



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Apollo Astronaut, Major general, USAF, Ret, Nuclear Engineer Dies at 90

The Astronaut Scholarship Foundation (ASF) is saddened to report the loss of an Apollo space hero, astronaut William Alison Anders, Major general, USAF, Ret. Anders passed away on June 7, 2024 at the age of 90; he is survived by his wife Valerie, six children, Alan, Glen, Gayle, Gregory, Eric and Diana, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Anders is best known for being one of the first three people to leave low Earth orbit and travel to the moon alongside crewmates Frank Borman and Jim Lovell on Apollo 8 in December 1968; he is also well known for taking the “Shot Seen ‘Round the World,” the iconic *Earthrise* photo.

Bill Anders was born in Hong Kong on October 17, 1933. In 1937 at the age of 4, when the Japanese began bombing, he and his mother were forced to flee to the Philippines, then finally to the United States where they were able to reunite with his father who had been serving in the war. In 1951 he entered the Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland and in 1955 he earned a Bachelor of Science Degree. After graduation, he joined the Air Force and served as a fighter pilot with the Air Defense Command in California and in Iceland. He has been quoted as saying “I think I’m the first guy to give the infamous Tom Cruise gesture to the Russians. We came up alongside, and they were waving, so I flipped them the bird. They waved and smiled.” (Russian intelligence later figured out what the gesture meant) Anders continued his education, earning a Master of Science in Nuclear Engineering in 1962 from the Air Force Institute of Technology at Wright-Patterson AFB in Dayton, Ohio.

In 1963 he was selected as part of NASA’s third group of astronauts. He also served as the Executive Secretary for National Aeronautics and Space Council from 1969-1973, which was responsible to the President, Vice President and Cabinet-level members of the Council for developing policy options concerning research, development, operations and planning of aeronautical and space systems. Anders has logged over 6,000 hours flying time.

On December 21, 1968, Bill Anders along with Frank Borman and Jim Lovell launched into space as Apollo 8 became the first manned spacecraft to leave low Earth orbit, reach the moon, and ultimately return to Earth. During a very tumultuous time in our country’s history with the assassinations of Senator Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr, along with the Vietnam war and its mass American casualties, Apollo 8 served as a beacon of hope - that *good* still existed in our country, and in our world. On Christmas Eve, 1968 as they became the first human beings to orbit another heavenly body, the astronauts read from the Bible, the book of Genesis; approximately 1/3 of the world’s population listened to the message delivered by the crew from outer space. It was also during this mission that Bill Anders photographed the Earth as it seemed to rise above the moon’s surface; this iconic photo gained international fame, and *Earthrise* remains one of the most recognized photos in the world.

Bill and the Anders family founded and currently run the Heritage Flight Museum in Burlington, Washington. This museum was established to help educate the public in understanding and appreciating the contribution military aircraft and the people that flew them have made to our heritage, national security and freedom.

Bill Anders will always be remembered by ASF for his exquisite love of exploration and aviation, as well as his unique way of seeing the other side of things- “We came all this way to explore the moon, and the most important thing is that we discovered the Earth.” – Bill Anders

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