

# Ohio's Columbus airport renamed for astronaut John Glenn

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(Photo: Jay LaPrete, AP)

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — The airport where astronaut John Glenn ogled planes as a kid, came and went to two wars, boarded his first commercial jet and piloted a private aircraft until age 90 has now been named in his honor.

The former U.S. senator, 94, said during a ceremony Tuesday that he hopes changing Port Columbus' name to [John Glenn Columbus International Airport](#) will inspire youngsters to pursue science, engineering and their own round of innovation.

"It is a great honor to me to have this field with my name on it. It's not just that, though," he said. "One of the things that I think is most important about something like this, other than just honoring me, is the fact that it may draw attention for some of our young people and develop their interest in knowing that they, in their time, can do as many new things as have been done in aviation and in flying in the past."

Glenn was joined at the event by his wife of 73 years, Annie, their children and a host of dignitaries.

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Susan Tomasky, the board chairwoman of the Columbus Regional Airport Authority, said the airport has a rich history. [Fullscreen](#)

"So it's completely fitting that our airport's name and its future will be associated with someone whose life achievements span one of the greatest adventures in human flight and an enduring lifetime of contributions to improving the lives and the future of the people in our community, our state and our nation," she said.

She called Glenn "an example of what unwavering Midwestern determination and dogged hard work can lead to."

Glenn, raised in New Concord, Ohio, was the first American to orbit the earth. He was part of NASA's historic Mercury Seven crew and became its last surviving member with the death of [Scott Carpenter](#) in 2013. Glenn returned to space in 1998, at age 77.

Earlier in his life, Glenn flew a combined 122 missions during [World War II](#) and the Korean War and set the transcontinental speed record. He was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1974, serving until 1999.

Glenn recalled Tuesday begging his parents to take him by the Columbus airport to look at planes whenever they passed through the city. "It was something I was fascinated with," he said.

He also recalled many "tearful departures or homecomings" during wartime at the airport's old terminal. He remembered traveling from Columbus to Los Angeles on a DC-3 when there was only one airline, TWA. The trip required interim stops in Indianapolis, St. Louis, Kansas City, Dallas, El Paso and Albuquerque. "It took 24 hours to get there, something we find almost ridiculous these days when we have direct service," Glenn said.

Glenn apologized Tuesday for not recognizing some old friends in the crowd. He said he's lost a quarter to a third of his eyesight as a result of a small stroke and macular degeneration. The aging hero then poked fun at the situation with a couple of jokes.

The airport's new name was unveiled at the end of the event. It stretches across a video board that featured a scrolling multimedia presentation of Glenn's life and legacy.

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