

To oldly go: Shatner, 90, inspires with real-life space trip

October 13 2021, by Cody Jackson and Andrew Dalton



This undated photo made available by Blue Origin in October 2021 shows, from left, Chris Boshuizen, William Shatner, Audrey Powers and Glen de Vries. Their launch scheduled for Wednesday, Oct. 13, 2021 will be Blue Origin's second passenger flight, using the same capsule and rocket that Jeff Bezos used for his own trip three months earlier. Credit: Blue Origin via AP

As William Shatner prepares to be beamed up Wednesday for his first real-life spaceflight, and to become at 90 the oldest person ever to enter the final frontier, he's bringing out the awe in the small handful of people around a rural Texas spaceport.

Shatner's 10-minute trip with three others on the second passenger flight from Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin will be more like the first [space](#) launches of the 1960s than the [fictional galactic voyages of the Starship Enterprise](#) on "Star Trek," but the very idea of him leaving the atmosphere is powerful.

"It's time Captain Kirk actually physically got up into space. I'm kind of excited about that," said Becky Brewster, mayor of Van Horn, a rural town of about 1,800 people on what was once desolate desert ranchland in far West Texas that has been transformed by the presence of the Blue Origin spaceport facilities 25 miles away.

The mayor, a lifelong "Star Trek" fan, said she was disappointed she wasn't invited to the launch site but is savoring the moment anyway. She's planning to watch from her backyard with the livestream playing.

"He and Mr. Spock were the ones that got me interested in space and science fiction and everything else," Brewster said. "So, from junior high age up to now where William Shatner is actually in our town fixing to go up into space. You know, it's kind of like the whole circle now for me."



In this May 6, 2018 file photo, actor William Shatner takes questions from reporters after delivering the commencement address at New England Institute of Technology graduation ceremonies, in Providence, R.I. Star Trek's Captain Kirk is rocketing into space this month—boldly going where no other sci-fi actors have gone. Jeff Bezos' space travel company, Blue Origin, announced Monday, Oct. 4, 2021 that Shatner will blast off from West Texas on Oct. 12. Credit: AP Photo/Steven Senne, file

Beyond his celebrity identity, Shatner being space-bound at his age is a kick for close observers.

Joseph Barra, who works as a bartender for a Los Angeles catering company, heard only that he was getting an unusual gig at a remote Texas launch site.

"I'm like stop. You had me at space. Had no clue what else," Barra said. "And then all I heard was their gonna send some 90-year-old man into space. And I'm like, Dang, that sounds intense. Like, I wonder who that is. Then you get in site and I'm like, Oh, it's William Shatner."

Barra said the experience of serving drinks to Shatner and his crew mates has been surreal and then some.

"We're seeing that the man who in a sense like made space popular or made or gave everybody dreams of going to space," Barra said. "Now he's the one going to space and he's the one setting the bar. It's inspiring. Some like here, this man is 90 years old, proving that no matter how old you are, you still have more to do and accomplish on this Earth, and you can still give people an inspiration and a source and something to aspire to."



Blue Origin's New Shepard rocket sits on the landing pad after carrying passengers Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon and space tourism company Blue Origin, brother Mark Bezos, Oliver Daemen and Wally Funk, from its spaceport near Van Horn, Texas on July 20, 2021. The performer who breathed life into "Star Trek's" Captain James T. Kirk is, at age 90, heading toward the stars under dramatically different circumstances than his fictional counterpart when Shatner boards Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin NS-18. Credit: AP Photo/Tony Gutierrez, File

Barra said he heard Shatner say he plans to just gaze out the window at Earth during his minutes of weightlessness.

But he has a bit more planned apparently.

A Twitter user asked Shatner, an avid tweeter, on Tuesday whether he will post from space.

"I cannot bring my phone but I've prearranged a little something," [Shatner replied](#) with a wink emoji.

Earlier in the week he tweeted a photo of himself and his fellow crew members in blue flight suits that are far more futuristic than the yellow leotard-style uniform he wore on the original "Star Trek."

"Aren't we all adorbs!" [Shatner said](#).

Bezos, who was on Blue Origin's debut flight in July, is also a big "Star Trek" fan, and [invited Shatner to take the flight as a guest](#).

He'll join three others—two of them paying customers in the burgeoning business of space tourism—aboard a Blue Origin capsule.



Gene Walker, of Denison, Texas, makes a photo of a Blue Origin mural on a building for sale in Van Horn, Texas, Tuesday Oct. 12, 2021. Today's launch has been pushed to Wednesday due to weather. Credit: AP Photo/LM Otero



Van Horn Mayor Becky Brewster shows-off a Star Trek themed hand sign as she poses for a photo in Van Horn, Texas, Tuesday Oct. 12, 2021. The nearby Blue Origin launch site is 20 miles north of her city. Credit: AP Photo/LM Otero



In this 1988 file photo, William Shatner, who portrays Capt. James T. Kirk, attends a photo opportunity for the film "Star Trek V: The Final Frontier." Star Trek's Captain Kirk is rocketing into space this month—boldly going where no other sci-fi actors have gone. Jeff Bezos' space travel company, Blue Origin, announced Monday, Oct. 4, 2021 that Shatner will blast off from West Texas on Oct. 12. Credit: AP Photo/Bob Galbraith



A pedestrian crosses the street in Van Horn, Texas, Monday, Oct. 11, 2021. Tuesday's Blue Origin launch near the city has been pushed to Wednesday due to weather. Credit: AP Photo/LM Otero



Albert Fehrenbach, left, makes a photo as his wife, Susan Fehrenbach, center, chats with Rick Pratt outside the entrance to the Blue Origin launch site near Van Horn, Texas, Monday, Oct. 11, 2021. Tuesday's launch has been pushed to Wednesday due to weather. Credit: AP Photo/LM Otero

The fully automated flight, delayed by a day due to weather, will take them no higher than about 66 miles (106 kilometers). The capsule will parachute back to the desert floor, not far from where it took off.

Shatner plans to get right back to his work as Captain Kirk once he's back down to Earth.

"I'm doing Space, then Indiana Comic Con, & then on Sunday Wizard World Chicago," [he tweeted](#).

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