

**Charles Bolden, NASA Administrator  
A Celebration of the Life of Neil Armstrong  
Washington National Cathedral  
Sept. 13, 2012**

Carol...members of the Armstrong family...Bishop Budde...friends...

When President Kennedy challenged this nation to be first on the Moon in his historic Rice University speech 50 years ago, many thought it was an impossible dream. But the vision of that young President was rooted in the knowledge that the American experiment itself was an incredible miracle. The miracle of America was only made possible by men and women of uncommon foresight, determination, and courage who dared to turn the once impossible dream of freedom, equality, and democracy into a new and enduring reality.

That legacy inspired a young Neil Armstrong to first interrupt his studies at Purdue University to serve his country as a Navy fighter pilot. He would later become a NASA astronaut, first in the Gemini Program and later in Apollo. But he never forgot his Navy roots and naval aviation heritage as he lived out his life as an active member of the Golden Eagles.

Right after President Kennedy's speech, Neil was already working on the problem of how to land a flying machine on the Moon. Those of us who have had the privilege to fly in space followed the trail he helped forge. America's leadership in space and the

confidence that we can go farther into the unknown and achieve great things as a people rests with the achievements of Neil and the brave men with whom he served.

Neil will always be remembered for taking humankind's first small step on a world beyond our own, but it was the courage, grace, and humility he displayed throughout his life that lifted him above the stars.

Neil Armstrong left more than footprints and a flag on the moon. In fact as President Obama said in a letter to Carol and the family this morning, "Future generations will draw inspiration from his spirit of discovery, humble composure, and pioneering leadership in setting a bold new course for space exploration. The imprint he left on the surface of the Moon and the story of human history is matched only by the extraordinary mark he left on the hearts of all Americans."

He left a foundation for the future and paved the way for future American explorers to be first to step foot on Mars or another planet. Today, let us recommit ourselves to this grand challenge in honor of the man who first demonstrated it was possible to reach new worlds – and whose life demonstrated the quiet resolve and determination that makes every new, more difficult step into space possible.

I was proud to know Neil Armstrong as a fellow astronaut, a trusted advisor, and a friend. It was my honor to share in the moment with the entire Apollo 11 crew and

Senator John Glenn in Washington last fall as they received the Congressional Gold Medal.

It was the last time Neil made a public appearance in Washington, and ever true to his nature, he spoke not on his own behalf, but accepted the medal, "on behalf of his fellow Apollo teammates, all those who played a role in expanding human presence outward from Earth, and all those who played a role in expanding human knowledge of the solar system and beyond."

As we take the next giant leap forward in human exploration of the heavens, we stand on the shoulders of a true American hero.

On the south side of this sacred place, there is a special window – a Space Window – which holds a piece of the moon rock Neil and the Apollo 11 crew presented to the National Cathedral many years ago. It is a reminder not only of their significant human accomplishment, but an acknowledgement that such achievements are made possible through God's grace and guiding hand.

As Neil took his first steps on the Moon, nervous but excited NASA workers in Houston's mission control center waited to hear his now famous words from the lunar surface.

Today, we will share a small token of our esteem by presenting to you, Carol and the Armstrong family, the flag that flew over the Johnson Space Center's Mission Control on August 25<sup>th</sup>, the day of Neil's passing.

I join a grateful nation in saluting a brave and humble servant who never stopped dreaming, never stopped working to make those dreams reality, and inspired each and every one of us.

May God bless Neil Armstrong and may God bless these United States of America!