

# ONCE AND FUTURE HERO

By JO1 Joshua M. Hudson

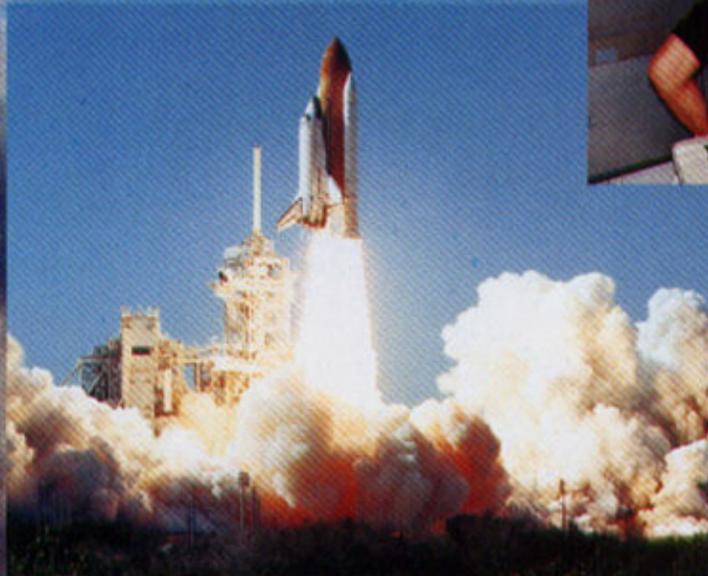
On 16 January 1998, NASA announced that U.S. Senator John Glenn, who made history 36 years ago as the first American to orbit the Earth, would fly in space again as payload specialist on shuttle mission STS-95 later that year. Glenn was to take part in experiments to study the connection between the adaptation to weightlessness and the aging process. At age 77, this would also make him the oldest man in space. As the day for the launch approached, those that remembered Glenn's 20 February 1962 Mercury launch experienced an excitement about space travel that had been waning for years. The nation watched as the STS-95 mission blasted into orbit on 29 October. Not since STS-1, the first space shuttle mission, had there been so much press coverage for a launch event.

On their first full day in space, the crew worked on dozens of experiments and deployed a satellite. Glenn showed no symptomatic problems from the launch or adaptation to weightlessness. "Zero-G and I feel fine," Glenn reported to NASA from space—a phrase he also said during his Mercury flight.

As the shuttle *Columbia* touched down on 8 November, Glenn said that he was glad to be home. "I'm about 95 to 98 percent back to normal," he told reporters at the post-flight press conference. However, he acknowledged that he couldn't make quick



Above, a portrait of Senator John Glenn, payload specialist on the STS-95 space shuttle mission. Left, equipped with sleep monitoring devices, Glenn prepares to cocoon himself into bed. Bottom left, the entire nation watched the shuttle launch on television as a national hero returned to space after 36 years.



Photos courtesy NASA

head movements without discomfort, a condition common to astronauts after long space flights. When asked if he would go on another shuttle mission he said he would, but added that "this probably will be my last flight."

Senator Glenn has contracted with Bantam Books to write his autobiography, due out in fall 1999. ✈