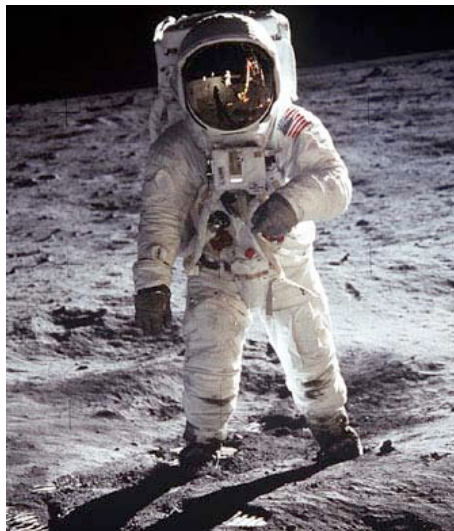




## NASA Honors Buzz Aldrin With Exploration Award

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West Point graduate. Fighter pilot. Space walker. Apollo 11 astronaut. Man on the moon. Such is the storied career of Buzz Aldrin.



*Image: In one of the most iconic images of the twentieth century, Buzz Aldrin explores the surface of the moon during the Apollo 11 mission. Image credit: NASA.*

Part of the first crew to set foot on another world, Aldrin spent more than 2 hours on the lunar surface during the Apollo 11 mission in July 1969. He also became the subject of one of the most iconic images on the 20th century (left), a solitary explorer in white contrasted against the gray landscape, with mission commander Neil Armstrong reflected in his visor. Even before his Apollo 11 fame, Aldrin had broken new ground with a record-setting space walk during the Gemini 12 mission in 1966.

For all his contributions to America's space program, Aldrin received NASA's Ambassador of Exploration Award on Saturday, March 25, at the California Science Center in Los Angeles.

In a post-Apollo 11 news conference, Aldrin said, "I think that this demonstrated that we were certainly on the right track when we undertook this commitment to go to the moon. I think that what this means is that many other problems, perhaps, can be solved in the same way, by making a commitment to solve them in a long-time fashion.

Aldrin is one of 38 recipients of the Ambassador of Exploration Award, all of whom were astronauts or other key individuals who participated in the Mercury, Gemini and Apollo programs. The award is a small sample of lunar material encased in Lucite and mounted for public display. The material is part of the 842 pounds of samples brought back to Earth during the six Apollo lunar expeditions from 1969 to 1972. Aldrin's award will be displayed in the Sketch Foundation Gallery: Air & Space Exhibits, California Science Center, 700 State Street, Los Angeles.

Aldrin earned a doctorate in Astronautics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology before being accepted into the third class of astronauts selected by NASA in October 1963. In his thesis, entitled "Guidance for Manned Orbital Rendezvous," he devised docking techniques that were used on the Gemini and Apollo missions.

On Nov. 11, 1966, he and command pilot James Lovell launched on Gemini 12, the last flight of the Gemini program, on a four-day mission. During the flight, Aldrin set a new record for spacewalking, spending more than 5 hours outside the spacecraft.

The next time he stepped outside of a spacecraft, it was the lunar module *Eagle* at Tranquility Base on the moon.



***Image: Another iconic image shows Buzz Aldrin's footprint on the moon. Image credit: NASA.***

Aldrin was the lunar module pilot on the Apollo 11 mission, and the second man to set foot on the moon on July 20, 1969. He and mission commander Armstrong spent two hours and 15 minutes on the lunar surface, while command module pilot Michael Collins orbited the moon.

As he set foot on the moon, Aldrin remarked, "Beautiful, beautiful. Magnificent desolation."

The spacewalk yielded another iconic image, Aldrin's footprint on the lunar surface.

In all, Aldrin logged almost 290 hours in space, including the almost 8 hours of spacewalks, before he resigned from NASA in July 1971.

Aldrin also had a 21-year career as an Air Force officer, including flying combat missions during the Korean War, working as an aide to the dean of faculty at the Air Force Academy and flying F-100s as a flight commander while based in Bitburg, Germany.

In March 1972 he retired from Air Force. After leaving the Air Force and his position as commander of the USAF Test Pilot School at Edwards Air Force Base, he wrote his

autobiography, "Return to Earth." He also served as chairman of the National Space Society.



*Image: Buzz Aldrin, his wife Lois and Dryden Flight Research Center Director Kevin L. Petersen pose with Aldrin's Ambassador of Exploration Award, which consists of a piece of moon rock encased in Lucite. Image credit: NASA.*

Aldrin remains a staunch supporter of NASA and through his writing, lectures and other public appearances continues to push for a strong American future in space. In 2002, President George W. Bush appointed him to serve on the Presidential Commission on the Future of the United States Aerospace Industry.

## **4/1/06 Transcript: This Week at NASA, March 25-April 1**

### **AMBASSADOR ALDRIN – JPL**

Apollo 11 astronaut Buzz Aldrin received NASA's Ambassador of Exploration Award at the California Science Center, Los Angeles. Aldrin is one of 38 recipients of the award, all of whom were astronauts or other key individuals in the Mercury, Gemini and Apollo programs. The award contains a small piece of the 842 pounds of lunar samples brought back to Earth on NASA's six Apollo missions, and will be on public display in the Sketch Foundation Gallery at the California Science Center, in Los Angeles.

Buzz Aldrin "The moon rock has a special meaning for me, not just the science that it enabled us to study and learn more about the origin of the moon and the origin of the Earth. But, I believe the plaque that we left on the moon signifies our mission, that 'We came in peace for all mankind.'"