

= Alan Shepard =

Rear Admiral Alan Bartlett " Al " Shepard Jr . (November 18 , 1923 ? July 21 , 1998) was an American naval officer and aviator , test pilot , one of the original NASA Mercury Seven astronauts , and businessman , who in May 1961 made the first manned Mercury flight . Shepard 's craft entered space , but did not to achieve orbit . He became the second person , and the first American , to travel into space , and the first person to manually control the orientation of his spacecraft .

Ten years later , at age 47 and the oldest astronaut in the program , Shepard commanded the Apollo 14 mission (1971) , piloting the lander Antares to the most accurate landing of the Apollo missions . He became the fifth and oldest person to walk on the Moon , and the only one of the Mercury Seven to do so . During the mission , he hit two golf balls on the lunar surface .

These were his only two space flights , as his flight status was interrupted for five years during the Mercury and Gemini programs by Ménière 's disease , an inner @-@ ear disease that was surgically corrected before his Moon flight . Shepard served as Chief of the Astronaut Office from November 1963 to July 1969 (the approximate period of his grounding) , and from June 1971 to August 1 , 1974 (from his last flight to his retirement) . He was promoted to rear admiral on August 25 , 1971 , the first astronaut to reach that rank . He retired from the United States Navy and NASA in 1974 .

= = Early life and education = =

Alan Bartlett Shepard Jr. was born on November 18 , 1923 , in Derry , New Hampshire , the oldest of two children of Alan B. Shepard Sr. and Pauline Renza Shepard (née Emerson) . He was one of many famous descendants of Mayflower passenger Richard Warren . Alan B. Shepard Sr. , known as Bart , worked in the Derry National Bank , owned by Shepard 's grandfather . He joined the National Guard in 1915 and served in France with the American Expeditionary Force during World War I. He remained in the National Guard between the wars , and was recalled to active duty during World War II , rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel . Shepard had a younger sister , Pauline , who was known as Polly .

Shepard initially attended Adams School . He skipped the sixth grade , proceeding to middle school at Oak Street School in Derry , where he skipped the eighth grade as well . He completed years 9 to 12 at the Pinkerton Academy , a private school in Derry that his father had attended . He was fascinated by flight , and created a model airplane club at the Academy , and his Christmas present in 1938 was a flight in a Douglas DC @-@ 3 . The following year he began cycling out to Manchester Airport , where he would do odd jobs in exchange for the occasional ride in an airplane or informal flying lesson .

With World War II approaching , Shepard 's father wanted him to join the Army , but Shepard chose the Navy instead . In 1940 , he easily passed the entrance exam to the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis , but at sixteen was too young to enter that year . Instead , the Navy sent him to the Admiral Farragut Academy , a prep school for the Naval Academy , from which he graduated with the class of 1941 . Tests administered at Farragut indicated an IQ of 145 .

At Annapolis , Shepard enjoyed aquatic sports . He was a keen and competitive sailor , winning a number of races , including a regatta held by the Annapolis Yacht Club . He learned to sail all the different types of boats the Academy owned , up to and including the USS Freedom , a 90 @-@ foot (27 m) schooner . He also participated in swimming , and row with the eight . During his Christmas break in 1942 , he went to Principia College to be with his sister , who was unable to go home due to wartime travel restrictions . There he met Louise Brewer , whose parents were pensioners on the du Pont family estate , and , like Renza Shepard , were devout Christian Scientists . Due to the war , the usual four @-@ year course at Annapolis was cut short by a year , and he graduated and was commissioned as an Ensign on June 6 , 1944 , ranked 463rd in his class of 915 . The following month he became secretly engaged to Louise Brewer .

= = Navy service = =

After a month of classroom instruction in aviation , Shepard was posted to a destroyer , USS Cogswell , it being the US Navy 's policy that aviation candidates should first have some service at sea . At the time it was deployed on active service in the Pacific Ocean . Shepard joined it when it returned to the naval base at Ulithi on 30 October . After just two days at sea Cogswell helped rescue 172 sailors from the cruiser USS Reno , which had been torpedoed by a Japanese submarine , then escorted the crippled ship back to Ulithi . The ship was buffeted by Typhoon Cobra in December 1944 , a storm in which three other destroyers went down , and battled kamikazes in the invasion of Lingayen Gulf in January 1945 .

Cogswell returned to the United States for an overhaul in February 1945 , and Shepard was given three weeks ' leave . He and Louise decided to marry before he had to return . They were married on March 3 , 1945 , in St. Stephen 's Lutheran Church in Wilmington , Delaware . His father , Bart , served as his best man . They had only a brief time together before Shepard rejoined Cogswell at the Long Beach Navy Yard on April 5 , 1945 . After the war , they had two children , both daughters : Laura , born in 1947 , and Julie , born in 1951 . Following the death of Louise 's sister in 1956 , they raised her niece , Judith , whom they renamed Alice to avoid confusion with Julie , as their own , although they never adopted her . They eventually had six grandchildren .

On Shepard 's second cruise with Cogswell he was appointed a gunnery officer , responsible for the 20 mm and 40 mm antiaircraft guns on the ship 's bow . They engaged kamikazes in the Battle of Okinawa , where the ship served in the dangerous role of a radar picket . The job of the radar pickets was to warn the fleet of incoming kamikazes ; but because they were often the first ships sighted by incoming Japanese aircraft , they were also the most likely ships to be attacked . Cogswell performed this duty from 27 May 1945 until 26 June , when it rejoined Task Force 38 . The ship also participated in the Allied naval bombardments of Japan , and was present in Tokyo Bay for the Surrender of Japan in September 1945 . Shepard returned to the United States later that month .

In November 1945 , Shepard arrived at Naval Air Station Corpus Christi in Texas , where he commenced basic flight training on January 7 , 1946 . He was an average student , and for a time faced being " bilged " (dropped) from flight training and reassigned to the surface navy . To make up for this he took private lessons at a local civilian flying school ? something the Navy frowned on ? earning a civil pilot 's license . His flying skills gradually improved , and by early 1947 his instructors rated him above average . He was sent to Naval Air Station Pensacola in Florida for advanced training . His final test was six perfect landings on the carrier USS Saipan . The following day he received his Naval Aviator wings , which his proud father pinned on his chest .

Shepard was assigned to Fighter Squadron 42 (VF @-@ 42) , flying the F4U Corsair . The squadron was nominally based on the aircraft carrier USS Franklin D. Roosevelt , but it was being overhauled at the time Shepard arrived , and in the meantime the squadron was based at Naval Air Station Norfolk in Virginia . He departed on his first cruise , of the Caribbean , with it in 1948 . Most of the aviators were , like Shepard , on their first assignment . Those that were not were given the opportunity to qualify for night landings on a carrier , a dangerous maneuver , especially in a Corsair , which had to bank sharply on approach . Shepard managed to persuade his squadron commander to allow him to qualify as well . After briefly returning to Norfolk , the carrier set out on a nine @-@ month tour of the Mediterranean Sea . He earned a reputation for carousing and chasing women . He also instituted a ritual of , whenever he could , calling Louise at 17 : 00 (her time) .

Normally sea duty alternated with periods of duty ashore . In 1950 , Shepard was selected to attend the United States Naval Test Pilot School at Naval Air Station Patuxent River in Maryland . After graduation , he participated in flight test work , which included high @-@ altitude tests to obtain data on light at different altitudes and on a variety of air masses over the American continent ; test and development experiments of the Navy 's in @-@ flight refueling system ; carrier suitability trials of the F2H Banshee ; and Navy trials of the first angled carrier deck . He narrowly avoided being court @-@ martialled by the station commander , Rear Admiral Alfred M. Pride after looping the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and making low passes over the beach at Ocean City , Maryland , and the base ; but Shepard 's superiors , John Hyland and Robert M. Elder , interceded on his behalf .

Fighter Squadron 193 (VF @-@ 193) , based at Naval Air Station Moffett Field , California , was a

night fighter unit flying F2H Banshee jets . The squadron was part of James D. " Jig Dog " Ramage 's Air Group 19 . Naval aviators with experience in jet aircraft were still relatively rare , and Ramage specifically requested Shepard 's assignment on the advice of Elder , who commanded VF @-@ 193 's sister squadron , VF @-@ 191 . Ramage made Shepard his own wingman , a decision that would save his life in 1954 , when Ramage 's oxygen system failed , and Shepard talked him through a landing . As operations officer of this squadron , Shepard 's most important job was imparting his knowledge of flying jets to his fellow aviators to keep them alive . He made two tours to the western Pacific on board the aircraft carrier USS Oriskany . It set out a combat tour off Korea in 1953 , during the Korean War , but the Korean Armistice Agreement ended the fighting in July 1953 , and Shepard did not see combat .

Shepard returned to Patuxent for a second tour of duty and engaged in flight testing the F3H Demon , F8U Crusader , F4D Skyray and F11F Tiger . At one point he was forced to bail out of a Vought F7U Cutlass . In 1957 , he was project test pilot on the F5D Skylancer . Shepard did not like the plane , and his unfavorable report killed the project . His last five months at Patuxent were spent as an instructor in the Test Pilot School . He then attended the Naval War College at Newport , Rhode Island , and , upon graduating in 1957 , was assigned to the staff of the Commander @-@ in @-@ Chief , Atlantic Fleet , as Aircraft Readiness Officer . By this time he had logged more than 3 @, @ 600 hours of flying time , including 1 @, @ 700 hours in jets .

= = NASA career = =

= = = Mercury Seven = = =

In 1959 , the newly formed National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) received permission from President Dwight D. Eisenhower to recruit its first astronauts from the ranks of military test pilots . The service records of 508 graduates of test pilot schools were obtained from the Department of Defense . From these , 110 were found that matched the minimum standards . These included being less than 40 years old , with a bachelor 's degree or equivalent , and no taller than 5 feet 11 inches (1 @. @ 80 m) . While there was flexibility with some requirements , the height requirement was firm , owing to the size of the Project Mercury spacecraft . The 110 were then split into three groups , with the most promising candidates in the first group .

The first group of 35 , which included Shepard , assembled at the Pentagon on February 2 , 1959 . The Navy and Marine Corps officers were welcomed by the Chief of Naval Operations , Admiral Arleigh Burke , while the United States Air Force officers were addressed by the Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force , General Thomas D. White . Both pledged their support to the Space Program , and promised that the careers of volunteers would not be adversely affected . NASA officials then briefed them on Project Mercury . They conceded that it would be a hazardous undertaking , but emphasised that it was of great national importance . That evening , Shepard discussed the day 's events with fellow naval aviators Jim Lovell , Pete Conrad and Wally Schirra . All were concerned about their careers , but decided to volunteer .

The briefing process was repeated with a second group of 34 candidates a week later . Of the 69 , six were found to be over the height limit , 15 were eliminated for other reasons , and 16 declined . This left NASA with 32 candidates . Since this was more than expected , it was decided not only to not bother with the remaining candidates , but to select six astronauts instead of the twelve originally planned . Then came a grueling series of physical and psychological tests at the Lovelace Clinic and the Wright Aerospace Medical Laboratory . Only one candidate , Lovell , was eliminated on medical grounds at this stage , and the diagnosis was later found to be in error .

Shepard was informed of his selection on April 1 , 1959 . Two days later he headed up to Boston with Louise for the wedding of his cousin Alice , and was able to break the news to his parents and sister . The identities of the seven were made public at a press conference at Dolley Madison House in Washington , DC , on April 9 , 1959 : Scott Carpenter , Gordon Cooper , John Glenn , Gus Grissom , Wally Schirra , Alan Shepard , and Deke Slayton . The enormity of the challenge ahead of

them was made clear a few weeks later , on the night of May 18 , 1959 , when the seven astronauts gathered at Cape Canaveral to watch their first rocket launch , of an SM @-@ 65D Atlas similar to the one that was to carry them into orbit . A few minutes after lift off , it spectacularly exploded , lighting up the night sky . The astronauts were stunned . Shepard turned to Glenn and said : " Well , I 'm glad they got that out of the way . "

= = = Freedom 7 = = =

Faced with intense competition from the other astronauts , particularly John Glenn , Shepard quit smoking , and adopted Glenn 's habit of taking a morning jog , although he did not go so far as to give up the cocktails or the philandering . On January 19 , 1961 , Robert R. Gilruth , the director of NASA 's Space Task Group , informed the seven astronauts that Shepard had been chosen for the first American manned mission into space . Shepard later recalled Louise 's response when he told her that she had her arms around the man who would be the first man in space : " Who let a Russian in here ? " During training he flew 120 simulated flights . Although his flight was originally scheduled for April 26 , 1960 , delays by unplanned preparatory work meant that this was postponed several times , initially to December 5 , 1960 , then mid @-@ January 1961 , March 6 , 1961 , April 25 , 1961 , May 2 , 1961 , and finally to May 5 , 1961 . On April 12 , 1961 , Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin had become the first person in space , and the first to orbit the Earth . When reporters rang Shorty Powers for a comment at 4am , he memorably replied : " We 're all asleep down here " .

On May 5 , 1961 , Shepard piloted the Mercury @-@ Redstone 3 mission and became the second person , and the first American , to travel into space . He named his spacecraft , Mercury Spacecraft 7 , Freedom 7 . It was launched by a Redstone rocket , and unlike Gagarin 's 108 @-@ minute orbital flight in a Vostok spacecraft three times the size of a Mercury capsule , Shepard stayed on a ballistic trajectory for a 15 @-@ minute sub @-@ orbital flight , which carried him to an altitude of 116 statute miles (187 km) and to a splashdown point 302 statute miles (486 km) down the Atlantic Missile Range . Shortly before the launch , Shepard said to himself : " Don 't mess up , Shepard ... " Unlike Gagarin , whose flight was strictly automatic , Shepard had some control of Freedom 7 , spacecraft attitude in particular . Shepard 's launch was seen live on television by millions . According to Gene Kranz in his book *Failure Is Not an Option* , " When reporters asked Shepard what he thought about as he sat atop the Redstone rocket , waiting for liftoff , he had replied , ' The fact that every part of this ship was built by the lowest bidder.' "

After a dramatic Atlantic Ocean recovery , Commander Shepard observed , " ... didn 't really feel the flight was a success until the recovery had been successfully completed . It 's not the fall that hurts ; it 's the sudden stop . " Splashdown occurred with an impact comparable to landing a jet aircraft on an aircraft carrier . A recovery helicopter arrived after a few minutes , and the capsule was lifted partly out of the water to allow Shepard to leave by the main hatch . He squeezed out of the door and into a sling hoist , and was pulled into the helicopter , which flew both the astronaut and spacecraft to the aircraft carrier USS Lake Champlain . The whole recovery process took just eleven minutes . Shepard was celebrated as a national hero , honored with ticker @-@ tape parades in Washington , New York and Los Angeles , and received the NASA Distinguished Service Medal from President John F. Kennedy . He was also awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross .

Shepard served as capsule communicator (CAPCOM) for Glenn 's Mercury @-@ Atlas 6 orbital flight , which he had also been considered for , and Carpenter 's Mercury @-@ Atlas 7 . He was the backup pilot for Cooper for the Mercury @-@ Atlas 9 mission , nearly replacing Cooper after Cooper flew low over the NASA administration building at Cape Canaveral in an F @-@ 106 . In the final stages of Project Mercury , Shepard was scheduled to pilot the Mercury @-@ Atlas 10 (MA @-@ 10) , which was planned as a three @-@ day mission . He named Mercury Spacecraft 15B Freedom 7 II in honor of his first spacecraft , but on June 12 , 1963 , NASA Administrator James E. Webb announced that Mercury had accomplished all its goals , and no more missions would be flown . Shepard went as far as making a personal appeal to President Kennedy , but to no avail .

= = = Project Gemini : Chief astronaut = = =

After the Mercury @-@ Atlas 10 mission was cancelled , Shepard was designated as the Command Pilot of the first manned Project Gemini mission , with Thomas P. Stafford chosen as his Pilot . In late 1963 , Shepard began to experience episodes of extreme dizziness and nausea , accompanied by a loud , clanging noise in the left ear . He tried to keep it secret , fearing that he would lose his flight status , but was aware that if an episode occurred in the air or in space it could be fatal . Following an episode during a lecture in Houston , where he had recently moved from Virginia Beach , Virginia , Shepard was forced to confess his ailment to Slayton , who was now Director Flight Operations , and seek help from NASA 's doctors .

The doctors diagnosed Ménière 's disease , a condition in which fluid pressure builds up in the inner ear . This syndrome causes the semicircular canals and motion detectors to become extremely sensitive , resulting in disorientation , dizziness , and nausea . There was no known cure , but in about 20 percent of cases the condition went away by itself . They prescribed diuretics in an attempt to drain the fluid from the ear . They also diagnosed glaucoma . An X @-@ ray found a lump on his thyroid , and on January 17 , 1964 , surgeons at Hermann Hospital removed 20 percent of it . The condition caused Shepard to be removed from flight status . Grissom and John Young flew Gemini 3 instead .

Shepard was designated Chief of the Astronaut Office , with responsibility for monitoring the coordination , scheduling , and control of all activities involving NASA astronauts . This included monitoring the development and implementation of effective training programs to assure the flight readiness of personnel for crew assignments on manned space flights ; furnishing pilot evaluations applicable to the design , construction , and operations of spacecraft systems and related equipment ; and providing qualitative scientific and engineering observations to facilitate overall mission planning , formulation of feasible operational procedures , and selection and conduct of specific experiments for each flight . He spent much of his time investing in banks and real estate .

During this period , his secretary had several head shot photographs taken of Shepard , posed with various expressions on his face . She would post these on the door to his private office , with a sign which said " Mood of the Day . " Visitors could then look at the photo to decide whether it was a good time to talk to him .

= = = Apollo program = = =

In 1968 , Stafford stopped by Shepard 's office and told him that an otologist in Los Angeles had developed a cure for Ménière 's disease . Shepard flew to Los Angeles , where he met with Dr. William F. House . House proposed to cut through Shepard 's mastoid bone and make a tiny hole in the sacculle . A small tube was inserted through which excess fluid would drain from the endolymphatic sac . The surgery was conducted in early 1969 at St. Vincent 's Hospital in Los Angeles , where Shepard checked in under the pseudonym of Victor Poulos .

The surgery was successful , and Shepard was restored to full flight status on May 7 , 1969 . Shepard and Slayton put Shepard down to command the next available moon mission , which was Apollo 13 in 1970 . Under normal circumstances , this assignment would have gone to Cooper , as the backup commander of Apollo 10 . Cooper was swept aside . Shepard asked for Jim McDivitt as his Lunar Module Pilot . A rookie , Stuart Roosa , was designated the Command Module Pilot . McDivitt balked at the prospect , arguing that Shepard did not have sufficient Apollo training to command a moon mission . A rookie , Edgar Mitchell was designated the Lunar Module Pilot instead . When Slayton submitted the proposed crew assignments to NASA headquarters , George Mueller turned it down . So Slayton asked Jim Lovell , who had been the backup commander for Apollo 11 , and was slated to command Apollo 14 , if his crew would be willing to fly Apollo 13 instead . He agreed to do so , and Shepard 's inexperienced crew was assigned to Apollo 14 instead . Neither Cooper nor McDivitt ever flew in space again .

Shepard made his second space flight as Commander of Apollo 14 from January 31 to February 9 , 1971 , America 's third successful lunar landing mission . Shepard piloted the Lunar Module Antares to the most accurate landing of the entire Apollo program . He became the fifth and , at 47 , the

oldest man to walk on the moon . This was the first mission to successfully broadcast color television pictures from the surface of the Moon , using a vidicon @-@ tube camera . (The color camera on Apollo 12 provided a few brief moments of color telecasting before it was inadvertently pointed at the Sun , ending its usefulness .) While on the Moon , Shepard used a Wilson six @-@ iron head attached to a lunar sample scoop handle to drive golf balls . Despite thick gloves and a stiff spacesuit , which forced him to swing the club with one hand , Shepard struck two golf balls ; driving the second , as he jokingly put it , " miles and miles and miles " .

For this mission Shepard was awarded the NASA Distinguished Service Medal and the Navy Distinguished Service Medal . His citation read :

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Navy Distinguished Service Medal to Captain Alan Bartlett Shepard , Jr . (NSN : 0 @-@ 389998) , United States Navy , for exceptionally meritorious and distinguished service in a position of great responsibility to the Government of the United States , as Spacecraft Commander for the Apollo 14 flight to the Fra Mauro area of the moon during the period 31 January 1971 to 9 February 1971 . Responsible for the on @-@ board control of the spacecraft command module Kittyhawk and the lunar module Antares in the gathering of scientific data involving complex and difficult instrumentation positing and sample gathering , including a hazardous two @-@ mile traverse of the lunar surface , Captain Shepard , by his brilliant performance , contributed essentially to the success of this vital scientific moon mission . As a result of his skillful leadership , professional competence and dedication , the Apollo 14 mission , with its numerous tasks and vital scientific experiments , was accomplished in an outstanding manner , enabling scientists to determine more precisely the moon 's original formation and further forecast man 's proper role in the exploration of his Universe . By his courageous and determined devotion to duty , Captain Shepard rendered valuable and distinguished service and contributed greatly to the success of the United States Space Program , thereby upholding the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service .

Following Apollo 14 , Shepard returned to his position as Chief of the Astronaut Office in June 1971 . He was appointed by President Richard Nixon in July 1971 as a delegate to the 26th United Nations General Assembly , serving from September to December 1971 . He was promoted to Rear Admiral by Nixon on August 26 , 1971 , the first astronaut to reach this rank , although McDivitt had previously been promoted to brigadier general in the Air Force . He retired from both NASA and the Navy on July 31 , 1974 .

= = Later years = =

After Shepard left NASA , he served on the boards of many corporations . He also served as president of his umbrella company for several business enterprises , Seven Fourteen Enterprises , Inc . (named for his two flights , Freedom 7 and Apollo 14) . He was a member of many organizations . He was a fellow of the American Astronautical Society and the Society of Experimental Test Pilots ; member of the Rotary , the Kiwanis , the Mayflower Society , the Order of the Cincinnati , and the American Fighter Aces ; honorary member , Board of Directors for the Houston School for Deaf Children , Director , National Space Institute , and Director , Los Angeles Ear Research Institute .

In 1984 , he and the other surviving Mercury astronauts , along with Betty Grissom , the widow of astronaut Gus Grissom , founded the Mercury Seven Foundation to raise money for scholarships for science and engineering students in college . In 1995 , the organization was renamed the Astronaut Scholarship Foundation . Shepard was elected president and chairman of the foundation , posts he held until October 1997 , when he turned over both positions to former astronaut Jim Lovell .

In 1994 , he published a book with two journalists , Jay Barbree and Howard Benedict , called Moon Shot : The Inside Story of America 's Race to the Moon . Fellow Mercury astronaut Deke Slayton is also named as an author . The book generated some controversy for use of a staged photo purportedly showing Shepard hitting a golf ball on the Moon . The book was also turned into a TV miniseries in 1994 .

Shepard was diagnosed with leukemia in 1996 , and died from it in Pebble Beach , California , on

July 21 , 1998 , He was the second astronaut who had walked on the Moon to die , Jim Irwin being the first in 1991 . His widow Louise resolved to cremate his remains and scatter the ashes , but she died from a heart attack five weeks later on August 25 , 1998 , at 17 : 00 , the time at which Shepard had always called her . They had been married for 53 years . The family decided to cremate them both , and their ashes scattered together by a Navy helicopter over Stillwater Cove , in front of their Pebble Beach home .

= = Awards and honors = =

Shepard was awarded the Congressional Space Medal of Honor by President Jimmy Carter on October 1 , 1978 . He also received the Golden Plate Award for Science and Exploration in 1981 ; the Langley Gold Medal (highest award of the Smithsonian Institution for Aeronautics and Astronautics) on May 5 , 1964 ; the John J. Montgomery Award in 1963 ; the Lambert trophy ; the SETP Iven C. Kincheloe Award ; the Cabot Award ; the Collier Trophy ; and the City of New York Gold Medal for 1971 . He was awarded an Honorary Master of Arts degree from Dartmouth College in 1962 , an Honorary D.Sc. from Miami University in 1971 , and an Honorary Doctorate of Humanities from Franklin Pierce College in 1972 . Shepard was inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame in 1977 , the International Space Hall of Fame in 1981 , and the U.S. Astronaut Hall of Fame on May 11 , 1990 .

Many things are named in his honor . The Navy named a supply ship , USNS Alan Shepard (T @ - @ AKE @ - @ 3) for him in 2006 . The McAuliffe @ - @ Shepard Discovery Center in Concord , New Hampshire is named after Shepard and Christa McAuliffe . Interstate 93 in New Hampshire , from the Massachusetts is designated the Alan B. Shepard Highway. and in Hampton , Virginia , a road is named Commander Shepard Boulevard in his honor . His hometown of Derry has the nickname Space Town in honor of his career as an astronaut . Following an act of Congress , the post office in Derry is designated the Alan B. Shepard , Jr . Post Office Building . Alan Shepard Park in Cocoa Beach , Florida , a beach @ - @ side park south of Cape Canaveral , is named in his honor . The City of Virginia Beach renamed its convention center , with its integral geodesic dome , the Alan B. Shepard Convention Center . The building was later renamed the Alan B. Shepard Civic Center , and was razed in 1994 . At the time of the Freedom 7 launch , Shepard lived in Virginia Beach .

Shepard 's high school alma mater in Derry , Pinkerton Academy , has a building named after him , and the school team name is called the Astros after his career as an astronaut . Alan B. Shepard High School , in Palos Heights , Illinois , which opened in 1976 , was named in his honor . Framed newspapers throughout the school depict various accomplishments and milestones in Shepard 's life . Additionally , an autographed plaque commemorates the dedication of the building . The school newspaper is named Freedom 7 and the yearbook is entitled Odyssey .

In a 2010 Space Foundation survey , Shepard was ranked as the ninth most popular space hero (tied with astronauts Buzz Aldrin and Gus Grissom) . In 2011 , NASA honored Shepard with an Ambassador of Exploration Award , consisting of a Moon rock encased in Lucite , for his contributions to the U.S. space program . His family members accepted the award on his behalf during a ceremony on April 28 at the U.S. Naval Academy Museum in Annapolis , Maryland , where it is on permanent display . On May 4 , 2011 , the U.S. Postal Service issued a first @ - @ class stamp in Shepard 's honor , the first U.S. stamp to depict a specific astronaut . The first day of issue ceremony was held at NASA 's Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex .

Each year , the Space Foundation , in partnership with the Astronauts Memorial Foundation and NASA , present the Alan Shepard Technology in Education Award for outstanding contributions by K ? 12 educators or district @ - @ level administrators to educational technology . The award recognizes excellence in the development and application of technology in the classroom or to the professional development of teachers . The recipient demonstrates exemplary use of technology either to foster lifelong learners or to make the learning process easier .

= = In media = =

1965 ? The character of Alan Tracy in the Thunderbirds was named after him .

1983 film The Right Stuff ? played by Scott Glenn .

1998 HBO miniseries From the Earth to the Moon ? played by Ted Levine

2001 opening montage , Star Trek : Enterprise

2002 film Race to Space , played by Mark Moses

2005 BBC TV series Space Race ? played by Todd Boyce

2007 - 2012 BioWare Video Game Series Mass Effect - main protagonist Commander Shepard is named after him .

2015 ABC TV series The Astronaut Wives Club ? played by Desmond Harrington .

= = Physical description = =

Weight : 170 pounds (77 kg)

Height : 5 feet 11 inches (180 cm)

Hair : Brown

Eyes : Blue