

Nine prominent early astronauts carrying on US space history

January 16 2017, by Seth Borenstein

Early U.S. space history is fading with the [deaths of Gene Cernan](#), the last man to walk on the moon, John Glenn, the last of the Mercury 7 astronauts, and Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the moon. But others survive, veterans of a time when Americans were glued to their television sets to watch their heroics, from fiery Saturn V launches to ocean splashdowns.

More than half of the first 30 astronauts NASA hired have died. "There's going to come a time and it's probably going to be in the next decade or so when none of the moonwalkers are going to be left," said National Air and Space Museum associate director Roger Launius.

"As this history recedes into the background and fewer and fewer people remember it, the more mythological it becomes," he said. "The majority of the human race has been born since we've left the [moon](#) so they don't have knowledge of it."

Here are nine U.S. pioneering astronauts who are part of living [space](#) history:

BUZZ ALDRIN

The second man to walk on the moon is still active promoting space travel, especially to Mars. The 86-year-old veteran of Apollo 11 and

Gemini 12 made news recently when he fell ill while visiting Antarctica to study conditions similar to Mars. A Florida resident, he was released from a hospital in New Zealand on Friday.

MICHAEL COLLINS

Collins, 86, circled the moon while Aldrin and Neil Armstrong walked on the moon during Apollo 11 in 1969, then went on to work for the U.S. State Department and become the first director of the National Air and Space Museum. Now living in Florida, Collins, who also flew on Gemini 10, makes a few public appearances; he has painted and written books.

JAMES LOVELL

Lovell, 88, was one of NASA's most frequent early fliers, best known as the commander of the ill-fated Apollo 13 mission, which teetered on catastrophe. Their ordeal later inspired a hit movie, in which Lovell was played by Tom Hanks (the real Lovell makes a brief appearance as a ship captain). He also flew on Gemini 7, Gemini 12 and the Apollo 8 mission that circled the moon for the first time. He lives in Illinois and makes public appearances, sometimes with Aldrin.

FRED HAISE

Haise, 83, was also on that aborted Apollo 13 mission. He was scheduled to command a flight to land on the moon, but it was cancelled. He served

as a test pilot for the space shuttle prototype Enterprise and worked in the aerospace industry. Like many of the others on this list, he is the U.S. Astronaut Hall of Fame and now lives in Texas.

JOHN YOUNG

Young, 86, was the first person to fly in space six times, including a stint commanding the first space shuttle flight in 1981. Before that he flew two Gemini missions and on Apollo 10 and 16. As commander of Apollo 16, he walked on the moon. He later became NASA's chief astronaut and a tireless advocate of astronaut safety. He lives in Texas.

FRANK BORMAN

Borman, 88, commanded Apollo 8, the first flight in which humans circled the moon. It is a crew remembered today for their Christmas Eve broadcast, in which they read from Genesis and Borman signed off wishing blessings to "all of you on the good Earth"—a serene ending to the tumultuous year of 1968. He had previously flown in Gemini 7. He later became chief executive of the now-defunct Eastern Air Lines.

HARRISON "JACK" SCHMITT

Schmitt, 81, was the first scientist astronaut, a geologist who got to walk on the moon on Apollo 17 and was the next to last person on the moon, getting in the lander before Cernan. He later was elected to the U.S. Senate from New Mexico. He teaches a bit at the University of

Wisconsin and is a prominent scientist who rejects the mainstream view of man-made global warming.

ALAN BEAN

Bean, 84, was the fourth man to walk on the moon in Apollo 12 and later turned from space to art, especially painting. His paintings often have a space theme. He lives in Texas.

TOM STAFFORD

Stafford, 86, commanded Apollo 10, the second flight around the moon, which preceded Apollo 11's moon landing. Stafford, who also flew on two Gemini flights, later commanded the Apollo-Soyuz test program, which paved the way for U.S.-Soviet cooperation. A Florida resident, he would go in to a career in NASA management and was often consulted as an outside expert for the space agency after he retired.

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