

First Barbershop In Space – 1998



On October 29, 1998, Senator John Glenn, age 77, donned a space suit as he did 36 years earlier and became Payload Specialist 2 John Glenn. The man who made history as the first American to orbit the earth, made history a second time as the oldest person to go into space, in the Ninety-Second Flight of the Space Shuttle, STS-95, aboard Discovery.

Barbershop chords also took a giant leap in 1998 when John Glenn took with him the first barbershop music to be played in outer space. The Alexandria Harmonizers provided the famous astronaut and barbershop lover with two Harmonizer CD's: "Live on Stage" and "Havin' Fun." Now, fully autographed, Glenn donated his CD's to the Society's Harmony Hall in a unique display. Senator Glenn's love of barbershop came early as he noted in his 1999 Memoir: "A few of the crew put on headphones and listened to music. We all had the opportunity to bring a selection of compact discs along. My choices included music by Henry Mancini, Peter Nero, and Andy Williams. I also took along a disc of barbershop chorus harmonies by the champion Alexandria Harmonizers, a taste I inherited from my dad."

John and Annie Glenn were longtime Harmonizer fans and attended many annual shows, especially joint shows with the Southern Gateway Chorus from the senator's native state of Ohio. The Alexandria Chapter enjoyed TV and print media exposure

when our celebrity association with the 1998 space flight helped promote our fall show on the same weekend. "...Lest you wonder what sort of music Glenn, 77, has taken into space, think barbershop harmony. His pal Chuck Harner of the 130-man Alexandria Harmonizers gave Glenn two CDs because the astronaut can't make the group's concerts this weekend." -- Washington Post, October 30, 1998.

John Glenn was a WWII and Korean War fighter pilot, Navy veteran, Marine Colonel, and NASA astronaut. On February 20, 1962, he became the third American in space and the first to orbit the earth when he lifted off in Friendship 7.

Harmonious Tagline #1: John Glenn died at age 95 on December 8, 2016. His body was interred at Arlington National Cemetery on April 6, 2017, the 74th wedding anniversary of Annie and John Glenn. Ordering all flags to be flown at half-staff in respect, President Obama said: "The last of America's first astronauts has left us but propelled by their example we know that our future here on Earth compels us to keep reaching for the heavens. On behalf of a grateful nation, Godspeed, John Glenn."

Harmonious Tagline #2. On May 19, 2020, Annie Glenn died of complications from COVID-19 at a nursing home near St. Paul, Minnesota. As reported by MSNBC's Brian Williams: "While Annie Glenn never orbited the earth, she made sure that the first man who did remains down to earth. She changed a lot of lives in the process."