

# The Clerk's Black History Series

**Debra DeBerry**  
Clerk of Superior Court  
DeKalb County



**Guion "Guy" Stewart Bluford Jr.**

(November 22, 1942 – )

**"First African American Astronaut in Space"**



**Guion "Guy" Stewart Bluford, Jr.** was born on November 22, 1942, in Philadelphia, PA and grew up in an academic focused family. As a third-generation college student, Guy attended Penn State University where he received a B.S. in aerospace engineering in 1964. After graduation, Guy joined the Air Force and served as a pilot during the Vietnam War. He flew 144 combat missions in Southeast Asia as an F4C fighter pilot. From 1967 to 1972, he served as a T-38 instructor pilot at Sheppard Air Force Base in Texas. In 1974, Guy received a Master of Science degree with distinction in aerospace engineering from the Air Force Institute of Technology. After graduating from the Air Force Institute of Technology in 1974, he was assigned to the Air Force Flight Dynamics Laboratory as deputy for advanced concepts for the Aeromechanics Division and then as branch chief of the Aerodynamics and Airframe Branch.

On January 16, 1978, NASA announced the first astronaut class in nine years. Dr. Ronald McNair, Guy Bluford, and Fred Gregory were among those selected, and the first African American in NASA's astronaut program. Guy knew it would be one of the three that would make history by being the first black man to go into space. And at 1:00AM on a rainy August morning in 1983, Guy became the First African American Astronaut in space as he boarded the Space Shuttle Challenger for the historic flight "STS-8". Their mission was to deploy an Indian communications satellite; it was also the first launch and landing of a space shuttle at night. The shuttle returned safely to earth on Sept. 5, 1983.



On January 28, 1986, Guy's fellow NASA classmate, and the second black man in space, Ronald McNair, died during the launch and subsequent explosion of the Space Shuttle Challenger on mission STS-51-L.



In 1991, Guy suffered a herniated disc in his back which almost kept him from the next space mission assignment.

Guy's last mission was "STS-53" in 1992. The crew deployed the Department of Defense payload DOD-1 and then completed several Military-Man-in-Space and NASA experiments. After completing 115 orbits of the Earth and 175 hours in space, the shuttle landed one week later.



In 1993, Guy resigned from the Air Force and NASA to become vice-president of the Engineering Services Division of NYMA Inc., in Greenbelt, Md.

In 1997, he became vice president of the Aerospace Sector of Federal Data Corporation, and in 2000, he became vice president of Microgravity R&D and Operations for the Northrop Grumman Corporation

Guy was inducted into the International Space Hall of Fame in 1997, the U.S. Astronaut Hall of Fame in 2010, and the National Aviation Hall of Fame in 2019. In 2020, Guy was awarded the Ohio Distinguished Service Medal; Ohio's highest non-combat decoration for service. Guion "Guy" Bluford currently lives in Cleveland, Ohio and is the president of Aerospace Technology Group, an engineering consulting firm in Cleveland, Ohio.

