

REFLECTIONS

By Bill Tinsley
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The Right Stuff

Fifty years ago, John Glenn became the first American to orbit the earth. I was in high school. Our science teacher slipped us out a side door and led us to his house a few blocks away where we crowded around his black and white television to watch the launch. The tiny speakers strained to recreate the thunder of the Mercury Atlas 6 rocket when it ignited on the launch pad at Cape Canaveral. A shaky camera traced the flame that streaked through the sky hurtling John Glenn toward space. The rocket was little more than a beefed up Intercontinental Ballistic Missile, its warhead replaced by a space capsule. Within four hours, Glenn made three orbits of the earth, and then prepared for re-entry. An entire nation held its breath as Walter Cronkite described the potentially loose heat shield and the likelihood that Friendship 7 would burn up like a meteor.

Years later I visited the Smithsonian and viewed the space capsule in which Glenn made his historic flight. The capsule is about the size of a 1960's Volkswagen Beetle. It was far less sophisticated than a Prius or a Ford Focus. Personal computers would not become available for another twenty years. Because of their discipline and courage, John Glenn and the other astronauts who blazed the first trails into space came to be known as men with "the right stuff."

Few of us will ever experience a heroic moment like John Glenn experienced February 20, 1962. But each of us has the opportunity to be men and women with "the right stuff." Every day we are called upon to live with courage, discipline and faith. Some face huge challenges.

When I think of people with the "right stuff," I think of my friend Heather. Heather was born with cerebral palsy. She is confined to a wheel chair with limited use of one arm. She is unable to feed, bathe or clothe herself. But she is able to manipulate the joystick on her powered wheel. Although she struggles with a speech impediment, she is articulate and intelligent. As a freshman at Baylor University, Heather gave her life to Christ. Four years later she graduated with a Bachelor's degree in counseling. Three years after that, she completed a Master's degree at Truett Seminary. Since I met her, she has made three trips to India to minister to those who have handicaps similar to her own. Last year she published her first children's book, *My Friends and I*.

James wrote, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance." (James 1:2-3). Peter wrote, "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than

gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 1:6-7).

Perhaps the fiftieth anniversary of John Glenn’s courageous ride into space can remind us that we must face life with courage and faith. That each of us can live with the “right stuff.”

Bill Tinsley reflects on current events and life experience from a faith perspective. For more info, visit www.tinsleycenter.com. Email bill@tinsleycenter.com.