

**Remarks by the Honorable Sean O'Keefe
NASA Administrator
John Young Celebration
Smithsonian National Air & Space Museum
Washington, D.C.
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Thank you Glenn (Glenn Mahone, Assistant Administrator for Public Affairs) for that introduction and good evening ladies and gentleman. This is really a treat this evening. General Dailey, my good friend, thank you once again for having us. We're regulars here. He has come to really open the doors and provide the hospitality to us in this fantastic facility every time we ask, and we really thank you for that.

To Astronaut Dana (Comedian Bill Dana) or Astronaut Jimenez (Dana's Character Jose Jimenez) I want to thank you so much for spending the time with us. This is really an extraordinary moment. As Glenn alluded, I had the opportunity to see Bill at the

memorial service for Gordo Cooper, not too long ago. It reminded myself of the breath and extent of the association he has had to our broader NASA family and the space community for so many decades. And Bill it is awfully good of you to spend the time to be with us for this historic moment as we honor John Young.

I'm delighted to be here as Jack alluded in the world's most popular museum for this special tribute to a truly special American, Captain John Young. As John likes to say on occasion, this is "Fantastic!"

Now as a proud father, I'd like to start of my remarks by mentioning that helping with the program tonight are a number of boy and girl scouts and their leaders here from Herndon and Ashburn. My son Kevin is among this group. He's acquitted himself with great distinction and I'm very proud of him. And I'm very glad that these future explorers are a part of this ceremony, to honor a former Boy Scout

himself, John Young. And they too, will I hope be inspired by the story of John. So I'd like to ask them to stand up and be recognized. There are some stories you will hear tonight, that if you aspire and achieve a fraction of what this gentleman has done it will be a truly remarkable life that you will have.

There are a number of special guests with us tonight who I would like to thank for coming. First and foremost is John's lovely wife Susy. Now while Susy stands up, we'd like to brighten up this rainy day by giving her a dozen roses in appreciation for her tremendous support. Thank you Susy. Susy, thank so much for being such a tremendous member of the NASA family. We appreciate all the effort that you have placed in this as well.

I am delighted that one of NASA's greatest Administrators graces this theatre. Please welcome the Administrator who led our storied Agency when John made his two Shuttle flights, Jim Beggs and his

wife Mary are here as well. So thank you very much Jim.

We are also honored by the presence of a colleague and another member of President's team who's worked very closely with NASA these past four years, Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman and her family. Thank you so much for being here Madame Secretary.

We will always be very grateful to Secretary Veneman and the Agriculture Department for the remarkable support that your Forest Service professionals gave to the Columbia recovery effort. We will always consider you and the members of the Forest Service team to be a very integral part of the NASA family. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for that tremendous support as well as tremendous enthusiasm with which they dedicated themselves professionally. Thank you Madame Secretary.

From the Halls of Congress, we are delighted to welcome Representative Dale Kildee and his wife Gayle, and Representative Scott Garrett and wife Mary Ellen.

Today we had the great pleasure of meeting with the NASA Advisory Council who as always provided some very thoughtful commentary as well as I think reflection on the kind of recommendations we need in order to proceed and pursue the President's broader space exploration agenda. They've been incredibly influential in helping us understand that. I'd like to introduce them and ask that they rise. Dr. Ken Baldwin, Dr. James Cameron, Dr. Andrew Christensen, Dr. Lennard Fisk, Senator John Glenn, Dr. Don Fraser, Dr. Charlie Kennel, Dr. Harold Mortazavian, Mr. Roger Tetrault, Mr. Knox Tull, Dr. Larry Smarr and Dr. Laurie Zoloth. Thank you all very, very much for your tremendous insights. We appreciate it very much.

It is also my honor to introduce some of the folks who know John best, his cheering section in the front rows who served with John in the astronaut corps.

First is a gentleman who flew in space before John joined the program and flew after John hung up his boots in the space program as an astronaut but not as an integral participant in our activities--he's been that every single day he's shown up--he did this just to prove what good shape he's in. Now of course I'm referring to Senator John Glenn and his lovely wife Annie, a lady who truly is a national treasure.

Another former Senator with us here this evening is a scientist who is especially proud of John's skills as a lunar geologist, Apollo 17 astronaut and fellow rock hound Jack Schmitt. We very much appreciate his continued support and enthusiasm for all that we do at NASA.

Now it is my distinct pleasure to introduce those astronauts who have had the honor of flying in space

with Captain Young, or of serving as a key member of his mission team.

First up is Mike Collins, John's pilot on the Gemini 10 rendezvous and docking mission. That's of course is the mission you will always be known for. (Laughter)

Next is Buzz Aldrin, who Mike also had a later association with, who served on the backup crew for Gemini 10, and would later get together with Mike and a fellow named Neil Armstrong on another mission.

Before we could land on the Moon 35 years ago and meet President Kennedy's bold objective, we had to do one full dress rehearsal of the Apollo Command and Lunar modules in lunar orbit.

I am delighted to introduce John's crewmembers on the path finding Apollo 10 mission, General Tom Stafford, who believe it or not served as a midshipman in the Navy alongside John on the USS

Missouri some 50 years ago--neither one of you looks like that's even possible, that you've been around that nearly that long--and Captain Gene Cernan, the gentleman who owns the distinction as being the last man to set foot on the Moon in the 20th century, and we're going to fix that soon by going back.

This very day is the anniversary of the launch of Apollo 17. Gene we thank you so much for being a part of the effort on January 14th of this year in which the President pledged that you will be followed, A few years later but we're going to get there. No doubt about it. Thank you so much for your attendance this evening and your inspiration over the years.

It was 32 years ago, on the Apollo 16 mission that John became the first man to orbit the moon twice, and the ninth man to set foot on the lunar surface. Brigadier General Charlie Duke and Rear Admiral T.K. Mattingly shared that historic mission

to the Descartes Highlands, and are here tonight to salute their flight commander, even though they outrank him, just by military rank only. Gentlemen, please rise.

Also here tonight, representing their father, Stu Roosa, who walked on the moon during the Apollo 14 mission, are Stu's sons, Jack and Chris.

You will hear soon from Bob Crippen, John's pilot on the maiden voyage of Columbia 23 years ago, when John was barely half way through his NASA career. Bob please stand.

And there are also Shuttle era astronauts here in numbers far to many to count. If you begin with Fred Gregory or he would say 'No, end with Fred Gregory.' Or midshipman Bill Readdy, or end with Bill Readdy, it would always inevitably include a very large number. So I ask that all of you who are Shuttle era astronauts to please rise.

Ladies and gentlemen, as I was walking around the museum tonight, admiring Jack Dailey's impressive collection of Gemini, Apollo and Space Shuttle hardware and displays, I couldn't help but think that the museum could serve--if he were just inclined to do such things--as a large annex to John Young's trophy case!

But because I know John is so humble, he would blanch at the very thought of something like that. In fact it took a considerable amount of coercion of he and Susy to convince him that he really should come here tonight for us. It's an opportunity for us to recognize the tremendous legacy and history that certainly you have contributed to and have a large measure in John. As a consequence it's an opportunity for us this evening to celebrate what a tremendous community this is and your very essential part in it.

This is a man who never once entered a space capsule because of the glory. Rather, he propelled himself through one of the most remarkable careers in the annals of exploration, let alone space exploration, because of an overriding sense of duty, honor and commitment--indeed naval service characteristics--to this great country of ours.

Let me just mention one artifact that is displayed here in this fantastic museum--an exact duplicate of the telescope John used on Apollo 16 to photograph star clouds, nebulae, and Earth's outermost atmosphere from the Moon.

This was the first telescope used to make astronomical observations from the surface of another planetary body, but as John will tell us, certainly not the last.

Now we will certainly hear a lot tonight about John Young's extraordinary record as an astronaut. But rather than dwell on the fact that he flew onboard

four different kinds of space vehicles, and with Charlie Duke broke the lunar speed limit several times in their souped up lunar rover, one of my favorite John Young numbers has nothing to do with his astronaut records. That number is 159, the number of current NASA employees who have worked for the Agency a longer period of time than John. He's outlasted almost everybody. (laughter)

Of course I said that just to egg John on into staying so he can one day hold the title of longest serving NASA employee if he would so desire.

Well we do know for sure that the 42 years John has been a part of the NASA family he has never once punched a time clock. Not once.

His career at the Agency, stemming over the Administrations of nine Presidents, have been characterized by an extraordinary commitment to excellence in all matters great and small. Even

inquiries of anything we do always end with, "Just askin."

When I speak of our astronauts as being ambassadors of exploration, John is our model for the astronaut pioneers who will return to the Moon, and then carry the torch of exploration on, just as John has been eloquently advocating for so many years.

When he did get the chance to explore the Descartes highlands on Apollo 16, this man who grew up near the flat farmlands of pre-Disney Orlando, took on with gusto the challenge of learning geology in our nation's most desolate regions.

Andy Chaiken, the author who chronicled the Moon missions, writes "Inside Young was an unwavering determination, an overriding sense of responsibility--to the space program, to the country, to his crew--and an almost childlike sense of wonder at the Universe."

It was on the moon that Charlie Duke took that iconic photo you see on the face of tonight's program of John jumping up into the lunar vacuum to salute the U.S. flag with the rover, lunar module Orion and Stone Mountain in the background. The spirit of exploration and discovery has never soared higher.

Nine years later, when John and Bob Crippen rode Columbia into orbit and guided it to a perfect landing at Edwards Air Force Base, our spirits soared anew.

Another photo, this one of John standing alongside the Columbia and thrusting his arm with jubilation into the air was a wonderful symbol NASA's and our nation's renewal following a rough time in our history.

Even after he suited up for his final mission, STS-9, the first flight of the Spacelab science laboratory, on Columbia, John continued contributing to the cause of exploration.

Around the Agency, he's been our safety conscience, never resting until he's wrestled a problem to the ground with his extraordinary mind. 'Just askin.'

Kent Rominger, who is filling John's shoes as the head of the Astronaut Office now, was quoted not long ago of saying, "John's really been the soul of independent assessment. He provides a common sense check, a sanity check on the most technical detail. You can't really replace someone like John." Wow was that every right.

Now there are many good friends of John who can't be here tonight who wanted to express their appreciation via other media. One of John's big fans is a fellow who introduced a new generation of Americans to the heroism of our Apollo astronauts with his portrayal of Jim Lovell in Apollo 13, and his brilliant HBO Series, "From the Earth to the Moon." Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Tom Hanks.

Comments by Tom Hanks

Hello and good evening. I'm Tom Hanks in Los Angeles, sorry that I could not be with you tonight there in our nation's capital.

Throughout my life, John Young has been one of my heroes. Now I know the word hero is bandied about quite a bit these days. But throughout history there have been those kinds of people who did what had to be done regardless of the consequences. In which case John Young deserves to be rated as one of my heroes as well as anybody else's.

His career was a career of firsts. He was the first astronaut to fly around the moon by himself. He was the first astronaut to fly in space six times. He was onboard the very first Space Shuttle mission and he was the first man to take a corned-beef sandwich where no corned-beef sandwich had gone before.

A newspaper reporter described him as "an intense young man who could not get to where he

was going fast enough," and that kind of drive and dedication, and, well, stick-to-itiveness landed John on the Moon in 1972 as Commander of Apollo 16. But we all know this. He once said, "Space exploration is the future of mankind and we need to get on with it. When we can live and work on other worlds, then we can control our own destiny here on Earth." I for one cannot disagree with you John Young. That's why you are one of my heroes. That's why I say, let's get on with it.

It is my honor to be here on video congratulating John Young, paying homage to John Young, and in some small way reminding everybody of the great pioneering efforts John Young committed to the exploration and discovery of our future in outer space. John Young. Congratulations. Job well done. And as this hero worshiper from afar along with many others, can't help but wonder, what will we do without you?

Continuation of Sean O'Keefe Remarks

Tom Hanks' commentary reminds me how far we've come. When the corned beef sandwich went into space it earned a congressional investigation. When Mike Melville went into space and brought M&M's, everybody applauded. So it's kind of an unusual passage of time.

Another great friend of John Young's is our Nation's 41st President, George H.W. Bush. He was Vice President during John's two Shuttle missions and helped John keep in shape by jogging with him when he was between missions. Although he and Barbara regret very deeply not being able to be here tonight, I heard from him a couple of times by note as well as phone call, he did take the time to honor John with the following video tribute.

President George H.W. Bush Video

Well John and Susy too, let me first apologize for this voice of mine. I've been in outer space, that space being the quail fields of south Texas near Falfurrias. I've picked up a darn cold.

Also I regret that I'm not there as your fellow astronauts and leaders there at NASA celebrate your years and years of service. For Barbara and me you've been an example of the best of public service. You've given of yourself, year after year. You've led and you've inspired our nation. So good luck to you in whatever lies ahead. I hope your future is every bit as challenging as the past, and with Susy at your side, I know it will be. Bar (Barbara Bush) sends her love and so do I.

Continuation of Sean O'Keefe's Remarks

Finally, I would like to read from a letter that his son sent.

"Dear John:

Congratulations on your retirement after 42 years with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. I join your family, friends and colleagues in recognizing your record of service and many accomplishments.

As the longest-serving astronaut in NASA's history, you have assumed great risk for the good of all mankind. Your dedication to exploration and discovery has lifted our national spirit and inspired future generations of pioneers.

Laura joins me in sending best wishes for an enjoyable retirement."

Signed, George W. Bush, December 3rd 2004.

And John, we have a framed photo of the President's letter to give you.

John, your moment to get back at all of us has arrived. But first, I'd like you to come up to receive a couple presentations that represent the enormous

gratitude that we all have for your remarkable service to NASA to the Naval Service and to our country.

First, I'd like to invite two Naval Service veterans, Captain Bill Readdy our Associate Administrator for Space Flight, and Colonel Brian O'Connor, our Chief Safety and Mission Assurance Officer to come forward to help make a presentation on behalf of the Space Flight Awareness safety program.

John, this Space Flight Awareness Safety Award is given in recognition of your tremendous contributions to flight safety and America's Gemini, Apollo, Space Shuttle and International Space Station programs.

The letter that goes along with this trophy states:

"Your impressive 42-year career as a test pilot, astronaut, engineer, explorer and respected member of NASA management has set the standard for resolution of concerns as well as developing

engineering change and support of safety and mission success. Your six space flights contributed immeasurably to advances in human exploration of space. Your letters of concern as well as your advice and counsel on engineering, operational, and safety matters fostered many safety improvements that led to program enhancements for the Space Shuttle and ISS. Throughout your career you have consistently demonstrated safety as a core value in the context of an unequalled personal commitment to human space exploration."

This is now referred to throughout the Agency as the "Just askin" award.

John, it is now my great pleasure to present to you NASA's highest honor, our Distinguished Service Award.

This award is given for your unparalleled contributions to the Agency and the nation as an astronaut during the Gemini, Apollo and Space

Shuttle programs, and for your dedicated service as a human space flight pioneer, who with unwavering courage, brought the Moon closer to the Earth, took man closer to the Universe and elevated human space flight to its current pinnacle.

Finally, John we have a photo of you, which definitely shows you in your element. It was taken in front of one of our T-38 aircraft, the same aircraft that you have flown in over 9,000 hours. John, it is my tremendous honor to present you this token of our esteem. This is the John Young we all know and love in this shot.

Ladies and gentlemen, an exemplar of the space program, a distinguished Naval Officer, Captain John Young.

John Young's Remarks

Thank you everybody for being here. How many of you have worked on a space program, human spaceflight exploration in one way or another? Let

me see a show of hands. Boy, thank you very much. I know you all have worked very hard, and I see the gentlemen here who have been here who worked very hard and thank you very much for saving my rear. (Laughter) NASA says that using four letter words is better than using three letter words. So, I say again, thank you for saving my rear.

This is a wonderful evening. And I certainly think that human exploration is a key to the future of civilization on this planet. And I think that this is just a beginning. It is going to be very important, very, very important.

Let me tell you what I know about human risk. We do probabilistic risk assessment for everything. Bill Anders (Apollo 8 crewmember) told me he thought the probability of him getting back from the Moon when he flew was one in two. And Susy, my wife Susy, who used to work for the people who do probabilistic risk assessment, she told me that my

chance of getting back safely on Apollo 16 was one in five. And she said, "I blew it off and didn't pay any attention." I certainly don't remember her telling me anything like that. (Laughter) And now we know that before we launched the Space Shuttle Columbia the probabilistic risk of getting back was one in 265, and then after we launched the Columbia it's now one in 57, a proven. That's remarkable. Actually for a very complicated and aging spacecraft, its better than 98 percent reliability for a very complex launch vehicle. And its darned good, darned good. I'd just hope we'd be flying right now, but we're not there yet. But we're going to get there. And its going to be very important to the Space Station to get it going and get some things up there. Because there's some very important things we can do in space with experiments using zero gravity as a tool, and it's going to be very useful to us.

What's even more important, even more important is to do the space vision. Now why is that? I'll give you some more probabilistic risk. Do you know that the risk the human race getting taken out in the next hundred years counting asteroids or comet impacts or super volcanoes is one in 455. That is very high-risk odds. Now what are we doing about it? Well I'll tell you. The very technologies that will allow us to live and work on the Moon are the very technologies that will save civilization on Earth. And what the heck are they? We got to be power rich. We have to have a lot of electricity. And it should be pollution free. And we know we can get it on the Moon from solar arrays. And we know we can beam power back to the Earth one of these days. And in 2050 when Planet Earth has 10 billion people on it and everybody is using gasoline how much fossil fuel are we going to use? Well, 900 million barrels a day. And OPEC was very proud about raising their quota

to 27 million barrels a day. Well you see you can't get there from where we are at using fossil fuels. So we are going to go have to explore space. The human exploration of space out there, going to the moon and industrializing it, and doing the things we have to do to live and work on the Moon will eventually save civilization. And we are civilization. And don't think about civilization as them guys. Think about it as you, your children, your grandchildren and their children and their grandchildren. One in 455 is very high-risk business, so we are all very lucky to be here right now. Very lucky. And we can fix it we work on it by developing those technologies.

Now what else do we have to have? You have to be able to terraform to go and live and work on the Moon. We have already proven that you can do that. We can grow wheat at 1,000 bushels an acre. You have to be able to have inflatable structures, like Mr.

Bigelow is working on out there in Las Vegas. You have to have big inflatable structures so you can grow crops in there. You have to have reliable environmental control systems that 100 percent recycle food, water and waste. You need a lot of power to do that. You need very robust environmental control systems. We can develop those. You need new pressure suits and you need big rovers to explore with. And you can discover minerals on the Moon. I think you can mine the platinum minerals and eventually use them to convert to a hydrogen economy, which we're not doing right now.

I'm thinking about the future. And the future is your children and your grandchildren and their children and grandchildren. And I think it's going to be wonderful to do that. So the idea that I'm retiring from NASA and quitting and giving up on the idea of advocating exploring space is just won't happen until

they carry me out with my boots in the air. It's just not going to happen. I think what we are doing is extremely important to us, extremely important. It's important to the future of this country and the future of the great gang we all belong to, the human race. Thank you very much.