

Friend of Atchison becomes oldest woman in space

(KAIR)--Along with her numerous aviation-related accomplishments, one member of the Blue Origin Space Crew has ties to Atchison.

According to a social media post from Diane Liebsch, a committee member for Atchison's International Forest of Friendship, Wally Funk "has visited Atchison yearly for decades," and is considered a great friend of the forest, and participates annually with the children during the Parade of Flags held at the forest.

Funk is a member of the 99's organization of women pilots, a group formed in 1929, with Atchison native Amelia Earhart named to serve as the group's first president.

Among her visits to Atchison, the 99's [website](#) highlights a visit by Funk to the International Forest of Friendship in 1996, the year she gave a repeat seminar in both the Cayman Islands and at the forest.

According to the Amelia Earhart Hangar [Museum](#), Funk was one of the Mercury 13, a group of women who underwent screening tests at the same time as the Mercury Seven astronauts.

Although Funk's 1960 space mission was scrapped, on July 20, 2021, as the world watched, she became, at the age of 82, according to the museum, the oldest person to fly in space after she successfully flew with the Jeff Bezos-funded Blue Origin aboard the vertical-takeoff, vertical-landing launch vehicle, New Shepard.

Among her many years of accomplishments and record setting, Funk was also the first female Federal Aviation Agency Inspector, and the first female Air Safety Investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board.