

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Guion Bluford

PERSON

Bluford, Guion Stewart, 1942-

Alternative Names: Guion Bluford;

Life Dates: November 22, 1942-

Place of Birth: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Work: North Homestead, OH

Occupations: Astronaut; Military Officer

Biographical Note

NASA astronaut, aerospace engineer, military officer, and senior engineering executive, Guion S. Bluford Jr. was born on November 22, 1942 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was the eldest of three sons of Guion Bluford, Sr., a mechanical engineer, and Lolita Bluford, a special education teacher. Bluford graduated from Overbrook Senior High School in 1960 and went on to graduate from Pennsylvania State University in 1964 with his B.S. degree in aerospace engineering. He was also a distinguished graduate of the U.S. Air Force ROTC program and received his commission as an Air Force second lieutenant. Bluford graduated from the Air Force Institute of Technology with his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in aerospace engineering in 1974 and 1978, respectively. In 1987, Bluford received his M.B.A. degree in management from the University of Houston at Clear Lake.

After receiving his Air Force pilot wings, Bluford was assigned to the 557th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam. As an F4C fighter pilot, he flew 144 combat missions in Southeast Asia. From 1967 to 1972, he was a T-38 instructor pilot at Sheppard Air Force Base in Texas where he trained future U.S. Air Force and West German fighter pilots. Upon graduating from the Air Force Institute of Technology in 1974, Bluford was assigned to the U.S. Air Force Flight Dynamics Laboratory as Deputy for Advanced Concepts in the Aeromechanics Division and then as Branch Chief of the Aerodynamics and Airframe Branch. In 1978, Bluford was selected for the astronaut program and was officially designated a NASA astronaut one year later. In 1983, he became the first African American to fly in space and the first to receive the U.S. Air Force Command Pilot Astronaut Wings. Bluford was also the first African American to return to space a second, third, and fourth time when he flew on STS-61A in 1985, STS-39 in 1991, and STS-53 in 1992. He has logged more than 688 hours in space.

In 1993, he retired from NASA and the United States Air Force to become the Vice President/General Manager of the Engineering Services Division of NYMA Inc. He led the research support effort in aeropropulsion, satellite systems, microgravity and advanced materials. In 1997, he became the Vice President of the Aerospace Sector of the Federal Data Corporation and led the company's NASA business. Finally, in 2000, Bluford became the Vice President of Microgravity R&D and Operation for Northrop Grumman Corporation and led the industry team in the development of two experiment facilities currently on the International Space Station. Today, Bluford is the President of the Aerospace Technology Group in Cleveland, Ohio.

Bluford has been awarded the Department of Defense Superior Service and Meritorious Service Medals; the Air Force Legion of Merit and Meritorious Service Medal; the NASA Distinguished Service and Exceptional Service Medals; the Pennsylvania Distinguished Service Medal; the 1991 Black Engineer of the Year Award and fourteen honorary doctorate degrees. He was inducted into the International Space Hall of Fame in 1997 and the U.S. Astronaut Hall of Fame in 2010

Guion Stewart Bluford, Jr. was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on May 9, 2013.

Related Entries

Air Force Institute of Technology [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Ph.D.

Air Force Institute of Technology [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

M.S.

University of Houston [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

MBA

Pennsylvania State University [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.S.

Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

12th Tactical Fighter Wing [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1976 to ?]

F4C Combat Pilot

Northrop Grumman Information Technology [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1992 to ?]

Vice President, R&D and Operation

Air Force Flight Dynamics Laboratory [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 197503 to 197703]

Deputy for Advanced Concepts

Air Force Flight Dynamics Laboratory [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 197703 to 197806]

Branch Chief, Aerodynamics and Airframe Branch

Federal Data Corporation [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1971 to ?]

Vice President, Aerospace Secotr

3630th Flying Training Wing [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 196706 to 197206]

Air Force T-38 Instructor Pilot

Johnson Space Center [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 197806 to 199306]

NASA Mission Specialist Astronaut

NYMA Inc. [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1985 to ?]

Vice President, Engineering Services Division

Aerospace Technology Group [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1978 to ?]

Founder and President

ENSCO, Incorporated [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Member, Board of Directors

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Alumni League [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Member, Board of Directors

Penn State University [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Member, Society of Distinguished Alumni

Penn State University College of Engineering [MEMBEROF]
[from 1986 to 2006]

Member, Committee on Minority Activities

National Inventors Hall of Fame Foundation [MEMBEROF]
[from 1987 to 2002]

Member, Board of Directors

National Research Council's Aeronautics and Space Engineering Board [MEMBEROF]
[from 1993 to 1998]

Member

American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) [MEMBEROF]
[from 1995 to 2001]

Member, Board of Directors

Great Lakes Museum of Science, Environment, and Technology [MEMBEROF]
[from 1997 to 2003]

Member, Board of Directors

Western Reserve Historical Society [MEMBEROF]
[from 1997 to 2003]

Member, Board of Directors

National Space Club [MEMBEROF]
[from 1997 to 2001]

Member, Board of Governors

Aerospace Corporation [MEMBEROF]
[from 1999 to 2008]

Member, Board of Trustees

United States Space Foundation [MEMBEROF]
[from 2000 to 2006]

Member, Board of Directors, Life Director

Hiram College [MEMBEROF]
[from 2004 to 2009]

Member, Board of Visitors

Coalition of Space Exploration [MEMBEROF]
[from 2006 to 2011]

Member, Board of Advisors