SPACE STATION 3-D** is the first cinematic journey to the International Space Station. Narrated by Tom Cruise, the film allows viewers to experience for themselves life in zero gravity aboard the new Space Station.

The audience blasts off into space with the astronauts and cosmonauts from Kennedy Space Center and Russia's Baikonur Cosmodrome to rendezvous with their new home in orbit 220 miles above Earth. **SPACE STATION** is the story of this unique partnership of 16 nations building a laboratory in outer space, a permanent facility for the study of the effects of long-duration exposure to zero gravity and a necessary stepping stone in global cooperative efforts toward the human exploration of space.

WORLD PREMIERE

April 17, 2002

National Air & Space Museum IMAX Theatre in Washington D.C.

LOCAL PREMIERE

Beginning May 18, 2002

Moody Gardens in Galveston

DID YOU KNOW?

- ★ Between December 1998 and August 2001, 13 miles of 65 mm film negative was sent to space for use in two different IMAX 3-D cameras.
- ★ Each roll of film is only 108 seconds long!
- ★ During three trips to film at Kazakhstan, the film crew carried 1,500 meters of telephone cable and hundreds of bags to fill with sand to hold equipment in place.
- ★ To keep the film from fogging, fresh film was flown up and down from the Station on every visiting Shuttle mission. The Space Station crews discovered they could keep the film fresh longer by storing it between water containers on board.
- ★ Seven Shuttle crews and two Space Station Expedition Crews supported filming IMAX Space Station: Expedition 1 and 2, STS-88, STS-92, STS-97, STS-98, STS-102, STS-100 and STS-104.

"Three events immediately come to mind when I recall STS-88, the first assembly mission: The exuberance of the crew when Nancy Currie grabbed the FGB (functional cargo block or Zarya) with the shuttle arm and secured it over the payload bay; the sheer joy of entering a new vehicle on orbit for the very first time when Sergei Krikalev and I floated in side by side and turned on the lights; and finally the sense of pride and accomplishment when we undocked and got our first look at an operational, fledgling Space Station through the overhead windows. The Space Station 3-D movie really captures the size and magnificence of the station. We can really be proud of what we've accomplished thus far. It's truly amazing what we can accomplish working together."

Bob Cabana, STS-88

"We worked hard to film the best scenes we could because this experience will really allow millions of people to learn about life in space about the Space Station. We wanted everyone who sees the movie to get the full flavor of the experience and share the excitement with us."

Joe Tanner, STS-97

"What most movie goers don't realize is that each scene they see shot on orbit in this movie was take one of one! There are no retakes with IMAX. Each scene is between 20 to 30 seconds long and each scene is shot one time. If we don't get the shot the first time, the movie loses a major part of the story line. No other professional movie made in the world is shot like IMAX."

Marsha Ivins, STS-98

"After seeing the 3-D footage, I felt like I was on Alpha again. Not only does the movie document the assembly of the station with spectacular exterior views, but it also shows the human aspects of living and working inside the Space Station. Viewers will be able to float through space and watch the construction work and really be able to experience life on the station through the magic of 3-D."

Jim Voss, Expedition 2



Photo courtesy of IMAX

Actor Tom Cruise and his family visited JSC for a behind-the-scenes look at the human space flight program. Cruise is the narrator for *Space Station 3-D*. Here, Acting Director Roy Estess presents Cruise with a memento of his visit to JSC.

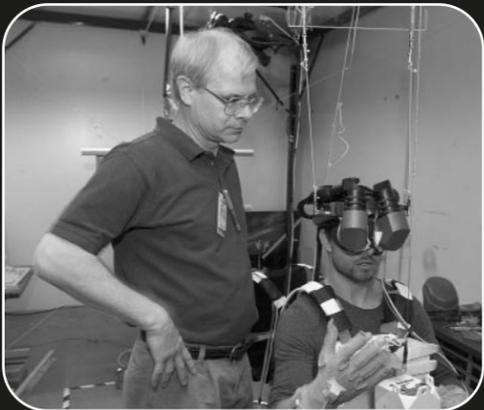


Photo courtesy of IMAX

Dave Homan, left, gives Cruise guidance as he experiences the feel of virtual reality training.



Photo courtesy of IMAX

Cruise and Astronaut Kent Rominger prepare for a shuttle "launch" in the Building 5 simulators.



Photo courtesy of IMAX

Rominger reviews a 'report card' with Tom Cruise after a simulated shuttle launch and landing in Building 5.

Holy Cow!

What can make 20,000 youngsters happy? Twenty thousand NASA Johnson Space Center aerospace activity books can do it. That is how many activity books were given to youngsters visiting the NASA Johnson Space Center exhibit at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo (HLS&R) 2002 in the Agraventure section of Reliant Hall between Feb. 12 and March 3. The exhibit, staffed by 80 volunteers, 17 astronauts and their friends from the astronaut office, had about 40,000 visitors during the 20-day show.



Volunteer Jerry Elliott visited with the exhibit's next-door neighbor, Elsie. Elsie wore her best blanket and fresh flowers, and she had polished hooves and horns for her appearance at the show.

Thanks to Jackie Baston, Don and Cynthia Hanselman, Bettye Bowerman and Jerry Elliott for the images. A huge thanks to all who helped made the exhibit at HLS&R 2002 a tremendous success.



A rodeo fan visiting the JSC exhibit talked with Astronaut Ron Garan as he signed a lithograph for her. Nicole Stott kept busy signing autographs and visiting too.



Astronaut Barry Wilmore's cowboy hat was the perfect accessory for his flight suit. Wilmore exchanged autographed pictures with a fan that had her own claim to fame: Her photo appeared in the newspaper with an account of her expertise at the weaving loom. Wilmore got her autograph in exchange for his. Astronaut Janice Voss is in the Commander's seat signing autographs for eager visitors.



IMPASS Community Outreach Coordinator, Hazel Fipps-Mann, who coordinated the volunteer effort for the event, helped Flat Stanley in his Extra-vehicular activity.



The exhibit featured popular photographic opportunities, eye-catching graphics and videos featuring JSC's educational programs and the International Space Station.

A young cowboy showed Flat Stanley the ropes.



SPACE CENTER Roundup

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