

# Former NASA manned spaceflight director dies

January 12 2013, by Adrian Sainz

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Dyer Brainerd Holmes, director of manned space flight for NASA when Americans were making their early forays into space in the early 1960s, has died.

Holmes' stepson, Pierce Ledbetter, said Holmes died at Baptist Memorial Hospital East in Memphis on Friday at age 91. Holmes died from complications from pneumonia, Ledbetter said.

Holmes, who was born in New York in 1921, was an influential figure in the aeronautics and aerospace industries during a career that lasted more than 40 years.

He joined NASA as director of [manned space flight](#) in October 1961, according to the NASA History Office. He resigned in June 1963.

During Holmes' time at NASA, John Glenn became the first U.S. astronaut in orbit on Feb. 20, 1962 on Mercury-Atlas 6.

Scott Carpenter followed Glenn by riding Mercury-Atlas 7 into space on May 24 of the same year. Walter Schirra became the fifth American in space on Mercury-Atlas 8 on Oct. 3, 1962.

Holmes also helped lay the groundwork for the Apollo program and America's ambitious venture to the moon. He was featured in a Time Magazine cover story on Aug. 10, 1962, which had the tag line "Reaching for the Moon."

NASA spokesman Bob Jacobs said Holmes took over the Office of Manned [Space Flight](#) for NASA during a critical time for the agency.

"NASA was still relatively young and senior administrators wanted to beef up leadership and management experience at headquarters in Washington," Jacobs said in an e-mailed statement. "Holmes' expertise in electrical engineering and management was seen as essential to not only study problems but to offer solutions as NASA began to focus its attention on the [Apollo program](#) and the race to the moon."

After leaving NASA, Holmes joined Raytheon Company as a director. He was later named president of Raytheon, which produced radar and communications systems as well as the Sparrow, Patriot and Sidewinder missiles. He retired in 1986.

Before joining NASA, Holmes worked for Western Electric, Bell Telephone Laboratories and the Radio Corporation of America. With RCA, he helped develop the U.S.'s Ballistic Missile Early Warning System.

Holmes received a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering in 1943 from Cornell University. As an ensign in the U.S. Naval Reserve, he completed graduate studies in radar at both the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Bowdoin College. He was awarded an honorary Doctor of Science degree by the University of New Mexico in 1963 and an honorary Doctor of Engineering degree from Worcester Polytechnic Institute in 1978.

Holmes was an accomplished pilot and avid sailor, and his home near the airport in Nantucket, Massachusetts was nicknamed "Wild Blue Yonder," Ledbetter said.

"I remember Brainerd as kind, witty, and very patriotic," Ledbetter said.

"Everything he did, he did for his country."

Ledbetter said Holmes lived on and off in Memphis for about 10 years. A private family funeral service will be held in Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts.

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