

Gagarin, Yuri Encyclopedia Article

Gagarin, Yuri

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Gagarin, Yuri

Russian Cosmonaut; First Human in Space 1934-1968

On April 12, 1961, at age twenty-seven, Yuri Gagarin, of the Soviet Union, became the first human in space. He completed one orbit of Earth before descending in his Vostok 1 spacecraft and parachuting the last 3 kilometers (2 miles) to the ground. Instantly, this Russian from a collective farm in Klushino became a world hero and household name.

After graduating from high school, Gagarin attended a machinery school to train as an ironworker. He then attended the industrial and technical school in Saratov. While there, he joined a flying club and became an amateur pilot. On the recommendation of an instructor he was accepted into the Orenburg Aviation School in 1955. Gagarin trained as a fighter pilot with the Northern Fleet. Inspired by the Soviet Union's Luna 3 satellite, which was the first to return images of the Moon's farside, he applied to become a cosmonaut and was accepted.

Russian Yuri Gagarin became the first person in space when he orbited Earth on April 12, 1961.

Gagarin's orbital flight in 1961 was a pivotal moment in the "space race" between the Soviet Union and the United States. The United States sent Alan Shepard into space on a suborbital flight three weeks after Gagarin's flight. After his orbital flight, Gagarin made many public appearances and in 1966 began training for a Soyuz flight. Unfortunately, at the age of thirty-four, he and a flight instructor were killed in the crash of their MiG-15 training jet.

See Also

Cosmonauts (Volume 3);; Government Space Programs (Volume 2);; History of Humans in Space (Volume 3);; Shepard, Alan (Volume 3).

Bibliography

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