

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

PERSON

Bluford, Guion , 1942-

Alternative Names: Bluford, Guion , 1942-;

Life Dates: November 22, 1942-

Place of Birth: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Residence:

Occupations: Astronaut

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

Bluford, Viola Harris [GRANDCHILD OF]
Paternal Grandmother

Brice, Ella Hawkins [GRANDCHILD OF]
Maternal Grandmother

Bluford, Eugene [SIBLING OF]
Brother

Bluford, James [PARENT OF]
Son

Bluford, Keneth [SIBLINGOF]

Brother

Brice, John [GRANDCHILDOF]

Maternal Grandfather

Bluford, John Henry [GRANDCHILDOF]

Paternal Grandfather

Bluford, Sr., Guion [CHILDOF]

Father

Bluford, III, Guion [PARENTOF]

Son

Bluford, Lolita [CHILDOF]

Mother

Air Force Institute of Technology [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to 1978]

Ph.D.

Air Force Institute of Technology [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to 1974]

M.S.

University of Houston [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to 1987]

MBA

Pennsylvania State University [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to 1964]

B.S.

The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to 1997]

12th Tactical Fighter Wing [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1966-10 to 1967-06]

F4C Combat Pilot

Northrop Grumman Information Technology [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 2000-10 to 2002-09]

Vice President, R&D and Operation

Air Force Flight Dynamics Laboratory [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1975-03 to 1977-03]

Deputy for Advanced Concepts

Air Force Flight Dynamics Laboratory [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1977-03 to 1978-06]

Branch Chief, Aerodynamics and Airframe Branch

Federal Data Corporation [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1997-05 to 2000-10]

Vice President, Aerospace Secotr

3630th Flying Training Wing [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1967-06 to 1972-06]

Air Force T-38 Instructor Pilot

Johnson Space Center [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1978-06 to 1993-06]

NASA Mission Specialist Astronaut

NYMA Inc. [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1993-06 to 1997-05]

Vice President, Engineering Services Division

The Aerospace Technology Group [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 2002-09 to ?]

Founder and President

ENSCO Inc. [MEMBEROF]

Member, Board of Directors

NASA Alumni League [MEMBEROF]

Member, Board of Directors

Penn State University [MEMBEROF]

Member, Society of Distinguished Alumni

Penn State University College of Engineering [MEMBEROF]

Member, Committee on Minority Activities

National Inventors Hall of Fame Foundation [MEMBEROF]

Member, Board of Directors

National Research Council's Aeronautics and Space Engineering Board

[MEMBEROF]

Member

American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics [MEMBEROF]

Member, Board of Directors

The Great Lakes Museum of Science, Environment, and Technology

[MEMBEROF]

Member, Board of Directors

The Western Reserve Historical Society [MEMBEROF]

Member, Board of Directors

National Space Club [MEMBEROF]

Member, Board of Governors

The Aerospace Corporation [MEMBEROF]

Member, Board of Trustees

United States Space Foundation [MEMBEROF]

Member, Board of Directors, Life Director

Hiram College [MEMBEROF]

Member, Board of Visitors

Coalition of Space Exploration [MEMBEROF]

Member, Board of Advisors