

# Neil Armstrong

By  
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How does one adequately express his feelings about a special friend ----- when that friend is also a world icon, a national hero of unimaginable proportion and a legend whose name will live in history long after all here today will have been forgotten. A friend whose commitment and dedication to that in which he believed was absolute ----- a man who when he became your friend, was a friend for a lifetime.

I am not sure this is possible, but I can only try.

Neil Armstrong grew up on a farm in middle America ----- and, as a young boy like most kids his age, had a paper route, cut lawns, shoveled snow, and his fascination for model airplanes gave birth to a dream ----- a dream of becoming an aeronautical engineer.

Neil had his first taste of flight when he was but 6 years old -----  
-- and from that day forward, never looked back.

Although he always wanted to design and re-design airplanes to make them do more than they were supposed to do, “once he had tasted flight ----- Neil’s eyes turned skyward and it was there he always longed to be.”

Little did Neil ever realize that his dream ----- and his longing to soar with the eagles ----- would someday give him the opportunity to be the first human being to go where no man had gone before.

Neil Armstrong was a sincerely humble man of impeccable integrity, who reluctantly accepted his role of the first human to walk on another world. And when he did, he became a testament to all Americans of what can be achieved through vision and dedication.

But in Neil's mind, it was never about Neil ----- it was about you, your mom and dad, your grandparents ----- about those of a generation ago who gave Neil the opportunity to call the Moon his home ----- but never was it about Neil.

Neil considered that he was just the tip of the arrow ----- always giving way to some 400,000 equally committed and dedicated Americans ----- Americans who were the strength behind the bow ----- and always giving credit to those who just "didn't know it couldn't be done."

And therein lies the strength and character of Neil Armstrong.

Neil knew who he was and understood the immensity of what he had done ----- yet was always willing to give of himself.

When Neil, Jim Lovell and I visited the troops in Iraq and Afghanistan on three separate occasions ----- meeting them in chow halls, control centers, and yes ----- even in armored carriers and helicopters ----- these enthusiastic young men

and women, yet to be born when Neil walked on the Moon -----  
-- were mesmerized by his presence -----

And in typical Neil fashion, he would always introduce himself --  
----- as if they didn't know who he was!! ----- he would shake  
each and every hand ----- and gave them a “ How are you  
guys doing?”

Asked by one overwhelmed and inquisitive young Marine -----  
“Mr. Armstrong, why are you here?” Neil's thoughtful and  
honest reply -----“because you are here!”

Neil was special to these young kids, and to a few old ones as  
well.....

Although deeply proud to be a Naval Aviator, as a civilian at the  
time he flew, Neil never received his Navy Astronaut Wings -----  
a tradition for those of us in the military. It was on the

USS EISENHOWER in 2010 on our way to Afghanistan that Neil finally did receive the tribute he deserved. His visibly moved response said it all ..... And I quote -----

“I’ve never been more proud than when I earned my Navy Wings of Gold.”

I’ve got to believe there’s some Golden Eagles here who would second those words.

Trying to get into Neil’s inner self was always a challenge for almost anyone ----- Asked one day by a stranger -----

“Mr. Armstrong, how did you feel when looking for a place to land with only 15 seconds of fuel remaining?”

In only a way Neil could, he said ----- “Well.....when the gage says empty, we all know there’s a gallon or two left in the tank.”

Now there's a man in control of his own destiny ----- That,  
Ladies and Gentlemen is Vintage Neil Armstrong.

Fate looked down upon us kindly when she chose Neil to  
be the first to venture to another world ----- and look back  
from space at the beauty of our own.

It could have been another ----- but it wasn't ----- and it  
wasn't for a reason -----

No one ----- No one ----- but no one ----- could have accepted  
the responsibility of his remarkable accomplishment with more  
dignity and grace than Neil Armstrong. He embodied all that is  
good and great about America.

Neil, almost a half a century later, you have shown us once  
again the pathway to the stars ----- now for you ----- a new  
beginning ----- but for us, I promise, it is not the end.

And as you soar through the heavens beyond where even  
Eagles dare not go ----- you can now finally -----put out your  
hand and touch the face of **God**.

Farewell, my friend ----- you have left us far too soon, but we  
do cherish the time we shared.

**God** Bless. (*salute*)