

Biographical Data

Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center
Houston, Texas 77058



National Aeronautics and
Space Administration
September 2023

KAROL J. BOBKO (COLONEL, USAF, RET.)
NASA ASTRONAUT (DECEASED)

PERSONAL DATA: Born in New York, New York, on December 23, 1937. Died on August 17, 2023. He is survived by his wife, the former Dianne Welsh of Denver, Colorado, and his daughter, Michelle and a son, Paul.

EDUCATION: Graduated from Brooklyn Technical High School, Bachelor of Science from the Air Force Academy in 1959 and a Master of Science in Aerospace Engineering from the University of Southern California in 1970.

SPECIAL HONORS: Awarded three NASA Space Flight Medals, two NASA Exceptional Service Medals and six JSC Group Achievement Awards; presented the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Air Force Distinguished Flying Cross and two Meritorious Service Medals (1970 and 1979). He also received the Air Force Academy Jabara Award for Airmanship in 1983. He was inducted into the Brooklyn Tech Alumni Hall of Fame in 1999, the Cradle of Aviation Museum in 2009, and the Astronaut Hall of Fame in 2011. He received a Heritage Recognition from the National Reconnaissance Office in 2019. He is a Distinguished Member of the Association of Space Explorers and an Associate Fellow in the Society of Experimental Test Pilots. A former President of the U.S. Chapter of the Association of Space Explorers, Bobko serves on the ASE Board of Directors.



EXPERIENCE: Bobko, an Air Force Colonel, was a member of the first graduating class of the Air Force Academy. Subsequent to receiving his commission and navigator rating, he attended pilot training at Bartow Air Base, Florida, and Vance Air Force Base, Oklahoma. He completed his flight training and received his wings in 1960.

From 1961 to 1965, he flew F-100 and F-105 aircraft while assigned as a pilot with the 523d Tactical Fighter Squadron at Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, and the 336th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina. He attended the Aerospace Research Pilots School at Edwards Air Force Base, California, and was assigned as an astronaut to the USAF Manned Orbiting Laboratory Program in 1966. After the cancellation of the MOL Program, he was assigned as an astronaut to NASA in 1969.

He has logged over 6,600 hours flight time in the F-100, F-104, T-105, T-33, T-38, and other aircraft.

NASA EXPERIENCE: Colonel Bobko became a NASA astronaut in September 1969. He was a crewmember on the highly successful Skylab Medical Experiments Altitude Test (SMEAT) -- a 56-day ground simulation of the Skylab mission, enabling crewmen to collect medical experiments baseline data and evaluate equipment, operations and procedures.

Bobko was a member of the astronaut support crew for the Apollo-Soyuz Test Project (ASTP). This historic first international, manned space flight was completed in July 1975. Subsequently, he was a member of the support crew for the Space Shuttle Approach and Landing Tests conducted at Edwards Air Force Base, California. He served alternately as CAPCOM and prime chase pilot during these Approach and Landing Test (ALT) flights.

In preparation for the first flight of Columbia (STS-1) Colonel Bobko served as the lead astronaut in the test and checkout group at Kennedy Space Center.

A veteran of three space flights, Bobko has logged a total of 386 hours in Space. He was the pilot on STS-6 (April 4-9, 1983); and was the mission commander on STS-51D (April 12-19, 1985) and STS-51J (October 3-7, 1985). He is the only Astronaut to have flown on the maiden flights of the two Space Shuttles.

SPACE FLIGHT EXPERIENCE: Colonel Bobko was pilot for STS-6, which launched from Kennedy Space Center, Florida, on April 4, 1983. During this maiden voyage of the spacecraft Challenger, the crew deployed a large communications satellite (TDRS) and the rocket stage (IUS) required to boost it to geosynchronous orbit. The STS-6 crew also conducted the first shuttle spacewalk (EVA) and additionally conducted numerous other experiments in materials

processing and the recording of lightning activities from space. There were also three Getaway Specials activated on the flight. After 120 hours of orbital operations STS-6 landed on the concrete runway at Edwards Air Force Base, California, on April 9, 1983.

On his second mission Colonel Bobko was the commander of STS-51D which launched from Kennedy Space Center, Florida, on April 12, 1985. The mission was to deploy two communications satellites, perform electrophoresis and echocardiograph operations in space, in addition to accomplishing other experiments. When one of the communications satellites malfunctioned, a daring attempt was made to activate the satellite which required an additional EVA, rendezvous, and operations with the remote manipulator arm. After 168 hours of orbital operations Discovery landed on Runway 33 at Kennedy Space Center on April 19, 1985.

Colonel Bobko was next commander of STS-51J, the second Space Shuttle Department of Defense mission, which launched from Kennedy Space Center, Florida, on October 3, 1985. This was the maiden voyage of the Atlantis. After 98 hours of orbital operations, Atlantis landed on Edwards Air Force Base Lakebed Runway 23 on October 7, 1985. The main task of the now declassified mission was to deploy two communication satellites and as well as other experiments.

INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE: In 1988, Bobko retired from NASA and the Air Force to join the firm of Booz Allen & Hamilton Inc., in Houston, Texas. At Booz Allen he was a principal and managed efforts dealing with human space flight. His areas of emphasis were: high performance training simulation, hardware and software systems engineering, spacecraft checkout and testing, space station development and program integration.

In 2000, Bobko joined SPACEHAB, Inc in Houston, Texas and was Vice President for Strategic Programs. He led an organization which developed concepts, processes and hardware for future spaceflight applications.

In 2005, Bobko joined SAIC (Science Applications International Corp) and became Program Manager of the NASA Ames Research Center Simulation Labs contract (SimLabs). The facilities and capabilities under this contract allow the latest technology in the real world to be integrated with the latest technology in the virtual world resulting in extraordinary simulations. NASA considers this a crucial asset and includes the Virtual Motion System facility in the Strategic Capabilities Assets Program. In 2014 Bobko retired as Program Manager. Since 2014 to the present he has continued as a consultant on the SimLabs contract.