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WOMEN IN THE SPACE EXPLORATION HISTORY

Abstract

Astronomy enthusiasts frequently ask, "What are the roles of women astronauts in history?" The answer is: women astronauts have been participating in and contributing to the space journey throughout the entire history of astronomy. From Valentina Tereshkova (Soviet Union)—the first woman in space since 1963, to Sally Ride (United States)—the first American female engineer on the shuttle from 1983 to 1984, to Shannon Lucid (United States)—the first American woman on a space station, many women have marked their names high above the sky. And still the list goes on. Twenty-five years ago, three extraordinary female astronauts were lost in the Challenger Disaster: Christa McAuliffe, Laurel Clark, and Kalpana Chawla. Despite such losses and setbacks, from the first woman to fly a plane, to the first female commercial airline pilot, all the way to those women now working and living in the International Space Station, women pilots and astronauts have never given up their dream of flying high.

The beginnings of women's involvement and contributions to air and space travel did not start easily, according to history. As early as 1908, female participants were often disrespected and restricted to mundane tasks. Despite a great deal of prejudice, numerous female astronauts have played incredibly significant roles in the history of air and space exploration, through both military and commercial positions. Today, there has been a proliferation of female astronomy enthusiasts, and consequently, modern aerospace is prospering with the great passion of more and more female astronaut candidates. This paper will provide a clear historical retrospect of the important roles that women have played in space exploration, including their impact on culture and science, as well as its significance for the future of the space program.