



Astronaut Eileen Collins

The first female pilot and
first female commander of
Space Shuttle.

BY ELLEN

Early Life and background:

Eileen Marie Collins is a retired NASA astronaut and United States Air Force colonel.



Born 19 November 1956 in Elmira, New York. Her parents were James E. and Rose Marie Collins. According to a speech she gave when she was inducted into the Irish American 2016 Hall of Fame, her ancestors came to America in the mid 1800s, settling in Pennsylvania and Elmira, New York.





Education and Space training:

As a child Eileen dreamed about space and of becoming a pilot.

After high school Collins enrolled at Corning Community College in New York, while there she studied hard to earn a two year scholarship to Syracuse University. Graduated in 1978 with bachelor of arts degree in mathematics and economics.

In 1979 Collins graduated from Air Force Undergraduate Pilot Training at Vance Air Force Base.

She became the Air Force's first female flight instructor and for the next 11 years taught both flying and math. From 1986 - 1989 she was assigned to the U.S Air Force Academy in Colorado.

In 1989 she became the second female pilot to attend the U.S Air Force Test Pilot School and graduated with class 89B.



Space career:

In 1990, Eileen Collins was selected by NASA and became an astronaut in July 1991. She became the first woman to pilot a space shuttle on 2nd February 1995 aboard STS-63 which involved a rendezvous between Discovery and the Russian space station MIR.



She made history once again in 1999 on 23th July she became the first woman to command a Space Shuttle mission STS-93, which deployed the Chandra X-ray Observatory.

As commander of Discovery orbiter during the July-August 2005 flight of STS-114, she led six fellow crewmates on NASA's first shuttle since the 2003 loss of the Columbia orbiter and its crew.

In total Eileen Collins has logged 38 days 8 hours and 20 minutes in space during her service with NASA on FOUR shuttle missions: **STS-63, STS-84, STS-93, and STS-114.**



Retirement:

On 1st May 2006 Eileen Collins announced that she would leave NSAS to spend more time with her family.

She has gone on to appear on CNN as an analyst covering Shuttle launches and landings.



Awards and honors:

Eileen has received the Free Spirit Award and the 2006 National Space Trophy and has an astronomical observatory named in her honor - the Eileen M. Collins Observatory.

And has been inducted into the National Women Hall Of Fame.

On 14 June 2006 University College Dublin conferred on Colonel

Collins the honorary Doctor of science degree of the

National University of Ireland.

