

and the United States. Tonight we celebrate our friendship, among friends. It is a long friendship, indeed, going back to our struggles for independence, including, as President Pastrana discussed today, an alliance in war as well as peace.

After all these years, the United States remains captivated by Colombia, by the power of Colombian art, the force of Colombian literature, and I might add, the strength of Colombian coffee. [Laughter] Indeed, if ever a prize is given to any of the people who negotiated the peace treaty at Wye, something will have to be given to Colombia, for without the coffee it would not have occurred. [Laughter]

The United States is grateful for the many contributions Colombians make to our national life, as students, teachers, athletes, and every occupation between.

Mr. President, your election this summer marks the beginning of a new era in your country's history and in our long relationship. Bravely, you have placed Colombia on the path to peace. You have taken hard steps toward renewed prosperity. We look forward to walking with you into the 21st century. We still have much to learn from and to give to each other.

We live in a hemisphere on a planet growing ever smaller. In our independence, every day we grow more interdependent. If we would be strong, we must lift others. If we would fulfill our own promise, we must help others live their dreams. We must, in short, go forward together.

In the last phrase of what has famously become known in the United States as my favorite novel, "One Hundred Years of Solitude," our guest and friend tonight, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, says, "Races condemned to 100 years of solitude did not have a second opportunity on Earth." In the 21st century let us move away from isolation, solitude, loneliness, to build 100 years of an American family together.

Ladies and gentlemen, I ask you to join me in a toast to the President and First Lady of Colombia and to the people of their great land.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:50 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Nohra Pastrana, wife of President Pastrana. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Pastrana.

Interview With Walter Cronkite and Miles O'Brien of the Cable News Network in Cape Canaveral, Florida October 29, 1998

John Glenn's Return to Space

Walter Cronkite. Good to see you, Mr. President.

The President. Good morning, Walter, and good morning, Miles—or good afternoon. I'm delighted to be here.

Mr. Cronkite. They say, Mr. President, that there are more visitors here than at any time since the Moon launchings, the Moon flights, and that includes the President of the United States. What's particularly appealing to you about this flight?

The President. Well, of course there is the John Glenn factor. Senator Glenn is a very good personal friend of Hillary's and mine, as well as an ally, a colleague. And like all Americans, I'm thrilled that he is going up today. But also this really is the last launch before we begin to put the international space station up. So

John Glenn began this first phase of our space program, and he's ending it just before we start on the space station.

So it's very exciting. It's important for the space program. But it's a great day for America, a great day for our senior citizens, and I hope that all Americans share the exuberance that I feel today.

Mr. Cronkite. You know, some naysayers say, Mr. President, that this flight of Glenn's is your reward to him for his stalwart support of you during his years in the Senate. Anything to that?

The President. No. I've always wanted John to be able to go back, as long as I've known he's wanted to. But if I had my druthers, he'd be home in Ohio running for reelection right now. [Laughter] And he said he was too old to serve another term in the Senate, but he wasn't too old to go into space.

And I think the American people should know that the decision to send him was made strictly by the book. I had no role in it. He had to pass the strenuous physical exams, and then, for each experiment he's going through, he had to prove that he was qualified and able to do that. I think this is very important.

One of the most important benefits that the American people derive from our space program is the whole rush of discoveries we get that help us here on Earth, environmental discoveries, health care discoveries of all kinds. We've got all kinds of medical scanning equipment today that we wouldn't have but for the space program. We've got protective clothing that people who are supersensitive to the Sun can wear, that we wouldn't have but for the space program.

So we're going to get a lot out of John Glenn going up there today, and I think the country is well served by doing it. And goodness knows, for a lifetime of service to us in the air and on the ground, he's earned this chance.

Mr. Cronkite. They say that President Kennedy grounded Glenn after his first flight because they didn't want to risk the death of a hero out there on a second flight. Would you have made that decision?

The President. Well, I don't know. I can't say because I wasn't there then, and it's easy to second-guess. But I'll say this, I think that John Glenn going up today is a very good thing for America. We're going to learn a lot from it, and we're all going to, I think, be thrilled by it. And I'm just glad he was brave enough to do it.

Russia-U.S. Space Station

Mr. Cronkite. You know, out there on Pad 39A, Mr. President, there to the right, to the south of 39B, from which this flight will take place, there's a shuttle scheduled to take into orbit in just a few months the first parts of the planned American-Russian joint international space station, almost a small city, permanently in space. Now that Russia has this desperate economic situation that endangered that schedule, it looks like we may have to put in a lot of money to try to keep that space station on schedule, the construction of it. Are we prepared to do that?

The President. Well, Walter, if it were required, I would be supportive of it, and I would be happy to talk to the congressional leaders

in both parties. Our space program has been a great investment. It's had hardly any increase in funding since I became President, but we've gone from two launches to eight launches a year. We've dramatically cut costs. NASA is sort of the star, the poster child, of Vice President Gore's reinventing Government campaign, and we're getting a lot out of it.

If we were required now to help the Russians during this difficult period, which will not last forever, so that they could continue to participate, I would be in favor of that. I think that it's very important that we have the Europeans, the Japanese, the Canadians, and the Russians in the space station venture.

I've been here. I've been over the space station project many times in great detail in Houston; twice, I've been down there to look at that. And I think we're doing the right thing with this space station, and we need to stay with it.

Pre-Launch Excitement

Miles O'Brien. Mr. President, it's Miles O'Brien, I have a question for you. But first I want to check the countdown clock for our viewers for just a moment. We have now entered into a hold—a 10-minute hold. We are at T minus 20 minutes and holding. The hold began at 1:20 p.m. eastern standard time; it will end at 1:30 p.m. eastern time. And then we'll count down again to 9 minutes, another 10-minute hold at that point. Once again, to remind our viewers, this is simply a way of NASA keeping up with the important business at hand and making sure that everybody is doing their job on time.

Mr. President. I'm just curious, are you nervous?

The President. Oh, a little bit. I think that it's part of the excitement. I'm a little nervous, but I've got great confidence in these people. I've had a lot of great honors as President to meet people who serve our country, but meeting the people who are in the space program, the astronauts, those who work on the ground, those who plan these missions—they've done everything they can possibly do, and they would never compromise an iota of safety or reliability just because Hillary and I and all the rest of the world are here through the media—I feel good about this.

But yes, I'm nervous, and I'm excited. I feel like a kid at his first Christmas. I'm very excited about this.

Space Program Goals

Mr. Cronkite. Mr. President, President Bush in 1989 proclaimed a national goal to send humans to the planet Mars by the year 2019. That's the 50th anniversary of Neil Armstrong's first step onto the Moon. Do you affirm that goal for the Mars mission?

The President. Well, let me say, what we're doing now will help us once we get to the position of evaluating that. I don't want to either affirm or renounce it. What I think we should do is to recognize that what we have now is a set of very focused goals in our space program. We are working on the space station. We are working on the shuttle. We are working on space transportation. We are working on things that tell us about our environment on Earth. And then we're doing these special projects—the Hubble telescope, which is magnificent. And we did the *Mars Pathfinder* mission on, you remember, July 4th of last year.

And so we're going to see how we are. Let's get the space station up and going and evaluate what our long-term prospects are. I'll tell you this, I am for a continued, aggressive exploration of space in ways that are high quality, cost effective, and that will benefit us here on Earth. And I hope that we can have, as a result of this flight today, even more broadbased American support from all Americans and all parties and all walks of life for our mission in space. It's still very, very important.

1998 Elections

Mr. Cronkite. Mr. President, as a journalist, I think I'd be remiss at this moment in time if I didn't ask you what your advisers are telling you about the results of next Tuesday's election.

The President. The truth is they don't know. [Laughter] We've got an extraordinary number of very, very close elections. In this 2-year period the members of the other party have raised, I think, \$100 million more than our folks did.

But we've got good candidates and an extremely good grassroots effort, I think, a good agenda.

The only thing I think I should say today to avoid being too political is that it's a very important election, and I would hope that every American who is eligible to vote would go and vote in that election.

If you look at this space launch today, this is a triumph of American democracy. It was made possible by the elected Representatives of the American people supporting the space program. And it is just one more example of why it's so important for citizens to stand up and be counted on election day. So if you feel patriotic when you see John Glenn and the others go up in space today, then keep that patriotic feeling until next Tuesday and go and vote for the candidate and the programs and the issues of your choice.

John Holliman

Mr. O'Brien. All right. Mr. President, thank you so much for being with us on CNN today.

The President. Thank you, Miles.

Mr. O'Brien. And we hope you enjoy the launch.

The President. Thank you, I will. I think I ought to say just one other thing because I'm talking to CNN. I know that I speak for a lot of people when I express my thanks to the late John Holliman for the work he did to advance our cause in space. And I know that all of you will be thinking about him and his family today. And I thank CNN for giving such a high profile to our space mission.

Thank you.

Mr. Cronkite. Thank you, Mr. President, for those words. Miles and I were going to dedicate this broadcast at an appropriate time to the memory of John Holliman, who was the space expert at CNN, as skilled as Miles—planned to be in this anchor chair and who was killed, unfortunately, in an automobile accident just a couple of weeks ago. This broadcast is dedicated to the memory of John Holliman.

NOTE: The interview began at 1:16 p.m. at the John F. Kennedy Space Center.