



## E-Newsletter | November 2012

### Women and the Space Program

With the death of astronaut Sally Ride and the retirement of the shuttle fleet, the U.S. has come to an end of a space era. This month, we celebrate the accomplishments of space exploration to date, by featuring Jerrie Cobb, Sally Ride, and Mae Jemison.

Jerrie Cobb was selected as the first American woman astronaut in 1959; she was also the only woman to successfully pass all three phases of the Mercury astronaut tests. But she was ultimately denied the opportunity to go into space because she was a woman. A multi-decorated pilot, Cobb received the Amelia Earhart Gold Medal of Achievement in 1949, was named Woman of the Year in Aviation in 1958, and was selected by Life Magazine as one of the "100 most important young people in the United States."



Jerrie Cobb

Devastated by NASA's decision to only train men as astronauts, Cobb became a pilot in South America where she pioneered new air routes across the Andes mountains and the Amazon jungle. President Nixon awarded her the Harmon Trophy as the top woman pilot in the world and she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for her humanitarian work in South America. All of the funds raised by the Jerrie Cobb Foundation, established by friends in her native state of Oklahoma, go toward medical care and seeds for the indigenous people of South America.

Many times we talk about standing on the shoulders of the women who came

before us. Sally Ride did that by following the path charted by Jerrie Cobb. A physicist, Ride became the first American woman in space, when she flew aboard the space shuttle Challenger in 1983. She was part of the team that developed the robot arm used by shuttle crews to deploy and retrieve satellites. Ride was educated at Stanford University, earning all three of her degrees (B.S., M.S. and Ph.D.) there. Her historic flight into space captured the nation's imagination and made her a household name.



Mae Jemison

Ride became a symbol of the ability of women to break barriers and she also became a hero to generations of adventurous young girls. She flew on the Challenger again in 1984. She served as a member of the panels established to investigate the Challenger and Columbia shuttle disasters. After retiring from NASA, Ride used her 'high profile' to champion a cause she believed in passionately-inspiring young people, especially girls, to stick with their interest in science, to become scientifically literate, and to consider pursuing careers in science and engineering. Ride has been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

Physician Mae Jemison followed in the footsteps of Sally Ride. After completing a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering, she received a doctorate degree in medicine from Cornell University. Prior to joining the astronaut corps in 1987, Jemison worked as a physician in California. She was also a doctor in Africa for the Peace Corps where she was assigned to Sierra Leone and Liberia. Jemison was the first African-American woman in space when she flew aboard the space shuttle Endeavor in 1992. After her resignation from NASA, Jemison formed a company that researches the application of technology to daily life. Jemison, who is also a dancer, has been inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame. Her motto is "Daring makes a difference."

We are proud to profile the accomplishments of these amazing trailblazers.

**Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America**  
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