

Guion Bluford

Fact File

Date of Birth: 22nd November 1942

Place of Birth: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Early Life

Guion 'Guy' Bluford was the first of three sons born to Guion Bluford Sr, a mechanical engineer, and Lolita Bluford, a special education teacher. His parents encouraged academic success from an early age. Bluford graduated from high school in 1960, before going on to study for a degree in aerospace engineering at Pennsylvania State University.

After graduating from university in 1964, he trained as a fighter pilot in the US Air Force and flew 144 combat missions in the Vietnam War, winning several medals for his service. Bluford then enrolled at the US Air Force Institute of Technology to obtain a master's degree and a PhD in aerospace engineering. During this time, he wrote several scientific papers and served as a staff development engineer.

In 1978, Bluford was selected as one of 35 out of 10 000 applicants to become a NASA space shuttle astronaut.



Key Achievements

Became the first African American person in space in 1983.

Received several awards, including the Air Force Legion of Merit, the NASA Distinguished Service Medal and NASA Exceptional Service Medal.

Inducted into the International Space Hall of Fame in 1997 and the United States Astronaut Hall of Fame in 2010.

Contribution to Science

On 30th August 1983, Bluford became the first African American person to go into space. His first mission, STS-8, was the first space shuttle flight to have a night launch and a night landing. On the mission, the crew orbited the Earth 98 times in 145 hours while carrying out several important research projects, including testing a robotic arm and taking medical measurements to study the effects of space travel on the human body. Bluford went on to serve on the crew of three other space missions, including STS-61A, which holds the record for the largest crew to fly on a single spacecraft with eight crew members. In total, he logged over 688 hours in space.

Bluford left NASA and the Air Force in 1993 to join engineering company NYMA Inc., becoming vice president/general manager of its engineering services division. He moved on to two other vice president positions, before becoming president of the Aerospace Technology Group, which carries out research into the development and application of new aerospace innovations.

