

Biographical Data

Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center
Houston, Texas 77058



National Aeronautics and
Space Administration

**VIRGIL I. GRISSOM (LIEUTENANT COLONEL, USAF)
NASA ASTRONAUT (DECEASED)**

PERSONAL DATA: Born April 3, 1926, in Mitchell., Indiana. Died January 27, 1967, at NASA Kennedy Space Center, Florida, in the Apollo spacecraft fire. He is survived by his wife Betty and their two children.

EDUCATION: Graduated from Mitchell High School; received a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering from Purdue University.

ORGANIZATIONS: Member of the Society of Experimental Test Pilots.

AWARDS: Posthumously awarded the Congressional Space Medal of Honor.

SPECIAL HONORS: Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with cluster for his Korean service, two NASA Distinguished Service medals and the NASA Exceptional Service Medal; the Air Force Command Astronaut Wings.

EXPERIENCE: Grissom, an Air Force Lieutenant Colonel, received his wings in March 1951. He flew 100 combat missions in Korea in F-86s with the 334th Fighter Interceptor Squadron and, upon returning to the United States in 1952, became a jet instructor at Bryan, Texas.

In August 1955, he entered the Air Force Institute of Technology at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, to study Aeronautical Engineering. He attended the Test Pilot School at Edwards Air Force Base, California, in October 1956 and returned to Wright-Patterson in May 1957 as a test pilot assigned to the fighter branch.

He has logged 4,600 hours flying time—3,500 hours in jet aircraft.

NASA EXPERIENCE: Grissom was one of the seven Mercury astronauts selected by NASA in April 1959. He piloted the "Liberty Bell 7 spacecraft -- the second and final suborbital Mercury test flight -- on July 21, 1961. This flight lasted 15 minutes and 37seconds, attained an altitude of 118 statute miles, and traveled 302 miles downrange from the launch pad at Cape Kennedy.

On March 23, 1965, he served as command pilot on the first manned Gemini flight, A 3-orbit mission during which the crew accomplished the first orbital trajectory modifications and the first lifting reentry of a manned spacecraft. Subsequent to this assignment, he served as backup command pilot for Gemini 6.

Grissom was named to serve as command pilot for the AS-204 mission, the first 3-man Apollo flight

Lieutenant Colonel Grissom died on January 27, 1967, in the Apollo spacecraft flash fire during a launch pad test at Kennedy Space Center, Florida.

DECEMBER 1997

