



PANEL DISCUSSION

The Life and Legacy of John Glenn:
*A Discussion with NASA Administrator
Bill Nelson and Author Jeff Shesol*



1
00:00:06,122 --> 00:00:07,207
This event, the life

2
00:00:07,207 --> 00:00:08,708
and legacy of John Glenn.

3
00:00:09,159 --> 00:00:10,443
I'm Brian Odom, the acting

4
00:00:10,443 --> 00:00:13,179
NASA's chief historian from his birth

5
00:00:13,480 --> 00:00:16,816
on July 18th, 1921, in Cambridge, Ohio.

6
00:00:16,833 --> 00:00:18,902
John Glenn certainly lived a life

7
00:00:18,902 --> 00:00:20,170
filled with excitement

8
00:00:20,286 --> 00:00:22,022
and incredible accomplishments.

9
00:00:22,389 --> 00:00:23,506
One of the original Mercury

10
00:00:23,506 --> 00:00:24,557
seven astronauts,

11
00:00:24,557 --> 00:00:26,626
Glenn's orbital flight aboard Friendship

12
00:00:26,626 --> 00:00:29,529
seven on February 20th, 1962,

13
00:00:29,946 --> 00:00:31,247

came at an incredibly

14

00:00:31,247 --> 00:00:32,115

important inflection

15

00:00:32,115 --> 00:00:33,366

point in the early years

16

00:00:33,366 --> 00:00:35,251

of the space race with the Soviet Union.

17

00:00:35,802 --> 00:00:38,171

His return to space on October 29,

18

00:00:38,588 --> 00:00:40,607

1998, aboard the space

19

00:00:40,607 --> 00:00:43,143

shuttle Discovery's Stass 95 mission

20

00:00:43,276 --> 00:00:44,444

captain, incredible

21

00:00:44,444 --> 00:00:46,112

career in space and cemented

22

00:00:46,112 --> 00:00:47,614

finally his legacy

23

00:00:47,797 --> 00:00:48,915

as part of that program.

24

00:00:49,215 --> 00:00:51,167

Today, I'm pleased to be joined

25

00:00:51,167 --> 00:00:53,103

by an incredible group of folks here,

26

00:00:53,286 --> 00:00:55,155
as we'll all find out in a bit here

27

00:00:55,872 --> 00:00:58,508
as we discuss Glenn's life and legacy.

28

00:00:59,225 --> 00:01:00,276
First, we have the NASA's

29

00:01:00,276 --> 00:01:02,112
administrator, Bill Nelson, here.

30

00:01:02,712 --> 00:01:04,597
Bill, then we have NASA

31

00:01:04,597 --> 00:01:05,982
Glenn Center director Dr.

32

00:01:05,982 --> 00:01:07,183
Marla Pérez-Davis.

33

00:01:07,450 --> 00:01:08,701
And our invited guest

34

00:01:08,701 --> 00:01:10,386
is historian Jeff Shesol.

35

00:01:11,287 --> 00:01:13,473
First, I'd like to welcome Dr.

36

00:01:13,473 --> 00:01:15,125
Pérez-Davis to start us off

37

00:01:15,125 --> 00:01:15,975
before turning out

38

00:01:15,975 --> 00:01:17,143

to our discussion with Jeff,

39

00:01:17,444 --> 00:01:18,578

the author of the new book

40

00:01:18,578 --> 00:01:21,464

Mercury Rising, John Glenn, John Kennedy

41

00:01:21,798 --> 00:01:23,950

and the new battleground of the Cold War.

42

00:01:24,968 --> 00:01:26,469

But first, let me introduce Dr.

43

00:01:26,619 --> 00:01:27,370

Pérez-Davis

44

00:01:28,605 --> 00:01:29,405

Doctor Margaret

45

00:01:29,622 --> 00:01:30,673

Davis is director

46

00:01:30,673 --> 00:01:32,192

currently to the director of NASA's

47

00:01:32,192 --> 00:01:34,327

Glenn Research Center in Cleveland, Ohio.

48

00:01:34,744 --> 00:01:35,562

Prior to becoming

49

00:01:35,562 --> 00:01:36,880

center director there, Dr.

50

00:01:36,880 --> 00:01:38,381

Pérez-Davis held several

51

00:01:38,381 --> 00:01:39,766

leadership positions at Glenn,

52

00:01:39,999 --> 00:01:41,684

including deputy center director,

53

00:01:41,985 --> 00:01:44,170

aeronautics research office director,

54

00:01:44,354 --> 00:01:46,689

project liaison and integration office,

55

00:01:47,223 --> 00:01:49,292

and the electrochemistry branch chief.

56

00:01:49,659 --> 00:01:51,227

And now to turn it over to Dr.

57

00:01:51,227 --> 00:01:53,196

Chris Davis for some opening remarks.

58

00:01:54,364 --> 00:01:55,515

Good afternoon, and thank you

59

00:01:55,515 --> 00:01:57,634

for joining us for today's program.

60

00:01:58,067 --> 00:01:59,169

I'd like to thank Dr.

61

00:01:59,169 --> 00:02:01,204

Odom for organizing this event,

62

00:02:01,237 --> 00:02:03,289

which is part of a weeklong celebration

63

00:02:03,306 --> 00:02:04,624

that culminate this Sunday.

64

00:02:05,141 --> 00:02:07,360

Hundred years from the birth of a true

65

00:02:07,360 --> 00:02:09,395

aviator space pioneer

66

00:02:09,546 --> 00:02:11,114

and a devoted public servant,

67

00:02:11,414 --> 00:02:13,416

senator and astronaut John Glenn,

68

00:02:14,050 --> 00:02:16,085

as the first American to orbit the Earth,

69

00:02:16,085 --> 00:02:18,521

Glenn became and is the national hero

70

00:02:18,972 --> 00:02:20,673

as his flight helped NASA

71

00:02:20,707 --> 00:02:22,775

learn more about human spaceflight

72

00:02:23,176 --> 00:02:24,427

and set us on a course

73

00:02:24,427 --> 00:02:25,512

to win the space race.

74

00:02:26,112 --> 00:02:27,730

I'm looking forward to hearing today

75

00:02:27,730 --> 00:02:29,649

speaker share his insight

76

00:02:29,949 --> 00:02:31,151
on the historic Mercury

77

00:02:31,151 --> 00:02:33,436
Friendship seven mission in 1962.

78

00:02:34,120 --> 00:02:36,005
Thirty years later, Senator Glenn

79

00:02:36,039 --> 00:02:37,574
flew on again on space

80

00:02:37,574 --> 00:02:41,594
shuttle mission STS-95 participating investigations

81

00:02:41,594 --> 00:02:42,795
about the aging process.

82

00:02:43,847 --> 00:02:46,366
On March 1st, 1999, the name

83

00:02:46,983 --> 00:02:49,202
the NASA Lewis Research Center

84

00:02:49,736 --> 00:02:51,938
Grant Highway was officially rename

85

00:02:52,305 --> 00:02:53,590
the NASA John H.

86

00:02:53,957 --> 00:02:56,226
Glenn Research Center at Lewisville

87

00:02:56,626 --> 00:02:58,561
to honor these remarkable men.

88

00:02:59,395 --> 00:03:01,414

Later that Spring, that's being our Senate, hosted

89

00:03:01,781 --> 00:03:03,216

a full day of festivities,

90

00:03:03,216 --> 00:03:05,385

including a parade and ceremony.

91

00:03:06,035 --> 00:03:07,837

Senator Glenn spoke to the gathering.

92

00:03:07,987 --> 00:03:09,255

He expressed his honor

93

00:03:09,489 --> 00:03:10,840

being associated with the center,

94

00:03:11,291 --> 00:03:12,692

his historical contribution

95

00:03:12,692 --> 00:03:14,911

and bright future, not in the slogan

96

00:03:14,911 --> 00:03:16,846

he saw in one of the parade float,

97

00:03:17,080 --> 00:03:20,083

expanding horizons, opening frontiers.

98

00:03:20,583 --> 00:03:21,634

He challenged the men

99

00:03:21,634 --> 00:03:23,770

and women of NASA again to continue

100

00:03:23,770 --> 00:03:25,989

working to make that mission a reality

101
00:03:26,506 --> 00:03:28,091
for our future explorers

102
00:03:28,091 --> 00:03:29,475
in air and space.

103
00:03:30,226 --> 00:03:31,578
I am going to read to you

104
00:03:31,594 --> 00:03:32,946
what Senator Glenn said

105
00:03:32,946 --> 00:03:34,247
to our staff that day,

106
00:03:34,831 --> 00:03:36,849
because I couldn't possibly sleep better.

107
00:03:37,483 --> 00:03:39,285
Here's a passage from his speech

108
00:03:40,186 --> 00:03:43,273
expanding horizon, opening frontiers,

109
00:03:43,957 --> 00:03:45,491
and that just about saying it,

110
00:03:46,175 --> 00:03:47,493
he'd say it for the lab.

111
00:03:47,493 --> 00:03:50,146
Here, he say, is for NASA's activities,

112
00:03:50,713 --> 00:03:52,065
expanding horizons

113
00:03:52,298 --> 00:03:53,716

and opening frontiers.

114

00:03:54,133 --> 00:03:55,802

Every single bit or advance

115

00:03:56,085 --> 00:03:58,988

that ever been made by humankind

116

00:03:59,022 --> 00:04:01,591

in all of the history has been made

117

00:04:01,591 --> 00:04:03,693

because somebody was curious,

118

00:04:04,143 --> 00:04:06,129

curious about how we do things better,

119

00:04:06,913 --> 00:04:08,598

how to do things differently.

120

00:04:09,699 --> 00:04:11,200

How if we just knew

121

00:04:11,834 --> 00:04:13,686

this little bit of information

122

00:04:14,470 --> 00:04:16,839

we got in not a secret to something else

123

00:04:17,440 --> 00:04:20,793

in medicine, engineering, transportation

124

00:04:20,977 --> 00:04:22,595

in science across the board

125

00:04:23,079 --> 00:04:25,031

is taking that bit of curiosity

126

00:04:25,214 --> 00:04:27,667

to move us forward as humankind.

127

00:04:28,418 --> 00:04:30,336

And that's what you are all about

128

00:04:30,887 --> 00:04:31,721

right here.

129

00:04:32,021 --> 00:04:33,640

You just expand your horizon

130

00:04:34,057 --> 00:04:35,725

and opening frontiers.

131

00:04:36,342 --> 00:04:37,777

That's what he said that day.

132

00:04:38,494 --> 00:04:40,096

And we are the center

133

00:04:40,113 --> 00:04:41,464

bearing his name, continue

134

00:04:41,464 --> 00:04:43,216

his legacy of exploration,

135

00:04:43,516 --> 00:04:45,335

inspiration and discovery,

136

00:04:45,785 --> 00:04:47,537

as we may, in fact, will lasting

137

00:04:47,537 --> 00:04:49,122

contribution to our nation.

138

00:04:49,539 --> 00:04:51,307

I'm prepared to send the first woman

139

00:04:51,524 --> 00:04:53,076

and the first person of color

140

00:04:53,259 --> 00:04:54,877

to the moon on Artemis.

141

00:04:55,395 --> 00:04:56,529

Godspeed, John Glenn.

142

00:04:56,763 --> 00:04:58,364

And thank you for the example

143

00:04:58,364 --> 00:04:59,949

you set for all of us.

144

00:05:00,583 --> 00:05:01,000

Thanks.

145

00:05:02,201 --> 00:05:02,952

Back to you.

146

00:05:03,636 --> 00:05:03,653

no, no, no.

147

00:05:03,653 --> 00:05:05,388

Thank you so much to Dr. Pérez-Davis

148

00:05:05,388 --> 00:05:06,506

Really appreciate that.

149

00:05:06,506 --> 00:05:08,574

And the inspiration certainly

150

00:05:08,574 --> 00:05:10,076

that we draw from Glenn's life

151
00:05:10,610 --> 00:05:11,661
capsulated that.

152
00:05:12,512 --> 00:05:14,514
Now, I'd like to welcome our

153
00:05:14,630 --> 00:05:15,298
someone who needs

154
00:05:15,298 --> 00:05:16,683
no introduction, obviously,

155
00:05:16,683 --> 00:05:19,402
our nest administrator, Bill Nelson,

156
00:05:20,036 --> 00:05:21,471
to the stage and introduce

157
00:05:21,471 --> 00:05:23,756
our our guest, Jeff Shesol.

158
00:05:24,524 --> 00:05:26,359
First, Jeff Jeff

159
00:05:26,359 --> 00:05:28,244
is the author of several awards here,

160
00:05:28,277 --> 00:05:29,429
notably the one we'll talk

161
00:05:29,429 --> 00:05:31,497
about today, Mercury Rising, but also

162
00:05:32,098 --> 00:05:34,317
Supreme Power, Franklin Roosevelt vs.

163
00:05:34,317 --> 00:05:36,536

the Supreme Court and mutual cantante.

164

00:05:36,569 --> 00:05:37,437

Lyndon Johnson,

165

00:05:37,470 --> 00:05:38,871

Robert Kennedy in the view,

166

00:05:38,871 --> 00:05:40,907

the defining decade both selected

167

00:05:40,907 --> 00:05:41,691

as New York Times

168

00:05:41,691 --> 00:05:42,809

notable books of the year.

169

00:05:43,559 --> 00:05:44,994

He is a former speechwriter

170

00:05:44,994 --> 00:05:47,063

for President Bill Clinton, is a founding

171

00:05:47,063 --> 00:05:48,715

partner of West Wing writers,

172

00:05:49,015 --> 00:05:50,116

a Rhodes Scholar.

173

00:05:50,817 --> 00:05:52,668

He holds degrees in history

174

00:05:52,769 --> 00:05:55,038

from Oxford University Brown University

175

00:05:55,221 --> 00:05:56,639

and is a frequent contributor

176

00:05:56,639 --> 00:05:57,740

to The New York Times.

177

00:05:58,041 --> 00:05:59,642

And the watch, The Washington Post

178

00:05:59,642 --> 00:06:01,077

and The New Yorker, Newsday.

179

00:06:01,761 --> 00:06:02,695

So I'll turn it over

180

00:06:02,695 --> 00:06:03,529

to the administrator.

181

00:06:03,529 --> 00:06:04,313

I'm going to stay on.

182

00:06:04,313 --> 00:06:05,998

But Administrator, if you would,

183

00:06:06,265 --> 00:06:07,283

go ahead and open us up.

184

00:06:08,401 --> 00:06:09,919

Well, this is a real treat

185

00:06:09,919 --> 00:06:12,055

for me to interview Jeff

186

00:06:12,422 --> 00:06:15,208

because I read the book.

187

00:06:15,208 --> 00:06:15,958

As a matter of fact,

188

00:06:15,958 --> 00:06:17,460

I listened to it on Audible

189

00:06:18,077 --> 00:06:20,513

and I couldn't put it down.

190

00:06:21,147 --> 00:06:22,548

And I've recommended it

191

00:06:22,548 --> 00:06:24,384

to a number of people.

192

00:06:25,518 --> 00:06:27,737

It captures a part

193

00:06:27,737 --> 00:06:29,489

of our American history

194

00:06:30,239 --> 00:06:32,341

that not only is important

195

00:06:32,341 --> 00:06:34,644

to organizations like NASA,

196

00:06:34,644 --> 00:06:35,962

but is important

197

00:06:36,646 --> 00:06:41,067

to the the the success of our country

198

00:06:41,934 --> 00:06:44,720

because of what we had

199

00:06:44,720 --> 00:06:46,589

come out of in that

200

00:06:47,790 --> 00:06:50,760

face down with our mortal enemy,

201
00:06:50,760 --> 00:06:53,062
the Soviet Union, with nuclear

202
00:06:54,414 --> 00:06:56,999
warheads facing each other.

203
00:06:56,999 --> 00:06:59,335
And out of this came a spark

204
00:07:00,169 --> 00:07:02,305
that suddenly we were behind.

205
00:07:02,905 --> 00:07:05,641
Suddenly they held the high ground,

206
00:07:06,259 --> 00:07:07,860
first with Sputnik

207
00:07:08,578 --> 00:07:11,781
and then with Gagarin and Titov.

208
00:07:12,598 --> 00:07:15,501
And after Gagarin had already flown,

209
00:07:15,501 --> 00:07:17,603
we could only get into some orbit

210
00:07:17,603 --> 00:07:20,606
with Shepard and with Grissom.

211
00:07:20,940 --> 00:07:25,128
And then came delay and delay.

212
00:07:25,428 --> 00:07:28,164
And then in February of 62,

213
00:07:28,998 --> 00:07:31,801

John Glenn took off on an Atlas

214

00:07:31,801 --> 00:07:34,854

that had a 20 percent chance of failure.

215

00:07:36,005 --> 00:07:38,941

And there's no looking back.

216

00:07:40,092 --> 00:07:43,479

And America won that space race,

217

00:07:44,013 --> 00:07:47,383

which ultimately allowed us

218

00:07:47,733 --> 00:07:49,619

to have a partnership.

219

00:07:50,586 --> 00:07:52,722

With the then Soviet

220

00:07:52,722 --> 00:07:54,790

Union in Apollo-Soyuz

221

00:07:55,625 --> 00:07:58,110

and now the partnership continues

222

00:07:58,110 --> 00:07:59,946

with the Russian space agency.

223

00:08:00,847 --> 00:08:03,099

And so I think Jeff has hit

224

00:08:03,099 --> 00:08:05,368

a part of American history

225

00:08:05,368 --> 00:08:06,669

that is pivotal.

226

00:08:07,320 --> 00:08:09,121

And I want to know how

227

00:08:09,121 --> 00:08:10,656

since you've talked about

228

00:08:10,656 --> 00:08:11,891

or you've written about

229

00:08:11,891 --> 00:08:13,893

Franklin Roosevelt and all these others,

230

00:08:14,143 --> 00:08:17,530

how did you zero in on this particular

231

00:08:17,530 --> 00:08:19,832

part of our history, Jeff?

232

00:08:21,117 --> 00:08:23,436

Well, first, Administrator Nelson,

233

00:08:23,436 --> 00:08:25,638

I just want to thank you for those very,

234

00:08:25,638 --> 00:08:27,607

very kind words about the book

235

00:08:27,607 --> 00:08:29,842

and for joining us here today.

236

00:08:29,859 --> 00:08:31,511

It's really an honor to be here

237

00:08:31,511 --> 00:08:32,912

in conversation with you.

238

00:08:33,312 --> 00:08:34,797

And I want to thank Dr.

239

00:08:34,797 --> 00:08:35,998

Odom and Dr.

240

00:08:35,998 --> 00:08:37,900

Pérez-Davis for your comments

241

00:08:37,900 --> 00:08:39,218

and for joining us as well.

242

00:08:40,086 --> 00:08:42,538

It's really a thrill for me, a treat.

243

00:08:43,422 --> 00:08:45,191

And I appreciate what you said

244

00:08:45,191 --> 00:08:46,976

about the context of the book

245

00:08:46,976 --> 00:08:48,661

and the story that I'm trying to tell.

246

00:08:48,711 --> 00:08:51,180

I'd like a lot of American kids.

247

00:08:51,180 --> 00:08:52,832

I grew up fascinated

248

00:08:52,832 --> 00:08:54,333

by space and fascinated

249

00:08:54,333 --> 00:08:56,202

by the individuals

250

00:08:56,202 --> 00:08:57,570

who had flown into space

251
00:08:57,570 --> 00:09:00,273
and the heroic accomplishments

252
00:09:00,273 --> 00:09:01,507
of those Americans.

253
00:09:02,408 --> 00:09:03,843
But as I look back

254
00:09:03,843 --> 00:09:05,611
from a recent vantage point,

255
00:09:05,611 --> 00:09:07,363
I wanted to understand a little more

256
00:09:07,363 --> 00:09:09,131
of the significance

257
00:09:09,131 --> 00:09:10,216
of John Glenn's flight.

258
00:09:10,233 --> 00:09:11,651
I understood that he had

259
00:09:11,651 --> 00:09:12,868
become the first American

260
00:09:12,868 --> 00:09:14,887
to orbit the Earth and that that alone

261
00:09:15,238 --> 00:09:16,989
guaranteed him a place in history.

262
00:09:16,989 --> 00:09:20,259
But the reaction to Glenn's flight seemed

263
00:09:21,460 --> 00:09:23,879

almost wholly out of proportion to that.

264

00:09:23,879 --> 00:09:25,197

That simple fact.

265

00:09:25,197 --> 00:09:26,215

It was significant.

266

00:09:26,232 --> 00:09:28,050

But why was it so significant?

267

00:09:28,417 --> 00:09:30,069

And I think it really comes back

268

00:09:30,069 --> 00:09:31,837

to the Cold War context.

269

00:09:32,121 --> 00:09:34,257

As you Administrator Nelson

270

00:09:34,257 --> 00:09:36,726

described that the space race

271

00:09:36,726 --> 00:09:38,711

we have come to think of the space race

272

00:09:38,711 --> 00:09:40,363

as something that happened over here

273

00:09:40,363 --> 00:09:41,614

on its own timeline.

274

00:09:41,614 --> 00:09:43,649

And the Cold War was happening there

275

00:09:43,649 --> 00:09:45,101

in Berlin and in Cuba

276

00:09:45,101 --> 00:09:46,269
and in Southeast Asia.

277

00:09:46,602 --> 00:09:48,688
But at the time, they were understood

278

00:09:48,688 --> 00:09:50,590
to be part of the same conflict.

279

00:09:50,623 --> 00:09:51,991
That was certainly how President

280

00:09:51,991 --> 00:09:53,042
Kennedy understood them.

281

00:09:53,075 --> 00:09:53,943
That was certainly how

282

00:09:53,943 --> 00:09:55,211
the Mercury astronauts

283

00:09:55,528 --> 00:09:57,813
and everyone at NASA understood them,

284

00:09:57,813 --> 00:09:58,781
that it was part of this

285

00:09:58,781 --> 00:10:00,299
greater global struggle

286

00:10:00,600 --> 00:10:01,751
between two systems,

287

00:10:01,751 --> 00:10:04,020
between freedom and totalitarianism.

288

00:10:04,420 --> 00:10:05,921

And when you look at it

289

00:10:05,921 --> 00:10:07,690

through that frame, then you begin

290

00:10:07,690 --> 00:10:09,508

to understand why the buildup

291

00:10:09,809 --> 00:10:10,977

before John Glenn's

292

00:10:10,977 --> 00:10:12,278

flight was so significant

293

00:10:12,278 --> 00:10:13,713

and why the response afterward

294

00:10:13,713 --> 00:10:14,580

was what it was.

295

00:10:15,481 --> 00:10:19,018

So how did President Kennedy,

296

00:10:19,018 --> 00:10:21,904

who really didn't know much about space

297

00:10:22,588 --> 00:10:25,441

and probably, as you suggest,

298

00:10:25,808 --> 00:10:27,360

didn't care a lot about it,

299

00:10:28,077 --> 00:10:31,564

but he he was he had this

300

00:10:32,164 --> 00:10:35,584

incisiveness that he could pierce through

301

00:10:35,584 --> 00:10:37,203

and he could see the political

302

00:10:37,203 --> 00:10:38,854

ramifications of something.

303

00:10:39,822 --> 00:10:44,143

And he saw that this was a moment in time

304

00:10:44,143 --> 00:10:46,896

with a technological program.

305

00:10:47,830 --> 00:10:51,667

That could vault America into the lead.

306

00:10:51,751 --> 00:10:55,287

How how did he come to that conclusion?

307

00:10:56,405 --> 00:10:57,723

He came to that conclusion

308

00:10:57,723 --> 00:10:59,925

slowly, a little reluctantly,

309

00:10:59,942 --> 00:11:01,961

but inevitably, I would say

310

00:11:02,194 --> 00:11:04,864

in the late 1950s when Lyndon Johnson

311

00:11:04,864 --> 00:11:05,948

and others in the Senate

312

00:11:05,948 --> 00:11:07,233

were leading the discussion

313

00:11:07,233 --> 00:11:08,517

nationally about space.

314

00:11:08,951 --> 00:11:09,869

John Kennedy wasn't

315

00:11:09,869 --> 00:11:11,487

particularly interested in that.

316

00:11:11,971 --> 00:11:12,822

As you said.

317

00:11:12,822 --> 00:11:15,124

But when he ran for president in 1960,

318

00:11:15,124 --> 00:11:16,776

he understood the symbolic

319

00:11:16,926 --> 00:11:19,295

the symbolic power of space

320

00:11:19,295 --> 00:11:21,480

exploration, both domestically

321

00:11:21,664 --> 00:11:23,049

for a nation that had begun

322

00:11:23,049 --> 00:11:25,201

to feel that maybe it had lost its edge

323

00:11:25,201 --> 00:11:26,552

in its initiative in the years

324

00:11:26,552 --> 00:11:29,672

since World War Two and also globally .

325

00:11:29,672 --> 00:11:30,940

In this larger struggle

326

00:11:30,940 --> 00:11:32,158

that we were talking about

327

00:11:32,158 --> 00:11:33,092

and the nations of

328

00:11:33,092 --> 00:11:34,326

the world were watching

329

00:11:34,326 --> 00:11:36,128

to see who was going to take the lead

330

00:11:36,462 --> 00:11:38,831

and made certain assumptions

331

00:11:38,831 --> 00:11:40,116

which were not unreasonable, unreasonable

332

00:11:41,350 --> 00:11:43,536

about what that said about the nation's

333

00:11:43,536 --> 00:11:44,820

scientific capacity,

334

00:11:44,820 --> 00:11:46,422

its technological capacity

335

00:11:46,722 --> 00:11:48,357

and its military capacity.

336

00:11:48,657 --> 00:11:50,559

So Kennedy in 1960

337

00:11:50,559 --> 00:11:53,579

ran in part on the issue of space,

338

00:11:53,913 --> 00:11:55,331

and he said repeatedly

339

00:11:55,331 --> 00:11:57,249

that it was unacceptable and dangerous

340

00:11:57,249 --> 00:11:58,267

for the United States

341

00:11:58,267 --> 00:11:59,468

to be second in space.

342

00:11:59,668 --> 00:12:01,504

Now, what he didn't have at the time

343

00:12:01,887 --> 00:12:04,540

was a plan to put America in first place

344

00:12:04,540 --> 00:12:05,908

that was going to take some time

345

00:12:05,908 --> 00:12:07,226

and was going to take , frankly,

346

00:12:07,443 --> 00:12:09,011

some prodding from the Russians,

347

00:12:09,278 --> 00:12:10,529

because it was really only

348

00:12:10,529 --> 00:12:12,031

after that Gagarin flight

349

00:12:12,198 --> 00:12:14,650

that you mentioned that Kennedy awoke

350

00:12:14,650 --> 00:12:16,502

to the fact that he needed a solution

351

00:12:16,502 --> 00:12:17,520

and he needed it now.

352

00:12:19,522 --> 00:12:22,758

I recall when I was a young congressman,

353

00:12:22,758 --> 00:12:24,210

I was on the floor of the House

354

00:12:24,210 --> 00:12:26,529

one day and Tip O'Neill,

355

00:12:26,545 --> 00:12:28,464

the speaker, was there

356

00:12:28,464 --> 00:12:29,965

and he beckoned me over

357

00:12:30,716 --> 00:12:33,152

and he knew that I was going to fly.

358

00:12:33,169 --> 00:12:34,403

This is years later.

359

00:12:35,871 --> 00:12:38,991

And he says, let me tell you,

360

00:12:38,991 --> 00:12:40,643

when I was a young congressman,

361

00:12:40,760 --> 00:12:42,328

young Boston congressman,

362

00:12:42,962 --> 00:12:44,880

and I was down at the White House

363

00:12:44,880 --> 00:12:47,183

with President Kennedy, and he said

364

00:12:47,183 --> 00:12:49,401

I'd never seen the president so nervous.

365

00:12:49,401 --> 00:12:51,437

He was just pacing back and forth

366

00:12:51,437 --> 00:12:53,122

like a cat on a hot tin roof.

367

00:12:53,522 --> 00:12:56,242

And he said he pulled over to his aides

368

00:12:56,242 --> 00:12:56,659

and he said,

369

00:12:56,659 --> 00:12:57,860

what's wrong with the president?

370

00:12:58,861 --> 00:13:00,112

And they explain

371

00:13:00,112 --> 00:13:03,599

we were getting ready to fly

372

00:13:04,133 --> 00:13:06,752

Alan Shepard in suborbital

373

00:13:06,769 --> 00:13:08,871

after we had been surprised

374

00:13:08,871 --> 00:13:10,639

by Gagarin's flight

375

00:13:11,307 --> 00:13:14,176

and here we were in this catch up mode

376

00:13:14,243 --> 00:13:17,746

and he was so nervous to make

377

00:13:18,647 --> 00:13:20,816

to to want that mission

378

00:13:20,816 --> 00:13:21,717

to be a success,

379

00:13:21,717 --> 00:13:22,852

which, of course, it was.

380

00:13:23,719 --> 00:13:26,038

But then shortly after Alan Shepard,

381

00:13:26,038 --> 00:13:29,391

then Kennedy gets this bold vision

382

00:13:30,109 --> 00:13:31,577

and he goes to a joint

383

00:13:31,577 --> 00:13:32,778

session of Congress.

384

00:13:32,812 --> 00:13:34,013

Tell us about that.

385

00:13:34,730 --> 00:13:35,431

That's right.

386

00:13:35,781 --> 00:13:37,917

Well, that's that's a fascinating window

387

00:13:37,917 --> 00:13:38,667

into what Kennedy

388

00:13:38,667 --> 00:13:40,519

was experiencing at that time.

389

00:13:40,553 --> 00:13:42,571

He understood the stakes

390

00:13:42,888 --> 00:13:44,573

politically, geopolitically

391

00:13:44,573 --> 00:13:45,591

for the country.

392

00:13:45,591 --> 00:13:47,693

If if if we were to fail,

393

00:13:48,077 --> 00:13:49,495

if the Alan Shepard

394

00:13:49,495 --> 00:13:51,847

mission ended in any way in failure

395

00:13:51,881 --> 00:13:52,765

would happen before

396

00:13:52,765 --> 00:13:53,749

the eyes of the world.

397

00:13:54,116 --> 00:13:55,885

The Soviet Union, because it was,

398

00:13:55,885 --> 00:13:57,770

of course, a totalitarian state,

399

00:13:58,137 --> 00:14:00,139

was enabled to fail

400

00:14:00,139 --> 00:14:03,058

in secret, which they did when rockets

401
00:14:03,058 --> 00:14:04,293
blew up, boosters

402
00:14:04,293 --> 00:14:05,811
blew up on their launch pad.

403
00:14:06,212 --> 00:14:09,231
No one saw it who was physically present

404
00:14:09,415 --> 00:14:11,517
when one of their cosmonauts died

405
00:14:11,517 --> 00:14:13,853
in a really a horrific training accident.

406
00:14:14,820 --> 00:14:17,289
This was not known for for decades.

407
00:14:17,306 --> 00:14:21,176
And so there was an aura of invincibility

408
00:14:21,176 --> 00:14:22,411
to the Soviet program

409
00:14:22,411 --> 00:14:23,395
because all we ever saw

410
00:14:23,395 --> 00:14:24,213
were the successes.

411
00:14:24,563 --> 00:14:25,831
Whereas when our rockets

412
00:14:25,831 --> 00:14:27,266
exploded on the launch pad,

413
00:14:27,266 --> 00:14:28,801

the news cameras were there

414

00:14:28,801 --> 00:14:30,986

and it would appear in newsreels

415

00:14:30,986 --> 00:14:32,421

around the world, in the newspapers.

416

00:14:32,755 --> 00:14:35,057

So Kennedy understood these stakes.

417

00:14:35,457 --> 00:14:37,309

And it was after

418

00:14:37,760 --> 00:14:39,228

Shepperd's successful flight,

419

00:14:39,278 --> 00:14:40,529

as you described,

420

00:14:40,796 --> 00:14:42,448

that he was ready to make that

421

00:14:42,448 --> 00:14:44,633

that bold commitment to go to the moon.

422

00:14:45,301 --> 00:14:47,152

The logic of it was that

423

00:14:47,152 --> 00:14:50,639

it was a long term goal, and we knew that

424

00:14:50,906 --> 00:14:51,624

there was no way

425

00:14:51,624 --> 00:14:53,275

the United States was going to catch up

426
00:14:53,275 --> 00:14:55,010
to the Soviet Union in the near term.

427
00:14:55,194 --> 00:14:56,695
They just had too big a lead

428
00:14:56,695 --> 00:14:58,681
and we had too much catching up to do.

429
00:14:58,914 --> 00:14:59,965
But if you set a goal

430
00:14:59,965 --> 00:15:02,217
that was far enough away, literally,

431
00:15:02,217 --> 00:15:03,385
I guess, in terms of the moon,

432
00:15:03,385 --> 00:15:04,770
but also in terms of time,

433
00:15:05,187 --> 00:15:06,989
that that was going to require

434
00:15:07,323 --> 00:15:08,724
new technology that hadn't

435
00:15:08,724 --> 00:15:10,075
even been imagined yet.

436
00:15:10,292 --> 00:15:12,144
It was going to require investments

437
00:15:12,144 --> 00:15:13,462
on a massive scale over

438
00:15:13,462 --> 00:15:14,630

a long period of time

439

00:15:14,847 --> 00:15:16,832

that maybe there was no guarantee,

440

00:15:16,832 --> 00:15:18,384

but maybe we would have a chance

441

00:15:18,651 --> 00:15:20,102

to leapfrog the Soviets

442

00:15:20,102 --> 00:15:20,819

on the way to the moon,

443

00:15:20,970 --> 00:15:21,804

on the way to the moon.

444

00:15:23,038 --> 00:15:24,139

Although the Congress

445

00:15:24,139 --> 00:15:26,959

did increase the funding for the program

446

00:15:26,959 --> 00:15:29,628

after that speech that was received.

447

00:15:29,929 --> 00:15:31,680

As you point out in the book,

448

00:15:31,680 --> 00:15:33,799

in a kind of ho-hum fashion.

449

00:15:34,917 --> 00:15:36,952

What then propelled

450

00:15:37,987 --> 00:15:39,221

President Kennedy to

451
00:15:39,221 --> 00:15:40,889
go to Rice University,

452
00:15:41,557 --> 00:15:43,459
make a follow on speech,

453
00:15:43,475 --> 00:15:45,094
and when did that occur

454
00:15:45,094 --> 00:15:46,745
that he really poured

455
00:15:46,745 --> 00:15:48,364
the juice to the program?

456
00:15:49,148 --> 00:15:50,316
That speech occurred

457
00:15:50,316 --> 00:15:52,351
in September of 1962,

458
00:15:52,351 --> 00:15:54,153
so about a year and a half

459
00:15:54,153 --> 00:15:55,504
after the initial speech.

460
00:15:55,921 --> 00:15:57,456
And you're absolutely right.

461
00:15:57,456 --> 00:15:58,841
As I describe in the book,

462
00:15:59,591 --> 00:16:01,310
we see the soundbites

463
00:16:01,327 --> 00:16:02,378

from these speeches.

464

00:16:02,378 --> 00:16:05,981

And the boldness of Kennedy's commitment

465

00:16:06,281 --> 00:16:08,584

rings through the decades since.

466

00:16:08,584 --> 00:16:09,568

And we know, of course,

467

00:16:09,568 --> 00:16:10,869

that this was a successful

468

00:16:10,869 --> 00:16:11,787

gamble that he made,

469

00:16:11,787 --> 00:16:12,938

that we did get to the moon

470

00:16:13,172 --> 00:16:14,289

by the end of the decade.

471

00:16:14,606 --> 00:16:17,760

But as you said, the members of Congress,

472

00:16:17,760 --> 00:16:19,211

the senators in that chamber,

473

00:16:19,979 --> 00:16:21,513

received it very differently

474

00:16:21,530 --> 00:16:22,598

and Kennedy knew it.

475

00:16:23,015 --> 00:16:24,099

It's really interesting

476

00:16:24,099 --> 00:16:25,467

if you go back, as I'm sure

477

00:16:25,467 --> 00:16:26,769

you have Administrator

478

00:16:26,769 --> 00:16:28,620

and you watched that full speech,

479

00:16:28,921 --> 00:16:31,123

that after he has made this pitch

480

00:16:31,123 --> 00:16:32,191

that we should get to the moon

481

00:16:32,191 --> 00:16:33,308

by the end of the decade.

482

00:16:33,642 --> 00:16:34,860

He goes off script

483

00:16:34,860 --> 00:16:36,011

and he sort of shuffles

484

00:16:36,011 --> 00:16:38,247

the pages nervously and he looks down

485

00:16:38,530 --> 00:16:40,382

and he hedges and he says

486

00:16:40,382 --> 00:16:41,667

and I'm paraphrasing here,

487

00:16:41,667 --> 00:16:43,152

he says, listen,

488

00:16:43,152 --> 00:16:45,120

this is a huge commitment,

489

00:16:45,788 --> 00:16:47,823

both in terms of the federal budget

490

00:16:47,823 --> 00:16:49,341

and every other way.

491

00:16:49,358 --> 00:16:51,477

And I ask you, the Congress,

492

00:16:51,493 --> 00:16:52,961

the American people, to make sure

493

00:16:52,961 --> 00:16:53,946

that you're committed to it,

494

00:16:53,946 --> 00:16:54,897

because if you're not,

495

00:16:55,180 --> 00:16:56,315

the worst thing in the world

496

00:16:56,315 --> 00:16:57,900

would be to start along that path

497

00:16:58,150 --> 00:16:59,435

and then fail to get there.

498

00:16:59,818 --> 00:17:01,737

And when he went back to the White House,

499

00:17:01,737 --> 00:17:02,404

he talked to his

500

00:17:02,404 --> 00:17:03,839

speechwriter, Ted Sorensen,

501
00:17:03,839 --> 00:17:04,840
and he said, in effect,

502
00:17:04,840 --> 00:17:05,941
I don't think I sold it.

503
00:17:06,125 --> 00:17:08,961
I was reading the body language of

504
00:17:09,511 --> 00:17:11,530
of the members in my line of sight.

505
00:17:11,830 --> 00:17:13,399
And I don't think they were buying it.

506
00:17:13,415 --> 00:17:15,484
And in fact, the press wasn't

507
00:17:15,484 --> 00:17:16,618
as excited about it

508
00:17:16,618 --> 00:17:17,703
as Kennedy might have hoped.

509
00:17:17,703 --> 00:17:19,688
The newspaper coverage the next day.

510
00:17:20,022 --> 00:17:21,907
Focus not on the great adventure

511
00:17:21,940 --> 00:17:23,742
of going to the moon, but on the cost,

512
00:17:23,909 --> 00:17:25,828
which was a concern of Kennedy's as well.

513
00:17:26,195 --> 00:17:28,147

So it took some time for him to lead

514

00:17:28,147 --> 00:17:29,231

the American public

515

00:17:29,548 --> 00:17:32,101

and the members of Congress

516

00:17:32,101 --> 00:17:33,669

toward this goal along with him.

517

00:17:34,803 --> 00:17:37,923

So 10 months later, John Glenn

518

00:17:38,307 --> 00:17:40,059

launches successfully.

519

00:17:41,460 --> 00:17:44,496

The nation is absolutely riveted

520

00:17:44,496 --> 00:17:46,598

to this all-American boy

521

00:17:47,950 --> 00:17:51,670

who is now bringing the U.S.

522

00:17:51,687 --> 00:17:53,288

out of the doldrums.

523

00:17:54,073 --> 00:17:56,592

And is it at that point

524

00:17:56,825 --> 00:17:59,578

that Kennedy then pours

525

00:17:59,578 --> 00:18:01,380

the juice to it and says,

526

00:18:01,830 --> 00:18:03,782

we're going to do this in the decade

527

00:18:03,782 --> 00:18:06,001

and and we're going to be successful?

528

00:18:06,752 --> 00:18:08,771

He had announced the goal

529

00:18:09,488 --> 00:18:10,739

prior to Glenn's flight.

530

00:18:10,739 --> 00:18:12,040

He had announced the goal of

531

00:18:12,040 --> 00:18:12,608

going to the moon

532

00:18:12,608 --> 00:18:13,959

by the end of the decade back in

533

00:18:13,959 --> 00:18:15,461

that May 61 flight.

534

00:18:15,811 --> 00:18:17,613

And Glenn doesn't fly, as you noted,

535

00:18:17,613 --> 00:18:19,381

until February of 62.

536

00:18:19,782 --> 00:18:21,717

But he that really is the moment,

537

00:18:21,900 --> 00:18:23,285

as as you've said,

538

00:18:23,285 --> 00:18:24,536

when he begins to pour it

539

00:18:24,536 --> 00:18:27,272

on, because the the the moon shot

540

00:18:27,272 --> 00:18:29,308

goal just was not credible.

541

00:18:29,758 --> 00:18:31,243

Prior to Glenn's flight.

542

00:18:31,710 --> 00:18:33,846

And it wasn't as if Glenn's flight itself

543

00:18:33,846 --> 00:18:34,897

meant that we were certain

544

00:18:34,897 --> 00:18:35,731

to get to the moon

545

00:18:35,731 --> 00:18:36,582

or that we were certain

546

00:18:36,582 --> 00:18:37,900

to get there before the Soviets.

547

00:18:38,200 --> 00:18:39,034

But it really, for

548

00:18:39,034 --> 00:18:41,069

the first moment, Americans

549

00:18:41,069 --> 00:18:42,604

and our allies around the world

550

00:18:42,604 --> 00:18:44,940

were able to believe we had a shot.

551
00:18:45,157 --> 00:18:46,241
This was possible.

552
00:18:46,441 --> 00:18:47,526
This was what made the

553
00:18:47,526 --> 00:18:48,961
moon shot goal credible,

554
00:18:48,961 --> 00:18:51,630
even as I understand it, within NASA,

555
00:18:52,531 --> 00:18:53,382
within NASA,

556
00:18:53,382 --> 00:18:54,066
there was a lot of

557
00:18:54,066 --> 00:18:55,417
excitement about the goal

558
00:18:55,417 --> 00:18:56,552
and there was a commitment

559
00:18:56,552 --> 00:18:57,636
to the goal, certainly.

560
00:18:57,753 --> 00:18:58,537
But there was also

561
00:18:58,537 --> 00:19:00,372
a lot of doubt and skepticism,

562
00:19:00,873 --> 00:19:01,590
because, of course,

563
00:19:01,590 --> 00:19:03,725

those who were most intimately involved

564

00:19:03,725 --> 00:19:04,776

with the space program

565

00:19:05,010 --> 00:19:06,879

knew what a struggle it had been

566

00:19:06,879 --> 00:19:08,430

just to get these few men

567

00:19:08,430 --> 00:19:09,581

that we've been talking about

568

00:19:09,882 --> 00:19:12,067

into the suborbital range

569

00:19:12,067 --> 00:19:13,452

and then ultimately this orbital

570

00:19:13,452 --> 00:19:14,253

flight of Glenns.

571

00:19:15,437 --> 00:19:17,739

So among the original seven

572

00:19:17,756 --> 00:19:18,907

and of course, they get

573

00:19:18,907 --> 00:19:21,276

extraordinary publicity, but.

574

00:19:22,377 --> 00:19:24,680

Glenn rises to the top

575

00:19:25,781 --> 00:19:26,598

as.

576
00:19:28,217 --> 00:19:29,868
The all-American boy,

577
00:19:30,402 --> 00:19:32,020
this incredible story

578
00:19:32,020 --> 00:19:33,772
of a devotion to a wife,

579
00:19:34,873 --> 00:19:36,608
Annie, having this speech

580
00:19:36,608 --> 00:19:39,127
impediment are just

581
00:19:39,278 --> 00:19:40,729
just down the line,

582
00:19:41,513 --> 00:19:43,599
American red, white and blue.

583
00:19:44,333 --> 00:19:46,568
But there was fierce competition

584
00:19:46,568 --> 00:19:48,704
and John felt rejected

585
00:19:49,221 --> 00:19:52,491
because Alan Shepard and then Grissom.

586
00:19:53,275 --> 00:19:55,077
And yet he ends up

587
00:19:55,577 --> 00:19:57,079
getting the cake

588
00:19:57,079 --> 00:19:58,697

with the cherry on top.

589

00:19:59,665 --> 00:20:01,550

With the first orbital flight.

590

00:20:02,000 --> 00:20:03,268

Tell us about that.

591

00:20:04,620 --> 00:20:05,971

Well, you're absolutely

592

00:20:05,971 --> 00:20:08,307

right in describing the way that Glenn

593

00:20:08,307 --> 00:20:09,508

was seen and understood,

594

00:20:09,508 --> 00:20:11,076

and this is really who he was.

595

00:20:11,677 --> 00:20:12,277

I mean, they would

596

00:20:12,277 --> 00:20:14,079

often tease him, the other astronauts,

597

00:20:14,079 --> 00:20:15,364

and they call him the Boy Scout

598

00:20:15,364 --> 00:20:17,032

or they call him a Sunday school teacher.

599

00:20:17,049 --> 00:20:18,300

He was both of those things.

600

00:20:18,667 --> 00:20:20,886

He was also and they knew this as well.

601
00:20:20,919 --> 00:20:23,472
He was also the most decorated combat

602
00:20:23,472 --> 00:20:25,140
pilot of the entire group.

603
00:20:25,474 --> 00:20:26,558
Not all of them had even

604
00:20:29,945 --> 00:20:27,459
fought in combat.

605
00:20:29,945 --> 00:20:31,647
And it was sort of a sore spot with him.

606
00:20:31,647 --> 00:20:33,782
They were all brilliant test pilots.

607
00:20:33,782 --> 00:20:37,085
But but Glenn was was the most successful

608
00:20:37,085 --> 00:20:38,770
of all of them in war time

609
00:20:39,154 --> 00:20:41,757
and had also been the only one as a test

610
00:20:41,757 --> 00:20:44,076
pilot who had achieved national fame.

611
00:20:44,559 --> 00:20:46,962
He in 1957, had set us

612
00:20:47,112 --> 00:20:48,747
headed, set a speed record

613
00:20:49,114 --> 00:20:50,649

flying a crusader jet

614

00:20:50,916 --> 00:20:51,900
from Los Angeles

615

00:20:51,900 --> 00:20:53,252
to Brooklyn in three hours

616

00:20:53,252 --> 00:20:54,186
and 23 minutes.

617

00:20:54,186 --> 00:20:55,420
And he wound up on the front page

618

00:20:55,420 --> 00:20:56,922
of every newspaper in America.

619

00:20:57,222 --> 00:20:59,258
He wound up with a multi week

620

00:20:59,258 --> 00:21:01,960
stint on name that tune on on CBS

621

00:21:01,960 --> 00:21:02,711
as a contestant.

622

00:21:03,161 --> 00:21:04,796
He became a celebrity

623

00:21:04,796 --> 00:21:06,214
and he became really adored

624

00:21:06,298 --> 00:21:08,083
by the American public.

625

00:21:08,350 --> 00:21:09,518
So when they're selected

626

00:21:09,518 --> 00:21:12,154
as as astronauts in 1959

627

00:21:12,154 --> 00:21:14,072
and they're introduced to the public,

628

00:21:14,439 --> 00:21:15,991
Glenn is already very well known.

629

00:21:16,325 --> 00:21:17,676
And there is a sense

630

00:21:17,676 --> 00:21:18,910
on the part of the public,

631

00:21:18,910 --> 00:21:19,962
on the part of the press

632

00:21:19,962 --> 00:21:21,480
and even many in NASA, that,

633

00:21:21,480 --> 00:21:22,331
of course, Glenn,

634

00:21:22,331 --> 00:21:23,699
will win this competition

635

00:21:23,699 --> 00:21:25,000
to be the first in space.

636

00:21:25,267 --> 00:21:27,135
He stands above all of them.

637

00:21:27,686 --> 00:21:29,638
Really, any way you look at it

638

00:21:29,972 --> 00:21:31,406

and Glenn expected

639

00:21:31,506 --> 00:21:32,958

that he was going to come out on top.

640

00:21:32,991 --> 00:21:35,427

Now, in fairness, so did Alan Shepard

641

00:21:35,610 --> 00:21:38,380

and so did Deke Slayton, and so did most,

642

00:21:38,380 --> 00:21:39,631

if not all of the others.

643

00:21:39,631 --> 00:21:40,799

They were used to winning.

644

00:21:40,799 --> 00:21:41,967

They were used to leading.

645

00:21:42,484 --> 00:21:43,835

And so it was a huge

646

00:21:43,835 --> 00:21:45,570

shock to Glenn system

647

00:21:46,288 --> 00:21:48,690

when Alan Shepard was selected first.

648

00:21:49,091 --> 00:21:50,108

Gus Grissom, as you

649

00:21:50,108 --> 00:21:51,310

said, was selected second.

650

00:21:51,310 --> 00:21:53,712

And Glenn was made backup to both,

651
00:21:53,712 --> 00:21:54,880
which in a way was adding

652
00:21:54,880 --> 00:21:55,897
insult to injury.

653
00:21:56,164 --> 00:21:57,699
It was very tough for him

654
00:21:57,699 --> 00:21:58,650
for a period of time

655
00:21:58,900 --> 00:22:00,218
to accept that, in fact,

656
00:22:00,969 --> 00:22:02,487
he didn't accept it at first.

657
00:22:02,487 --> 00:22:03,872
He wrote a letter of protest

658
00:22:03,872 --> 00:22:05,340
to Bob Gilreath,

659
00:22:05,340 --> 00:22:06,725
the head of the space task

660
00:22:06,725 --> 00:22:07,843
group, who made the decision.

661
00:22:08,143 --> 00:22:10,028
He didn't get very far with that protest.

662
00:22:10,562 --> 00:22:12,964
But as as you said, Administrator Nelson,

663
00:22:12,964 --> 00:22:14,816

he wound up with the bigger prize,

664

00:22:15,133 --> 00:22:16,985

which was the first orbital flight.

665

00:22:16,985 --> 00:22:18,870

And there was a lot of luck to that.

666

00:22:18,870 --> 00:22:20,072

Just in terms of the timing.

667

00:22:20,072 --> 00:22:21,340

If he'd been selected first,

668

00:22:21,490 --> 00:22:22,024

then he wouldn't

669

00:22:22,024 --> 00:22:23,258

have gotten the orbital flight

670

00:22:23,558 --> 00:22:24,576

and the orbital flight.

671

00:22:24,576 --> 00:22:25,627

By the time it happened.

672

00:22:25,627 --> 00:22:26,945

It assumed greater

673

00:22:26,945 --> 00:22:28,263

and greater significance

674

00:22:28,563 --> 00:22:29,398

for some of the reasons

675

00:22:29,398 --> 00:22:30,449

we talked about earlier.

676

00:22:31,650 --> 00:22:33,935

And afterwards, he didn't

677

00:22:33,935 --> 00:22:35,137

get to fly again.

678

00:22:35,220 --> 00:22:37,572

I always heard that it was Kennedy

679

00:22:37,956 --> 00:22:40,058

that said, you can't fly again,

680

00:22:40,092 --> 00:22:41,860

you're too much of a national hero.

681

00:22:42,310 --> 00:22:43,678

But you suggest something

682

00:22:43,678 --> 00:22:44,763

different in your book.

683

00:22:46,148 --> 00:22:48,266

This is a story that had and in a way

684

00:22:48,283 --> 00:22:49,768

still has a lot of currency

685

00:22:49,768 --> 00:22:51,119

because it's hard to explain.

686

00:22:51,119 --> 00:22:52,537

Otherwise, why wouldn't John

687

00:22:52,537 --> 00:22:53,889

Glenn go back into space?

688

00:22:54,639 --> 00:22:56,591

It was an incredibly successful mission,

689

00:22:56,591 --> 00:22:57,959

and these were never supposed

690

00:22:57,959 --> 00:22:58,977

to be one and done.

691

00:22:58,977 --> 00:22:59,828

It wasn't, you know,

692

00:22:59,828 --> 00:23:01,113

get to the back of the line

693

00:23:01,113 --> 00:23:02,647

or fall out of the program.

694

00:23:02,998 --> 00:23:04,900

So he and the rest of the country

695

00:23:04,900 --> 00:23:05,801

really expected that

696

00:23:05,801 --> 00:23:07,202

he was going back into space.

697

00:23:07,536 --> 00:23:08,136

And in fact,

698

00:23:08,136 --> 00:23:09,271

there were a lot of predictions,

699

00:23:09,271 --> 00:23:10,422

including one made by

700

00:23:10,655 --> 00:23:13,024

by your predecessor, James Webb,

701
00:23:13,258 --> 00:23:15,210
that perhaps Glenn would be the first

702
00:23:15,477 --> 00:23:16,528
to walk on the moon.

703
00:23:16,928 --> 00:23:18,363
This was the expectation.

704
00:23:18,663 --> 00:23:19,831
And so it seemed that

705
00:23:19,831 --> 00:23:21,483
the only way to explain

706
00:23:21,483 --> 00:23:23,585
the fact that this didn't transpire

707
00:23:23,585 --> 00:23:24,936
was that President Kennedy

708
00:23:24,936 --> 00:23:26,371
had seen the importance of Glenn

709
00:23:26,371 --> 00:23:27,422
as a national symbol

710
00:23:27,422 --> 00:23:29,374
and ruled it out on safety concerns.

711
00:23:29,708 --> 00:23:30,342
But there's really

712
00:23:30,342 --> 00:23:31,810
no evidence of this at all.

713
00:23:31,827 --> 00:23:33,728

And Glenn heard this story

714

00:23:33,728 --> 00:23:34,963
and maybe found a little bit

715

00:23:34,963 --> 00:23:36,248
of comfort in this story.

716

00:23:36,248 --> 00:23:38,100
And he told it in later years

717

00:23:38,100 --> 00:23:39,618
as something that he had heard,

718

00:23:39,634 --> 00:23:40,502
not something that didn't

719

00:23:40,502 --> 00:23:41,553
necessarily happen.

720

00:23:41,920 --> 00:23:43,271
But there's really no evidence

721

00:23:43,271 --> 00:23:45,006
that Kennedy ever got involved

722

00:23:45,006 --> 00:23:46,591
in making these sorts of decisions.

723

00:23:47,459 --> 00:23:50,195
Tell us about writing his children

724

00:23:50,679 --> 00:23:52,714
a letter before the flight

725

00:23:52,831 --> 00:23:54,449
saying he might not make it.

726

00:23:56,001 --> 00:23:59,671

This was the most startling thing

727

00:23:59,671 --> 00:24:01,823

that I found document that I found

728

00:24:01,823 --> 00:24:03,775

that the Glenn Archives at Ohio State,

729

00:24:03,775 --> 00:24:05,310

which is an incredible collection

730

00:24:05,310 --> 00:24:06,711

of his materials .

731

00:24:06,711 --> 00:24:07,946

And I wasn't looking for it.

732

00:24:08,146 --> 00:24:10,015

There's always a serendipity to these

733

00:24:10,015 --> 00:24:12,117

these sorts of research missions.

734

00:24:12,117 --> 00:24:13,952

And there was in a folder,

735

00:24:13,952 --> 00:24:15,537

and it took me a little while

736

00:24:15,537 --> 00:24:16,688

to figure out what it was.

737

00:24:16,705 --> 00:24:19,374

It was a script that he had written for,

738

00:24:19,374 --> 00:24:21,409

as you said, a recording that he made

739

00:24:21,810 --> 00:24:24,146
that was meant to be played

740

00:24:24,146 --> 00:24:24,946
for his children,

741

00:24:24,946 --> 00:24:26,898
who were teenagers as two kids

742

00:24:27,382 --> 00:24:28,767
if he didn't come back alive.

743

00:24:29,000 --> 00:24:30,302
And he also made a recording

744

00:24:30,302 --> 00:24:31,970
for his wife, Annie, as well.

745

00:24:32,337 --> 00:24:33,922
And this script makes clear

746

00:24:33,922 --> 00:24:36,691
this was a very, very frank recording.

747

00:24:36,708 --> 00:24:38,660
It begins if you hear this,

748

00:24:38,660 --> 00:24:39,444
I've been killed.

749

00:24:40,078 --> 00:24:42,497
And he goes on to talk about his belief

750

00:24:42,497 --> 00:24:44,399
in God as belief in an afterlife.

751
00:24:44,749 --> 00:24:46,434
He even talks about a signal

752
00:24:46,434 --> 00:24:47,219
that he wants to

753
00:24:47,219 --> 00:24:49,321
send his kids from heaven

754
00:24:49,471 --> 00:24:51,122
so that they know that he's there

755
00:24:51,122 --> 00:24:52,140
and that he's OK.

756
00:24:52,591 --> 00:24:54,626
He talks to them about the funeral

757
00:24:54,676 --> 00:24:58,230
that he will have at Arlington, in which

758
00:24:59,364 --> 00:25:00,899
case in which there probably wouldn't

759
00:25:00,899 --> 00:25:03,018
be a body to bury.

760
00:25:03,051 --> 00:25:05,253
I mean, very, very difficult, frank

761
00:25:05,253 --> 00:25:07,189
stuff that he wanted to be sure

762
00:25:07,255 --> 00:25:10,008
that he said what he needed to say

763
00:25:10,909 --> 00:25:12,811

directly to his kids in this way.

764

00:25:12,811 --> 00:25:13,495

And in fact.

765

00:25:13,979 --> 00:25:16,398

And I found this to be a really moving.

766

00:25:16,698 --> 00:25:19,134

And and in a way, surprising fact

767

00:25:19,134 --> 00:25:21,570

that when Glenn was in that capsule

768

00:25:21,570 --> 00:25:22,671

and he was strapped in

769

00:25:22,671 --> 00:25:24,739

and he was sitting atop that Atlas rocket

770

00:25:24,739 --> 00:25:26,391

and he was getting ready for liftoff

771

00:25:26,391 --> 00:25:28,660

and the countdown was was going down,

772

00:25:28,710 --> 00:25:29,611

he was patched through

773

00:25:29,611 --> 00:25:30,629

to say goodbye to Annie.

774

00:25:31,129 --> 00:25:32,280

And one of the last things

775

00:25:32,280 --> 00:25:33,448

that he said, Annie, was,

776

00:25:33,598 --> 00:25:35,600

did you get the recordings that I made?

777

00:25:35,967 --> 00:25:37,352

This was very much on his mind.

778

00:25:40,422 --> 00:25:42,374

And of course, this

779

00:25:42,857 --> 00:25:44,809

larger than life person.

780

00:25:46,127 --> 00:25:47,295

He doesn't fly.

781

00:25:47,329 --> 00:25:50,715

He years later convinces

782

00:25:50,715 --> 00:25:52,867

your former boss, President Clinton,

783

00:25:53,385 --> 00:25:55,787

to let him be a part

784

00:25:55,787 --> 00:25:58,206

of the space shuttle program

785

00:25:58,206 --> 00:26:01,059

and does that extraordinarily.

786

00:26:01,092 --> 00:26:04,429

At age 77, of which

787

00:26:04,429 --> 00:26:06,615

I talked to those crew members

788

00:26:06,615 --> 00:26:09,534

and they said John participated

789

00:26:09,534 --> 00:26:12,587

in everything at that age

790

00:26:12,587 --> 00:26:14,356

and did it exceptionally.

791

00:26:16,274 --> 00:26:18,760

But his life was also

792

00:26:18,760 --> 00:26:20,829

a series of disappointments.

793

00:26:21,930 --> 00:26:24,099

He talks to the Kennedys.

794

00:26:24,099 --> 00:26:25,934

They want him to run for the Senate.

795

00:26:27,469 --> 00:26:29,638

He slips in the bathroom.

796

00:26:30,572 --> 00:26:31,823

Has an inner ear

797

00:26:31,823 --> 00:26:33,925

problem, has to back out

798

00:26:33,925 --> 00:26:36,227

of the first Senate race, runs

799

00:26:36,227 --> 00:26:38,330

the next Senate race and loses.

800

00:26:39,497 --> 00:26:40,849

And here he is, this

801
00:26:40,849 --> 00:26:43,668
national icon, and yet.

802
00:26:45,203 --> 00:26:46,821
He has to go through

803
00:26:46,821 --> 00:26:49,157
suffering again twice

804
00:26:49,708 --> 00:26:51,326
before he's elected.

805
00:26:52,160 --> 00:26:53,962
Talk about that and talk

806
00:26:53,962 --> 00:26:55,730
about his success as senator.

807
00:26:56,398 --> 00:26:57,599
That's absolutely right.

808
00:26:57,716 --> 00:27:00,235
I mean, it's easy to look back and gloss

809
00:27:00,235 --> 00:27:02,070
over all this and see this

810
00:27:02,070 --> 00:27:03,438
as a as a charmed life.

811
00:27:03,438 --> 00:27:05,156
And, of course, in many ways it was.

812
00:27:05,840 --> 00:27:07,108
And yet at the same time,

813
00:27:07,108 --> 00:27:08,760

there were big disappointments.

814

00:27:08,760 --> 00:27:10,495

That was, at least for a while,

815

00:27:10,495 --> 00:27:11,630

a huge disappointment

816

00:27:11,630 --> 00:27:12,714

that he didn't get to fly

817

00:27:12,747 --> 00:27:13,848

first or second.

818

00:27:14,132 --> 00:27:15,050

And that took time

819

00:27:15,050 --> 00:27:16,368

for him to to reckon with.

820

00:27:16,368 --> 00:27:18,253

There was the fact that he never got that

821

00:27:18,586 --> 00:27:20,789

that chance to fly in Gemini,

822

00:27:20,789 --> 00:27:21,990

that he was not invited

823

00:27:21,990 --> 00:27:23,725

to be part of the Apollo program,

824

00:27:24,092 --> 00:27:25,794

that it was clear that they were trying

825

00:27:25,794 --> 00:27:27,929

to edge him out into a desk job

826

00:27:28,229 --> 00:27:29,064

that he didn't want.

827

00:27:29,247 --> 00:27:30,298

He wanted to fly.

828

00:27:30,348 --> 00:27:32,701

And so finally, he accepted

829

00:27:32,701 --> 00:27:34,169

the entreaties of the Kennedys,

830

00:27:34,352 --> 00:27:35,670

as you suggested,

831

00:27:35,970 --> 00:27:38,606

and decided to run for Senate in 64.

832

00:27:38,606 --> 00:27:40,492

But that injury took him out of the race,

833

00:27:40,859 --> 00:27:41,760

and it was more than

834

00:27:42,293 --> 00:27:43,561

being taken out of the race.

835

00:27:43,561 --> 00:27:45,280

But the recovery was very slow.

836

00:27:45,296 --> 00:27:46,348

It was very painful.

837

00:27:46,681 --> 00:27:48,600

It would take him 10 minutes

838

00:27:48,767 --> 00:27:50,035

to essentially

839

00:27:50,035 --> 00:27:52,187

almost crawl along the wall

840

00:27:52,187 --> 00:27:53,221

to get from his bed

841

00:27:53,221 --> 00:27:54,973

to the couch in the morning.

842

00:27:54,989 --> 00:27:57,359

And this is a vigorous guy

843

00:27:57,359 --> 00:27:59,177

who had just been up in space

844

00:27:59,177 --> 00:28:01,946

and had aced every physical test

845

00:28:01,946 --> 00:28:02,731

that he had ever taken.

846

00:28:02,731 --> 00:28:04,382

He never had an injury in war time.

847

00:28:04,816 --> 00:28:05,667

And so these were

848

00:28:05,700 --> 00:28:07,452

these were tough things to recover from.

849

00:28:07,469 --> 00:28:08,236

And then, as you said,

850

00:28:08,236 --> 00:28:09,504

the political losses

851
00:28:09,504 --> 00:28:10,939
and then runs for president,

852
00:28:10,939 --> 00:28:12,924
as we know, in 1984.

853
00:28:12,924 --> 00:28:14,509
And even though initially

854
00:28:14,509 --> 00:28:15,960
the Reagan White House saw him

855
00:28:15,960 --> 00:28:17,278
as the strongest Democratic

856
00:28:17,278 --> 00:28:18,863
challenger, didn't emerge that way

857
00:28:18,863 --> 00:28:19,614
and he didn't wind up

858
00:28:19,614 --> 00:28:21,349
winning a single primary.

859
00:28:21,383 --> 00:28:25,787
So there is there is no Glenn understood.

860
00:28:25,787 --> 00:28:27,088
He often talked about his faith

861
00:28:27,088 --> 00:28:28,339
this way, that that

862
00:28:28,406 --> 00:28:29,574
being a person of faith

863
00:28:29,758 --> 00:28:31,192

gave you no guarantees.

864

00:28:31,192 --> 00:28:32,610

It was, as he often said,

865

00:28:32,610 --> 00:28:34,162

and this was his mother's advice.

866

00:28:34,579 --> 00:28:36,331

It was a 50/50 proposition.

867

00:28:36,715 --> 00:28:39,017

And 50 percent of it at least was up to

868

00:28:39,017 --> 00:28:40,702

you and your hard work.

869

00:28:40,702 --> 00:28:42,387

And you were going to succeed

870

00:28:42,387 --> 00:28:43,321

and you were going to fail

871

00:28:43,321 --> 00:28:44,389

and you had to keep at it.

872

00:28:44,689 --> 00:28:45,740

And that was very much

873

00:28:45,740 --> 00:28:47,575

the way he approached not only his

874

00:28:47,876 --> 00:28:49,861

his life as a pilot and an astronaut,

875

00:28:49,861 --> 00:28:51,179

but as a politician as well.

876

00:28:52,647 --> 00:28:55,233

Did John have an appreciation

877

00:28:55,266 --> 00:28:57,335

of what Lyndon Johnson

878

00:28:57,335 --> 00:28:59,370

had done for the space program,

879

00:28:59,370 --> 00:29:02,257

because Kennedy gave the inspiration,

880

00:29:02,257 --> 00:29:03,875

but a lot of the implementation

881

00:29:03,875 --> 00:29:05,009

was Lyndon Johnson.

882

00:29:06,027 --> 00:29:06,611

He did.

883

00:29:06,961 --> 00:29:07,812

He was aware.

884

00:29:07,812 --> 00:29:09,514

And I think there was a lot of awareness

885

00:29:09,514 --> 00:29:10,865

within NASA, certainly,

886

00:29:10,865 --> 00:29:12,600

and on the part of the astronauts

887

00:29:12,600 --> 00:29:14,068

that Lyndon Johnson had done

888

00:29:14,068 --> 00:29:15,603

more than really anybody.

889

00:29:15,603 --> 00:29:17,322

And that includes Eisenhower

890

00:29:17,322 --> 00:29:19,507

and that includes Kennedy to really

891

00:29:19,891 --> 00:29:22,026

drive the space program forward

892

00:29:22,260 --> 00:29:24,012

in its most difficult period,

893

00:29:24,329 --> 00:29:26,131

to give it proper footing,

894

00:29:26,131 --> 00:29:27,482

to get the proper funding

895

00:29:27,749 --> 00:29:28,683

and to set America

896

00:29:28,683 --> 00:29:29,801

on the path to the moon.

897

00:29:30,485 --> 00:29:31,603

They were well aware of that.

898

00:29:31,603 --> 00:29:33,638

And in fact, when the astronauts

899

00:29:34,139 --> 00:29:35,907

had just been introduced to the public,

900

00:29:35,907 --> 00:29:37,842

as I mentioned, in 1959, they

901
00:29:38,143 --> 00:29:39,160
they were sent to Capitol

902
00:29:39,160 --> 00:29:40,662
Hill for for a tour.

903
00:29:41,312 --> 00:29:42,997
Nixon, the vice president, stopped

904
00:29:42,997 --> 00:29:44,015
by, did a quick meet

905
00:29:44,015 --> 00:29:45,066
and greet and the photo

906
00:29:45,066 --> 00:29:47,101
on the Capitol steps and was gone.

907
00:29:47,135 --> 00:29:49,170
Eisenhower didn't have had time for them,

908
00:29:49,537 --> 00:29:51,840
but then they were ushered into Lyndon

909
00:29:51,840 --> 00:29:53,608
Johnson's palatial rooms,

910
00:29:53,608 --> 00:29:54,209
which, of course,

911
00:29:54,993 --> 00:29:56,945
you know very well were referred to

912
00:29:56,978 --> 00:29:58,596
as as the Taj Mahal.

913
00:29:58,980 --> 00:29:59,998

And this was really

914

00:29:59,998 --> 00:30:01,149

the meeting that mattered.

915

00:30:01,182 --> 00:30:02,133

They were meeting the

916

00:30:02,784 --> 00:30:05,787

the American who was, again, doing more

917

00:30:05,787 --> 00:30:08,490

for the space race than in any other.

918

00:30:09,941 --> 00:30:12,577

So I know we're almost out of time,

919

00:30:12,577 --> 00:30:14,979

but you as a historian,

920

00:30:14,979 --> 00:30:18,600

if you would look and compare,

921

00:30:18,600 --> 00:30:21,486

we were in this space race

922

00:30:21,936 --> 00:30:23,221

with the Soviets.

923

00:30:24,038 --> 00:30:26,558

We were able to compete

924

00:30:26,825 --> 00:30:29,861

and ultimately win a victory.

925

00:30:29,861 --> 00:30:32,313

And here we are over

926
00:30:32,313 --> 00:30:33,965
a half century later,

927
00:30:34,782 --> 00:30:37,051
and we now have a very

928
00:30:37,051 --> 00:30:38,887
aggressive competitor

929
00:30:38,887 --> 00:30:41,039
in the Chinese government

930
00:30:41,039 --> 00:30:43,107
and its space program.

931
00:30:43,808 --> 00:30:46,778
And they are challenging right and left

932
00:30:46,778 --> 00:30:49,197
and make no bones about it publicly

933
00:30:49,347 --> 00:30:50,582
that that's what they're doing.

934
00:30:50,982 --> 00:30:53,401
You want to compare the two space races?

935
00:30:54,335 --> 00:30:55,203
Absolutely.

936
00:30:55,203 --> 00:30:57,872
And I think I have followed with interest

937
00:30:57,906 --> 00:30:59,340
your statements and

938
00:30:59,340 --> 00:31:00,775

your leadership on this issue.

939

00:31:00,775 --> 00:31:01,893

You've been very clear

940

00:31:02,577 --> 00:31:04,796

about the challenge that we face from

941

00:31:04,812 --> 00:31:06,180

from China in space.

942

00:31:06,180 --> 00:31:07,799

And, of course, the relationship,

943

00:31:08,166 --> 00:31:10,051

as President Kennedy often stressed,

944

00:31:10,051 --> 00:31:11,436

as Lyndon Johnson stressed,

945

00:31:12,003 --> 00:31:12,837

the relationship

946

00:31:12,837 --> 00:31:14,322

between what happens in space

947

00:31:14,322 --> 00:31:15,356

and what happens on Earth.

948

00:31:16,024 --> 00:31:18,509

And these things are not separate.

949

00:31:18,993 --> 00:31:20,562

And they are part

950

00:31:20,578 --> 00:31:22,947

of, as you have said, the administrator,

951
00:31:23,197 --> 00:31:24,816
their part of the same

952
00:31:25,166 --> 00:31:28,019
larger struggle, again, between freedom

953
00:31:28,019 --> 00:31:29,254
and totalitarianism

954
00:31:29,254 --> 00:31:30,755
in our in our own era.

955
00:31:31,055 --> 00:31:32,040
Sometimes it takes

956
00:31:32,040 --> 00:31:35,193
a competition like this to get America

957
00:31:35,193 --> 00:31:37,328
to wake up and get up

958
00:31:37,328 --> 00:31:38,396
and commit to the fight.

959
00:31:38,796 --> 00:31:40,598
But I think what's clear now,

960
00:31:40,598 --> 00:31:41,616
what I hope is clear

961
00:31:41,616 --> 00:31:43,001
now is what became clear

962
00:31:43,001 --> 00:31:44,018
to President Kennedy

963
00:31:44,319 --> 00:31:47,422

in 1961, that there was no backing out.

964

00:31:47,438 --> 00:31:48,840

There was no opting out.

965

00:31:49,140 --> 00:31:50,441

That this was a challenge.

966

00:31:50,441 --> 00:31:52,660

That if we were not going to engage in it

967

00:31:52,660 --> 00:31:53,912

and on on our terms,

968

00:31:54,245 --> 00:31:55,380

then our adversaries

969

00:31:55,380 --> 00:31:56,531

were going to set the terms.

970

00:31:56,848 --> 00:31:58,866

And they did not always have

971

00:31:58,866 --> 00:32:01,452

the peaceful purposes that we did.

972

00:32:02,136 --> 00:32:04,022

They did not always intend in space

973

00:32:04,022 --> 00:32:05,790

to act, as the Space Act said,

974

00:32:06,190 --> 00:32:07,809

on behalf of all mankind.

975

00:32:08,226 --> 00:32:10,111

And so I think that there's

976
00:32:10,111 --> 00:32:11,462
again, there's there's

977
00:32:11,613 --> 00:32:13,381
there's no opting out.

978
00:32:13,564 --> 00:32:14,649
This is a challenge

979
00:32:14,649 --> 00:32:17,402
that whether we created it or not,

980
00:32:18,152 --> 00:32:19,687
we must engage in it.

981
00:32:19,954 --> 00:32:20,772
It's important

982
00:32:20,772 --> 00:32:22,006
not just symbolically

983
00:32:22,006 --> 00:32:24,242
have been in all sorts of practical ways.

984
00:32:25,627 --> 00:32:26,411
Well, Jeff, it's

985
00:32:26,411 --> 00:32:28,746
been a delight for me to interview you,

986
00:32:28,746 --> 00:32:31,783
and I am looking forward

987
00:32:31,783 --> 00:32:34,919
to reading anything else that you write

988
00:32:35,353 --> 00:32:38,022

because the words came to life

989

00:32:38,406 --> 00:32:40,108

off the page to me.

990

00:32:41,309 --> 00:32:43,478

And thank you for the insight

991

00:32:44,228 --> 00:32:46,497

that you have at a critical time.

992

00:32:47,015 --> 00:32:48,349

People often forget.

993

00:32:48,366 --> 00:32:52,720

Just think in that era when John flew

994

00:32:54,422 --> 00:32:56,374

Kennedy had been embarrassed

995

00:32:56,908 --> 00:33:00,244

by Khrushchev in Europe

996

00:33:00,361 --> 00:33:01,713

in their first summit.

997

00:33:03,181 --> 00:33:04,916

Shortly around,

998

00:33:05,700 --> 00:33:08,853

he had the embarrassment of the

999

00:33:09,687 --> 00:33:13,257

the invasion at the Bay of Pigs in Cuba.

1000

00:33:14,342 --> 00:33:17,328

Then in October of 62,

1001
00:33:17,328 --> 00:33:20,214
he went into that terrible confrontation

1002
00:33:20,515 --> 00:33:21,532
on the Cuban Missile

1003
00:33:21,532 --> 00:33:23,751
Crisis, where we almost had

1004
00:33:23,751 --> 00:33:25,703
an exchange of nuclear weapons.

1005
00:33:26,270 --> 00:33:29,307
And all of this, Mieli

1006
00:33:29,907 --> 00:33:31,909
John Glenn, is taking

1007
00:33:31,909 --> 00:33:34,012
the hopes of America.

1008
00:33:35,246 --> 00:33:36,597
Into the heavens.

1009
00:33:37,348 --> 00:33:40,001
So thank you for capturing that

1010
00:33:40,051 --> 00:33:41,703
and you've done it so well.

1011
00:33:42,336 --> 00:33:43,905
Well, thank you, Administrator.

1012
00:33:43,955 --> 00:33:46,240
Thank you for your generous comments

1013
00:33:46,240 --> 00:33:48,042

and for inviting me to

1014

00:33:48,042 --> 00:33:48,993

to talk with you today.

1015

00:33:49,027 --> 00:33:50,728

It's been a real thrill and a real honor.

1016

00:33:51,779 --> 00:33:52,130

Well, good.

1017

00:33:52,230 --> 00:33:53,731

Look forward to visiting

1018

00:33:56,000 --> 00:33:57,685

you, as this has been incredibly,

1019

00:33:57,852 --> 00:33:59,053

you know, as a historian,

1020

00:33:59,053 --> 00:34:00,388

just to sit and listen to you guys,

1021

00:34:00,388 --> 00:34:01,389

that this conversation

1022

00:34:01,389 --> 00:34:02,190

is incredibly important

1023

00:34:02,190 --> 00:34:03,941

because you bring out the incredibly

1024

00:34:04,442 --> 00:34:06,260

the issues that are at play here.

1025

00:34:06,260 --> 00:34:06,494

Right.

1026
00:34:06,511 --> 00:34:08,229
Why is it that history matters?

1027
00:34:08,529 --> 00:34:09,731
Why is it that knowing

1028
00:34:09,731 --> 00:34:10,982
this history is important?

1029
00:34:10,998 --> 00:34:11,315
Right.

1030
00:34:11,916 --> 00:34:12,934
And I think you've done

1031
00:34:12,934 --> 00:34:14,402
a great job just laying it out.

1032
00:34:14,402 --> 00:34:15,520
And Administrator Nelson,

1033
00:34:15,520 --> 00:34:17,071
you ask the right questions

1034
00:34:17,071 --> 00:34:18,990
to get to get to that context,

1035
00:34:18,990 --> 00:34:20,308
because the context is so

1036
00:34:20,308 --> 00:34:21,492
important to the history.

1037
00:34:21,726 --> 00:34:23,978
We may remember the people and the events

1038
00:34:23,978 --> 00:34:25,296

and the dates and the times

1039

00:34:25,296 --> 00:34:26,230

and all of this, but

1040

00:34:26,531 --> 00:34:28,783

knowing how these things are lain within

1041

00:34:28,783 --> 00:34:30,184

this context is important.

1042

00:34:30,184 --> 00:34:30,568

And Jeff,

1043

00:34:30,785 --> 00:34:32,470

as a as a final question, really,

1044

00:34:32,470 --> 00:34:33,821

and kind of one of the administrators

1045

00:34:33,821 --> 00:34:34,922

points, you know,

1046

00:34:35,740 --> 00:34:36,691

you've spent a lot of

1047

00:34:36,691 --> 00:34:39,710

time in this history and in our history.

1048

00:34:40,061 --> 00:34:41,913

How did you get to those documents?

1049

00:34:42,497 --> 00:34:43,714

And you mentioned

1050

00:34:43,714 --> 00:34:44,999

the serendipity of that.

1051

00:34:44,999 --> 00:34:46,567

But what's next?

1052

00:34:46,567 --> 00:34:48,569

And if you felt, you know, the history of

1053

00:34:48,703 --> 00:34:49,837

can provide you with anything

1054

00:34:49,837 --> 00:34:50,555

or you can get your

1055

00:34:50,555 --> 00:34:51,756

hands on new documents,

1056

00:34:51,756 --> 00:34:53,291

where might this story go

1057

00:34:53,291 --> 00:34:54,542

that it hasn't gone already?

1058

00:34:54,542 --> 00:34:56,461

And what context, what might we know

1059

00:34:56,461 --> 00:34:57,695

in the future from your work?

1060

00:34:58,412 --> 00:35:00,731

Well, thank you again, Dr. Odom

1061

00:35:00,932 --> 00:35:02,250

and thanks for those comments.

1062

00:35:02,266 --> 00:35:04,802

And I have to say that

1063

00:35:05,436 --> 00:35:07,021

all of us who do this kind of work

1064

00:35:07,021 --> 00:35:08,322

do it with a certain humility,

1065

00:35:08,322 --> 00:35:10,408

that there is always more out there,

1066

00:35:10,408 --> 00:35:11,642

that there is always more

1067

00:35:11,642 --> 00:35:12,927

of this story to tell.

1068

00:35:12,944 --> 00:35:15,480

And I was incredibly gratified

1069

00:35:15,480 --> 00:35:16,564

to find that underneath

1070

00:35:16,864 --> 00:35:17,849

there's a sort of rich

1071

00:35:17,849 --> 00:35:19,450

topsoil of material

1072

00:35:19,450 --> 00:35:21,035

that gets turned over and turned over.

1073

00:35:21,035 --> 00:35:23,187

And it's all very familiar to those of us

1074

00:35:23,187 --> 00:35:24,822

who have an interest in these

1075

00:35:24,822 --> 00:35:25,773

in these stories.

1076

00:35:26,140 --> 00:35:28,292

And yet, if you dig a little deeper,

1077

00:35:28,593 --> 00:35:30,545

there's more and a lot of it hasn't

1078

00:35:30,545 --> 00:35:31,562

been seen or hasn't

1079

00:35:31,562 --> 00:35:34,182

been discovered or hasn't been put in in

1080

00:35:34,348 --> 00:35:36,334

in a different context,

1081

00:35:36,634 --> 00:35:37,902

as is the case with

1082

00:35:37,902 --> 00:35:39,303

some of what we've been discussing.

1083

00:35:39,604 --> 00:35:41,739

And so it's tough to finish

1084

00:35:41,739 --> 00:35:42,940

a book like this, because,

1085

00:35:42,940 --> 00:35:43,841

you know, there is

1086

00:35:43,841 --> 00:35:45,059

there is more out there.

1087

00:35:45,059 --> 00:35:48,663

And I have and my my curiosity

1088

00:35:48,846 --> 00:35:52,150

about these people and these decisions

1089

00:35:52,150 --> 00:35:54,569

and these issues is not ended

1090

00:35:54,569 --> 00:35:56,587

when I sent the final manuscript.

1091

00:35:56,587 --> 00:35:57,572

So I would love to

1092

00:35:57,872 --> 00:35:58,873

continue digging

1093

00:35:58,873 --> 00:36:00,875

and writing and thinking about all this

1094

00:36:00,875 --> 00:36:02,376

and love to continue

1095

00:36:02,376 --> 00:36:03,511

this conversation with you.

1096

00:36:03,961 --> 00:36:05,279

Yeah, no doubt that we

1097

00:36:05,279 --> 00:36:06,180

and we look forward to it.

1098

00:36:06,180 --> 00:36:07,565

Let us know from the history program

1099

00:36:07,565 --> 00:36:08,499

what we can do, because,

1100

00:36:08,499 --> 00:36:09,450

you know, that's our goal

1101
00:36:09,450 --> 00:36:12,036
as part of NASA is making sure ensuring

1102
00:36:12,036 --> 00:36:12,970
that this history is

1103
00:36:13,421 --> 00:36:15,339
this analysis is done to make sure

1104
00:36:15,339 --> 00:36:16,541
the documentation is

1105
00:36:16,541 --> 00:36:18,092
there, you know, in the archives. Right.

1106
00:36:18,092 --> 00:36:19,560
We've got to preserve these things

1107
00:36:19,560 --> 00:36:22,029
to make them available for future future

1108
00:36:22,029 --> 00:36:24,048
historians to perform this analysis.

1109
00:36:24,098 --> 00:36:25,566
You know, think about JSC

1110
00:36:26,400 --> 00:36:27,852
and the oral history program

1111
00:36:27,852 --> 00:36:28,619
that's out there

1112
00:36:28,619 --> 00:36:29,820
in the work that they do.

1113
00:36:29,820 --> 00:36:31,239

And, you know, NASA's headquarters

1114

00:36:31,239 --> 00:36:32,490
and across the agency,

1115

00:36:32,490 --> 00:36:34,058
archivists are working

1116

00:36:34,058 --> 00:36:35,610
to make sure we have this story.

1117

00:36:35,610 --> 00:36:37,662
So I welcome any future

1118

00:36:38,546 --> 00:36:39,697
future opportunities

1119

00:36:39,697 --> 00:36:40,781
to talk it through.

1120

00:36:41,966 --> 00:36:42,316
Thank you.

1121

00:36:42,316 --> 00:36:43,417
You got it.

1122

00:36:43,417 --> 00:36:44,368
And it really you know,

1123

00:36:44,385 --> 00:36:45,836
Administrator Nelson, just what you know,

1124

00:36:45,937 --> 00:36:47,972
I really I really am.

1125

00:36:48,256 --> 00:36:49,590
I've talked to you

1126

00:36:49,590 --> 00:36:50,791

several times about history,

1127

00:36:50,791 --> 00:36:52,560

and I understand your passion for history

1128

00:36:52,560 --> 00:36:53,711

because you're part of that

1129

00:36:53,711 --> 00:36:54,912

history yourself, right?

1130

00:36:54,912 --> 00:36:56,831

I mean, that's you know, so, you know,

1131

00:36:57,582 --> 00:36:58,382

I think we could

1132

00:36:58,382 --> 00:36:59,967

we probably could have spent a whole

1133

00:37:00,818 --> 00:37:02,036

several parts of this talking

1134

00:37:02,036 --> 00:37:03,304

about Glenn's experience

1135

00:37:03,304 --> 00:37:04,055

and then comparing it

1136

00:37:04,055 --> 00:37:05,189

to your own experience.

1137

00:37:05,189 --> 00:37:08,726

So so, no, you can't compare that.

1138

00:37:09,477 --> 00:37:11,762

John Glenn is by far

1139

00:37:11,762 --> 00:37:13,714

in a class of his own.

1140

00:37:14,165 --> 00:37:15,933

But I'll tell you, the history

1141

00:37:15,933 --> 00:37:16,867

we're going to write in

1142

00:37:16,867 --> 00:37:19,453

the next few years is going to be

1143

00:37:19,720 --> 00:37:22,089

an exceptional part

1144

00:37:22,089 --> 00:37:23,491

of our American history.

1145

00:37:23,908 --> 00:37:26,644

And I suspect in a time

1146

00:37:26,644 --> 00:37:29,680

in which we are so politically divided

1147

00:37:30,448 --> 00:37:31,799

that we are going to see

1148

00:37:31,799 --> 00:37:33,868

our nation's space program

1149

00:37:33,868 --> 00:37:35,486

going back to the moon,

1150

00:37:35,970 --> 00:37:36,871

the first woman,

1151
00:37:36,871 --> 00:37:38,372
the first person of color

1152
00:37:38,889 --> 00:37:40,207
getting prepared

1153
00:37:40,207 --> 00:37:42,126
to go to Mars with humans.

1154
00:37:43,110 --> 00:37:44,528
I suspect that

1155
00:37:44,528 --> 00:37:45,579
what you're going to see

1156
00:37:45,579 --> 00:37:46,797
is that is going to be

1157
00:37:46,797 --> 00:37:48,149
one of the unifying

1158
00:37:48,149 --> 00:37:49,867
factors for our country

1159
00:37:50,167 --> 00:37:52,320
in this time of political division.

1160
00:37:52,720 --> 00:37:54,038
And the Lord willing,

1161
00:37:54,455 --> 00:37:56,290
maybe that'll just bring us together.

1162
00:37:57,942 --> 00:37:58,542
There you go.

1163
00:37:58,559 --> 00:38:00,244

I think that's a great place to stop,

1164

00:38:00,244 --> 00:38:00,911

but Jeff, is there

1165

00:38:00,911 --> 00:38:02,496

anything that we didn't get to that

1166

00:38:02,496 --> 00:38:03,431

you wanted to that

1167

00:38:03,431 --> 00:38:04,765

you wanted to talk about or.

1168

00:38:04,899 --> 00:38:05,883

I have a lot of questions

1169

00:38:05,883 --> 00:38:07,451

for the administrator. At some point.

1170

00:38:07,451 --> 00:38:08,169

We'd like I'd love

1171

00:38:08,169 --> 00:38:09,870

to reverse chairs here and

1172

00:38:10,237 --> 00:38:14,158

and to be asking the questions next time.

1173

00:38:14,642 --> 00:38:15,159

You got it.

1174

00:38:15,192 --> 00:38:16,477

Maybe we could arrange that.

1175

00:38:16,627 --> 00:38:17,878

Administrator Nelson, does that sound

1176
00:38:17,878 --> 00:38:19,380
like a good opportunity for the future?

1177
00:38:20,097 --> 00:38:20,881
I'm on.

1178
00:38:23,050 --> 00:38:23,901
All right, folks.

1179
00:38:23,918 --> 00:38:25,619
Well, I think we've reached our time.

1180
00:38:25,619 --> 00:38:26,771
And I really enjoyed

1181
00:38:26,771 --> 00:38:28,122
just being a participant

1182
00:38:28,122 --> 00:38:29,740
and listening to this conversation,

1183
00:38:29,740 --> 00:38:31,592
and I hope everyone else has as well.

1184
00:38:32,193 --> 00:38:33,778
And Administrator Nelson and Jeff,

1185
00:38:33,844 --> 00:38:35,346
thank you for for participating.

1186
00:38:35,346 --> 00:38:36,080
Administrator Nelson.

1187
00:38:36,097 --> 00:38:37,198
Thank you, Jeff.

1188
00:38:38,049 --> 00:38:39,400

Appreciate the research.

1189

00:38:40,534 --> 00:38:42,570

You've done an incredible job here.

1190

00:38:43,204 --> 00:38:43,738

So, folks,

1191

00:38:44,188 --> 00:38:46,090

I look forward to capturing that history

1192

00:38:46,090 --> 00:38:46,807

going forward

1193

00:38:46,807 --> 00:38:48,609

and then in other events in the future.

1194

00:38:48,609 --> 00:38:50,878

But for now, we're going to sign off

1195

00:38:50,878 --> 00:38:51,812

And thank you for joining

1196

00:38:51,812 --> 00:38:52,813

us, both of you.

1197

00:38:53,497 --> 00:38:54,899

Dr. Pérez-Davis, thank you

1198

00:38:54,899 --> 00:38:56,100

for those kind opening,

1199

00:38:56,283 --> 00:38:57,868

inspiring opening remarks.