

2024 ANNIVERSARIES AND BIRTHDAYS OF NOTE

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DATE	Year	Anniversary	ITEM	ITEM OF THE WEEK
1-Jan	1929	95	Endurance record was set by (then) Major C.A. Spaatz and crew in Fokker C-2A <i>Question Mark</i> : 150+ hours of continuous flight, 42 aerial refuelings.	Here
2-Jan	1959	65	Launch of <i>Luna 1</i> , the first satellite to escape Earth's gravity and orbit the Sun	Here
2-Jan	2004	20	The <i>Stardust</i> spacecraft encountered Comet Wild 2. <i>Stardust</i> collected samples of the materials shed by the comet and returned them to Earth.	Here
3-Jan	1999	25	Launch of <i>Mars Polar Lander</i> mission, which would ultimately crash on Mars.	Mars is Hard
3-Jan	2004	20	The Mars Exploration Rover " <i>Spirit</i> " landed safely at Crater Gusev on Mars.	Mars is Hard
6-Jan	1799	225	Explorer Jedediah Smith	
9-Jan	1839	185	Thomas Henderson of South Africa determined the distance to Alpha Centauri using geometric parallax.	Here
10-Jan	1954	70	A De Havilland Mk-1 "Comet" airliner crashed in the Mediterranean, killing all aboard. Examination of the recovered wreckage showed no obvious cause. Another accident soon after revealed that metal fatigue was responsible.	
15-Jan	2009	15	US Airways Flight 1549 suffered a series of bird strikes after takeoff from NYC's LaGuardia Airport. Expert work by pilot Chesley Sullenberger and crew allowed for a safe water landing in the Hudson River.	
15-Jan	1929	95	Heroic Martin Luther King, Jr.	
25-Jan	1964	60	Launch of <i>Echo 2</i> , a 100'-diameter aluminized balloon off which radio signals could be bounced over the transmitter's horizon.	Here
3-Feb	1959	65	Singers Buddy Holly, "Big Bopper" Richardson, and Richie Valens died in plane crash ("The Day the Music Died").	
5-Feb	1974	50	<i>Mariner 10</i> made the first close flyby of Venus, while en route to three fly-bys of Mercury (the first spacecraft to visit Mercury; the <i>MESSENGER</i> spacecraft is presently in orbit around Mercury). <i>Mariner 10</i> returned the first close-up views of Venus, and was the first spacecraft to use one planet's gravity to "slingshot" it towards another planet, Mercury.	Here

7-Feb	1999	25	Launch of <i>Stardust</i> , a spacecraft designed to capture material released by Comet Wild 2 and return it to Earth for analysis.	
8-Feb	1969	55	Observed fall of the Allende carbonaceous chondrite meteorite (a rare and scientifically-important type) at Pueblito de Allende, Chihuahua, Mexico. Almost two tons were recovered; Allende is probably the most-intensively studied meteorite in existence.	Here
8-Feb	1974	50	The final <i>Skylab</i> mission ended with the return to Earth of <i>SL-4</i> astronauts Gibson, Carr, and Pogue after 84 days in orbit.	Here
9-Feb	1964	60	73+ million saw the <i>Beatles</i> on the <i>Ed Sullivan Show</i> .	
10-Feb	1994	30	The first female U.S. combat pilot, an F-15E driver named Jean Flynn, completed flight training.	
12-Feb	1949	75	Thousands of residents of Quito, Ecuador were panicked when the local radio station performed a dramatic presentation of <i>The War of the Worlds</i> (shades of Welles in 1938!). An enraged mob torched the radio station; six people died in the ensuing confusion (the fire department was out chasing "Martians").	Here
12-Feb	1809	215	Scientist Charles Darwin	
12-Feb	1809	215	Abraham Lincoln, 16 th President of the USA	
20-Feb	1944	80	Start of the "Big Week" intensive bombing campaign against German industrial targets.	Here
20-Feb	1944	80	SSgt Archibald Mathis, B-17 ball turret gunner, and navigator 2Lt Walter E. Truemper, both earned (posthumous) Medals of Honor this date on a bombing mission over Leipzig, Germany. Mathis would be one of only four enlisted airmen to earn an MOH in WWII.	Here
26-Feb	1949	75	The first non-stop around-the-world flight began. Capt. James Gallagher piloted a Boeing B-50A Superfortress on the 94 hours mission that required four mid-air refuelings. B-50's were also used as "mothership" in drop tests for high-performance test planes.	Here
28-Feb	1959	65	<i>Discoverer 1</i> became the first satellite ever to be placed into a polar orbit. The "Discoverer" series was the cover for the Corona spy satellite program.	
28-Feb	1924	100	NASA flight director Chris Kraft	
1-Mar	1924	100	Astronaut Deke Slayton	Here
2-Mar	1969	55	The Concorde supersonic transport made its first flight.	

2-Mar	1979	45	Peale, Cassen, and Reynolds boldly predict, in the journal <i>Science</i> , that Jupiter's moon, Io, will have active volcanism, based on their analysis of the internal tides that Jupiter and Europa would raise within it. In the scientific equivalent of Babe Ruth's "Called Shot," they would be proved correct in the most dramatic fashion when <i>Voyager 1</i> flew by Io a mere one week later.	
5-Mar	1979	45	<i>Voyager 1</i> flew by Jupiter, the 3 rd spacecraft to do so, but with more sophisticated instruments than its <i>Pioneer</i> predecessors. A close encounter with Io was selected, but that precluded getting a good view of Europa and also prevented <i>Voyager 1</i> from going to Uranus from Saturn (the trajectory required to do so would have put <i>Voyager 1</i> through a dense part of the ring system).	
7-Mar	2009	15	Launch of the <i>Kepler</i> spacecraft, on a mission to detect exo-planets when the transit the stars they orbit.	Here
9-Mar	1934	90	Cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin	
14-Mar	1879	145	Albert Einstein was born this date.	
14-Mar	1934	90	Astronaut Gene Cernan	Here
19-Mar	1964	60	Geraldine Mock departed Columbus, OH in a Cessna 180 named the " <i>Spirit of Columbus</i> ," on what would become the first successful solo flight around the world by a female pilot.	Here
21-Mar	1999	25	The first successful circumnavigation of the Earth by balloon was completed this date by the <i>Breitling Orbiter 3</i> .	
24-Mar	1834	190	Grand Canyon explorer John Wesley Powell	
1-Apr	1954	70	President Eisenhower signed legislation establishing the U.S. Air Force Academy.	Here
1-Apr	1969	55	The "Harrier" V/STOL "jump jet" entered RAF squadron service.	
2-Apr	1899	125	The electrolytic method for aluminum refining was developed (today >3% of all electricity generated in USA goes to refining aluminum).	
5-Apr	1949	75	Astronaut Judith Resnick	Here
9-Apr	1959	65	The original Project Mercury astronauts were announced (Shepard, Grissom, Glenn, Carpenter, Schirra, Cooper, and Slayton).	
22-Apr	1904	120	Physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer	

25-Apr	1944	80	A helicopter (Sikorsky YR-4 Hoverfly, the first mass-produced military helicopter) was used for the first time to evacuate troops in combat, with the retrieval of four British soldiers from the Burmese jungle. Four separate trips, over two days, were needed to rescue three wounded soldiers and the Stinson pilot who had attempted their rescue earlier.	
25-Apr	1874	150	Radio inventor Guglielmo Marconi	Here
1-May	1944	80	B-17 ball turret gunner Sgt. Maynard H. Smith became the first enlisted airman to earn a Congressional Medal of Honor (one of four in WWII), on a mission of St. Nazaire, France. Sgt. Smith gave first aid to a wounded crewmate, fended off fighters with both waist guns, and fought fires for over 90 minutes.	Here
1-May	1944	80	A Vought OS2U "Kingfisher" floatplane from the battleship <i>North Carolina</i> , piloted by John Galvin, rescued nine aviators during air attacks on the Japanese base at Truk. Galvin gathered up downed airmen from locations unreachable by lifeguard submarine <i>Tang</i> , and brought them to the sub for safety. <i>Tang</i> would eventually rescue 22 airmen shot down during the Truk attacks (including Galvin, whose plane was damaged during the rescues).	Here
11-May	1949	75	Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson approved the Air Force desegregation plan ordered by President Truman. The plans for the Navy and Army were returned for revision.	
12-May	1949	75	The Soviet Union re-opened ground routes to Berlin, ending need for the "Berlin Airlift."	Here
18-May	1969	55	Launch of <i>Apollo 10</i> , the "dress rehearsal" for the first Moon landing.	Here
28-May	1959	65	First primates in Space, "Able" and "Baker," made a sub-orbital flight.	Here
29-May	1919	105	Measurements of star positions during a total solar eclipse confirmed predictions made by Einstein's Theory of General Relativity. Similar bending of light, now known as "gravitational lensing," is a standard observational tool astronomers use to detect objects too faint to be seen otherwise.	Here
3-Jun	1769	255	A rare transit of Venus, observed by many for the purpose of calibrating the size scale of the Solar System, occurred this date. Captain James Cook, on his first great voyage of discovery, was sent to Tahiti with astronomers to make the necessary observations. Their observing site is to this day known as "Point Venus." Cook would later (November 9) observe a transit of Mercury on that same voyage (shades of Kepler's prediction for 1631!), from still-named Mercury Bay in New Zealand. Cook's reputation as an impartial scientist/explorer was so well-established that his subsequent voyages were	Here

			given international free passage, in spite of the American Revolution and other warlike conflicts of the day.	
6-Jun	1944	80	D-Day! Over 12,000 combat sorties were flown in support of the invasion of Normandy.	
18-Jun	2009	15	Launch of the <i>Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO)</i> / <i>Lunar Crater Observation and Sensing Satellite (LCROSS)</i> tandem spacecraft.	
19-Jun	1944	80	Battle of the Philippine Sea, a one-sided aerial contest also known as the "Great Marianas Turkey Shoot," took place this date. Pilots David McCampbell would score seven victories, Alex Vraciu, six; others also scored heavily.	
23-Jun	1959	65	The Antarctic Treaty took effect.	
1-Jul	2004	20	The <i>Cassini</i> spacecraft was inserted into orbit around Saturn.	Here
2-Jul	1964	60	The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed into law by President Johnson.	
6-Jul	1944	80	2Lt. Jackie Robinson (yes, HIM) was charged falsely with being "drunk and disorderly" for refusing to move to the back of the (military) bus, later to be acquitted.	
11-Jul	1979	45	U.S. Space Station <i>Skylab</i> re-entered the Earth's atmosphere.	Here
15-Jul	1954	70	The Boeing 367-80 made its first test flight today. Known as the "Dash 80," it was the engineering prototype of the Boeing 707.	Here
16-Jul	1969	55	Launch of <i>Apollo 11</i> , the first crewed landing on the Moon.	
16-Jul	1994	30	Fragments of Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 began to impact Jupiter, the first time impact events have been observed in real time.	
19-Jul	1989	35	Expert piloting and good luck saved 181 of 293 passengers/crew on UA Flight 232 at Sioux City, IA.	
20-Jul	1969	55	APOLLO 11 LANDED SAFELY ON THE MOON!	Here
20-Jul	1919	105	Mountain climber Edmund Hillary	
21-Jul	1999	25	<i>Liberty Bell 7</i> , Gus Grissom's Mercury capsule, was recovered 38 years to the day after its loss.	
23-Jul	1999	25	Eileen Collins became the first female commander of the Space Shuttle, with the launch of STS-93 Space Shuttle <i>Columbia</i> on a mission to launch the <i>Chandra X-ray Observatory</i> . <i>Chandra</i> is the third of NASA's three "Great Observatories," and is still going strong.	

24-Jul	1969	55	The <i>Apollo 11</i> command module returned to Earth safely.	
25-Jul	1909	115	Louis Bleriot became the first pilot to cross the 31 mile-wide English Channel, in his Bleriot Type XI monoplane.	
25-Jul	1984	40	Cosmonaut Svetlana Savitskaya of <i>Soyuz T-12</i> became the first woman to "walk in Space."	
2-Aug	1909	115	The U.S. Army bought its very first aircraft, the <i>1909 Wright Military Flyer</i> . The Army paid \$25,000 plus a \$5,000 bonus because the <i>Wright Military Flyer</i> was capable of exceeding the contract-specified speed.	
3-Aug	2004	20	Launch of the <i>MESSENGER</i> spacecraft towards Mercury. The spacecraft flew past Earth once, Venus twice, and Mercury three times, using their gravity to assist it towards Mercury orbit, which it successfully entered on 11 March 2011.	Here
9-Aug	1949	75	An ejection seat was used successfully for the first time in the US, when Lt. J.L. Fruin escaped from a McDonnell F2H- 1.	
15-Aug	1914	110	The Panama Canal was opened.	
15-Aug	1969	55	The "Woodstock Music and Art Fair" opened.	
18-Aug	1774	250	Explorer Meriwether Lewis	
19-Aug	1964	60	Launch of <i>Syncom 3</i> , the first fully-geostationary (as opposed to "geosynchronous") satellite.	Here
23-Aug	1954	70	First test flight of the YC-130, which would become the famous "Hercules" cargo plane.	
25-Aug	1989	35	<i>Voyager 2</i> flew by Neptune, the first and only spacecraft to ever have done so.	Here
28-Aug	1789	235	William Herschel, discoverer of planet Uranus 8+ years previously, discovered Enceladus, an intriguing water-rich moon of Saturn.	
1-Sep	1979	45	<i>Pioneer 11</i> became the first spacecraft to fly by Saturn. Since then, <i>Voyagers 1</i> and <i>2</i> have flown by, and <i>Cassini</i> is presently orbiting Saturn.	Here
7-Sep	1924	100	Hawai'i senator Daniel Inouye, who played a pivotal role in the establishment of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian. A solar telescope at Haleakala, Maui, is named for him.	
17-Sep	1959	65	First test flight of the X-15 experimental hypersonic rocket plane.	Here
28-Sep	1924	100	The Douglas "World Cruisers" completed the first aerial circumnavigation of the world, landing this date in Seattle.	
4-Oct	1959	65	Launch of <i>Luna 3</i> , the first spacecraft to radio back a photograph of the lunar "far side."	Here

5-Oct	1914	110	First aerial combat victory ever: Voisin Pilot Joseph Franz and mechanic/gunner Louis Quinalt (or Quinaulty) downed a German observation plane.	
5-Oct	1969	55	A Cuban defector landed his Mig-17 at Homestead AFB, parking near <i>Air Force One</i> .	
11-Oct	1984	40	The first U.S. woman spacewalk, by STS-41G astronaut Kathryn Sullivan	
17-Oct	1974	50	First flight of the Sikorsky YUH-60A helicopter, known in service as the "Blackhawk."	
18-Oct	1989	35	Launch of STS-34 Space Shuttle <i>Atlantis</i> , on a mission to deploy the <i>Galileo</i> Jupiter spacecraft.	
25-Oct	1944	80	Culmination of the three-day Battle of Leyte Gulf; first widespread use of kamikaze suicide attacks; escort carrier <i>St. Lo</i> was sunk; extreme courage was displayed by Ernest Evans and crew of the <i>USS Johnston</i> (DD-557), the <i>Samuel B. Roberts</i> (DE-413), and others.	Here
9-Nov	1934	90	Famed scientist Carl Sagan	
18-Nov	1989	35	Launch of the <i>COsmic Background Explorer</i> satellite (<i>COBE</i>).	
19-Nov	1969	55	The Apollo 12 Lunar Module, <i>Intrepid</i> , landed safely on the Moon. Astronauts Conrad and Bean landed near, visited, and retrieved pieces from, the <i>Surveyor 3</i> robotic lander	
20-Nov	2004	20	Launch of the <i>SWIFT</i> satellite, on a mission to detect and observe an astronomical phenomenon called "gamma ray bursts," and their aftermath.	
20-Nov	1889	135	Astronomer Edwin Hubble	
24-Nov	1859	165	Darwin's <i>Origin of Species</i> was published.	
28-Nov	1964	60	Launch of <i>Mariner 4</i> , the first U.S. fly-by of Mars. The few images returned misled scientists into thinking Mars was more like the Moon than we know now.	Here
30-Nov	1954	70	The only thoroughly-documented case of a person being hit by a falling meteor occurred this date, when Ann Elizabeth Hodges of Sylacauga, Alabama, was struck while dozing on her couch, causing her minor injuries.	Here
1-Dec	1924	100	The play, <i>Lady Be Good</i> , opened in NYC (Gershwin music, starring Fred and Estelle Astaire; namesake for WWII lost bomber, which in turn provided base story for movie <i>Sole Survivor</i> and <i>Twilight Zone</i> episode, "King Nine Will Not Return").	Here

3-Dec	1999	25	The <i>Mars Polar Lander</i> spacecraft crashed on Mars. The problem was related to, but somewhat more complicated than, a simple metric/English unit conversion error, as commonly reported.	-
4-Dec	1639	385	The first <i>transit</i> of Venus was observed (Venus appearing in silhouette against the Sun) by Jeremiah Horrocks (who predicted it) and William Crabtree.	
17-Dec	1944	80	P-38 pilot Richard I. Bong, America's leading "ace" of WWII, scored his 40th (and last) victory. He piloted the P-38 now in the NASM collection on a test flight in which the right engine exploded. Bong survived that flight and combat, but died on VE Day while testing a P-80 at (soon-to-be-named) Edwards AFB.	
19-Dec	1989	35	First combat use of the F-117 "Nighthawk" stealth fighter, in Operation Just Cause, against Manuel Noriega of Panama.	
22-Dec	1964	60	First flight of the SR-71 "Blackbird" reconnaissance aircraft.	
23-Dec	1974	50	First test flight of the B-1A bomber	
25-Dec	1924	100	Spooky Rod Serling	Here
30-Dec	1924	100	Edwin Hubble proved that the Andromeda Galaxy is an "island universe" like our own Milky Way, one of billions of galaxies now known in the Cosmos. This and other accomplishments made him the namesake for the <i>Hubble Space Telescope</i> .	Here