50 years ago NASA launched its first communication satellite Echo 1 made from mylar polyester film and measuring about a hundred feet across when fully deployed the balloon shaped spacecraft was designed as a passive communications reflector for transcontinental and intercontinental telephone radio and television signals during orbit a special recorded message from President Dwight Eisenhower was bounced off Echo 1 and picked up by radio operators across the nation it is a great personal satisfaction to participate in this
first experiment in communication echo

success proved that microwave transmission to and from satellites in space was understood and demonstrated

the promise of communication satellites

echo 1 re-entered the atmosphere on May twenty-fourth 1968