

# Biographical Data

Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center  
Houston, Texas 77058



National Aeronautics and  
Space Administration

## LEROY GORDON COOPER, JR. (COLONEL, USAF, RET.) NASA ASTRONAUT (DECEASED)

**PERSONAL DATA:** Born March 6, 1927 in Shawnee, Oklahoma. His hobbies included treasure hunting, archeology, racing, flying, skiing, boating, hunting and fishing. Gordon Cooper passed away on Oct. 4, 2004, at his home in Ventura, California, at the age of 77.

**EDUCATION:** Attended primary and secondary schools in Shawnee, Oklahoma and Murray, Kentucky; received a Bachelor of Science degree in Aeronautical Engineering from the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT) in 1956; recipient of an Honorary Doctorate of Science degree from Oklahoma City University in 1967.

**ORGANIZATIONS:** The Society of Experimental Test Pilots, The American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, The American Astronautical Society, The Blue Lodge Masons, The York Rite Masons, The Scottish Rite Masons, The Royal Order of Jesters, The Sojourners, The Rotary Club, The Daedalians, The Confederate Air Force, The Boy Scouts of America, The Girl Scouts of America.

**SPECIAL HONORS:** The Air Force Legion of Merit, The Air Force Distinguished Flying Cross, The Air Force Distinguished Flying Cross Cluster, The NASA Exceptional Service Medal, The NASA Distinguished Service Medal, USAF Command Astronaut Wings, The Collier Trophy, The Harmon Trophy, The Scottish Rite 33°, The York Rite Knight of the Purple Cross, The DeMolay Legion of Honor, The John F. Kennedy Trophy, The Ivan E. Kincheloe Trophy, The Air Force Association Trophy, The Primus Trophy, The John Montgomery Trophy, The General Thomas E. White Trophy, The Association of Aviation Writers Award, The University of Hawaii Regents Medal, The Columbus Medal, The Silver Antelope, The Sport Fishing Society of Spain Award.

**EXPERIENCE:** Cooper, an Air Force Colonel, received an Army commission after completing three years of schooling at the University of Hawaii. He transferred his commission to the Air Force and was placed on active duty by that service in 1949 and given flight training.

His next assignment was with the 86th Fighter Bomber Group in Munich, Germany, where he flew F-84s and F-86s for four years. While in Munich, he also attended the European Extension of the University of Maryland night school.

He returned to the United States and, after two years of study at AFIT, received his degree. He then reported to the Air Force Experimental Flight Test School at Edwards Air Force Base, California, and, upon graduating in 1957, was assigned as an aeronautical engineer and test pilot in the Performance Engineering Branch of the Flight Test Division at Edwards. His responsibilities there included the flight testing of experimental fighter aircraft.

He logged more than 7,000 hours flying time--4,000 hours in jet aircraft. He had flown all types of Commercial and General aviation airplane and helicopters.

**NASA EXPERIENCE:** Colonel Cooper was selected as a Mercury astronaut in April 1959.

On May 15-16, 1963, he piloted the "Faith 7" spacecraft on a 22-orbit mission which concluded the operational phase of Project Mercury. During the 34 hours and 20 minutes of flight, Faith 7 attained an apogee of 166 statute miles and a speed of 17,546 miles per hour and traveled 546,167 statute miles.

Cooper served as command pilot of the 8-day 120-revolution Gemini 5 mission which began on August 21, 1965. It was on this flight that he and pilot Charles Conrad established a new space endurance record by traveling a distance of 3,312,993 miles in an elapsed time of 190 hours and 56 minutes. Cooper also became the first man to make a second orbital flight and thus won for the United States the lead in man-hours in space by accumulating a total of 225 hours and 15 minutes.



He served as backup command pilot for Gemini 12 and as backup commander for Apollo X.

Colonel Cooper logged 222 hours in space.

He retired from the Air Force and NASA in 1970.

**BUSINESS EXPERIENCE:**

- From 1962 to 1967, he was President of Performance Unlimited, Inc., a manufacturer and distributor of race and Marine engines, and fiberglass boats.
- From 1963 to 1967, he was President of GCR, Inc. They designed, tested and raced championship cars at Indianapolis and other USAC tracks, conducted tire tests for Firestone Tire and Rubber Company and pioneered turbine engine installation on cars.
- From 1965 to 1970, he was President of Teletest, Inc. They designed, installed and tested various systems using advanced Telemetry.
- From 1966 to 1969, he participated with Doubloon, Inc., on design, construction, and utilization of Treasure Hunting equipment.
- From 1968 to 1969, he participated with Cosmos, Inc., on Archeology exploration projects.
- From 1968 to 1970, he was part owner and race project manager of the Profile Race Team. He also designed, raced and constructed high performance boats.
- From 1968 to 1970, he was a Technical Consultant for corporate acquisitions and public relations for the Republic Corp.
- From 1967 to 1969, he was Technical Consultant for design and construction of various automotive production items for General Motors, Ford and Chrysler Motor Companies.
- From 1970 to 1972 he was Member of the Board of Directors and Technical Consultant for developing technical products and public relations in land development projects for Canaveral International, Inc.
- From 1970 to 1975, he was President of the consulting firm Gordon Cooper & Associates, Inc. They specialized in technical projects ranging from airline and aerospace fields to land and hotel development.
- From 1970 to 1974, he was on the Board of Directors for APECO which produced and marketed modular homes, computer systems, office systems, copy machines and boats and marine equipment.
- From July 1972 to June 1973, he was a Member of Board of Directors and Technical Consultant for Campco, a corporation which built campers and mobile homes.
- From August 1972 to December 1973, He was on the Board of Directors and a Technical Consultant for design and production of various advanced electronic systems for LowCom Systems, Inc.
- From 1972 to 1973, he was on the Board of Directors and a Technical Consultant for design and construction of lifting, inflatable, steerable foils which could land cargo and/or personnel at a precise spot for Aerofoil Systems, Inc.
- From July 1973 to January 1974, he was Vice President and member of the Board of Directors for Craftech Corporation. They specialized in the design and construction of economical homes, garages, storage buildings, and hangers of Craftboard and fiberglass.
- From January 1973 to 1975, he was Chairman of the Board for Constant Energy Systems, Inc.
- From January 1973 to 1975, he was Vice President for Research and Development/EPCOT for Walter E. Disney Enterprises, Inc., the research and development subsidiary of Walt Disney Productions.

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