

**REMARKS FOR ADMINISTRATOR BOLDEN  
MESSENGER AND SHEPARD STAMP UNVEILING**

**May 4, 2011**

Thank you, everyone, for coming out today, and thank you, Scott, Jim and Laura, for those moving words about the Mercury Program and the MESSENGER mission. You've given us a human perspective on this important part of our nation's history.

I also want to thank the U.S. Postal Service for their initiative in bringing awareness of space flight and science to wider audiences through these two works of art, and that's really what they are. Aren't they beautiful?

So today we celebrate the Mercury program and our historic first orbital mission to the planet Mercury. Two enormously important points separated by years on the NASA continuum. And joined by more than just a name, in the spirit of innovation and doing big things for which NASA has always been known.

When Alan Shepard took to the stars 50 years ago, no American had ever done so. The so-called Mercury 7 were a handful of brave men, each of whom would accomplish great things. Things no one had done before. We thank all of them. And we thank the scientists who conceived of MESSENGER and missions like it, which are continuing to fill rewritten textbooks with new knowledge about the universe and inspiring future explorers with the things we can find out if we keep our sights set high and try hard.

I was just a teenager when Alan stepped into the Freedom 7 capsule and entered history, but I remember being tremendously moved by his bravery. As a test pilot, I imagine he was just as focused on making the flight a success as he was about any legacy for posterity.

On the strength of his accomplishment, NASA was able to begin building the leadership role in human spaceflight that we have held ever since. And he set an example that so many have followed – the crews that orbited and landed on the moon; the astronauts who flew the first space shuttle flight, which was effectively the vehicle's first test flight as well. They all walked through the door that Alan blasted open.

And these stamps, which will go out by the millions across this country and the world, are also a testament to the thousands of NASA men and women who also shared dreams of human spaceflight and enlarging our knowledge of the universe – the people of mission control; the ground crews; the scientists and engineers with great ideas who translated them into real hardware. Since 1958, they have sought through their ceaseless efforts to chart a course to the stars for the human race, and to create the eyes and ears that we are able to send far and wide through amazing spacecraft like MESSENGER and its brethren across the solar system.

Today we celebrate firsts, and we celebrate the future. Because at NASA, each first is grown and expanded until we make the next breakthrough. Like a space station flying 250 miles overhead right now on which men and women have lived continuously for more than 10 years. A logical outcome of Alan's pioneering work. And missions in the testing and design stages right now that will take us farther and deeper into our universe, or the first time we launch American astronauts on a commercial spacecraft.

I am honored to be a part of the grand history that includes Alan Shepard and the first orbiting mission to Mercury. And we are just getting started. Our future holds many more firsts – new destinations and new capabilities. I look forward to giving the postal service plenty more ideas for stamps to honor the space program in the coming years. Thank you.