

# NASA's 1st female astronaut candidate, Jerrie Cobb, dies

April 18 2019, by Marcia Dunn



In this 1960 photo made available by NASA, Jerrie Cobb prepares to operate the Multi-Axis Space Test Inertia Facility (MASTIF) at the Lewis Research Center in Ohio. The three-axis rig was developed to train Project Mercury pilots in bringing a spinning spacecraft under control. The two controllers in Cobb's hands activated small nitrogen gas thrusters that were used to bring the MASTIF under control. She was one of several female pilots who underwent the skill and

endurance testing that paralleled that of the Project Mercury astronauts. In 1961 Jerrie Cobb was the first female to pass all three phases of the Mercury Astronaut Program. NASA rules, however, stipulated that only military test pilots could become astronauts and there were no female military test pilots. Cobb, NASA's first female astronaut candidate, died in Florida at the age of 88 on March 18, 2019. (NASA via AP)

NASA's first female astronaut candidate, pilot Jerrie Cobb, has died.

Cobb died in Florida at age 88 last month. News of her death came Thursday from journalist Miles O'Brien, serving as a family spokesman.

In 1961, Cobb became the first woman to pass astronaut testing. Altogether, 13 women passed the arduous physical testing and became known as the Mercury 13. But NASA already had its Mercury 7 astronauts, all test pilots and men.

None of the Mercury 13 ever reached [space](#).

Cobb served for decades as a humanitarian aid pilot in the Amazon jungle. She emerged in 1998 to make another pitch for space, as NASA prepared to launch John Glenn on shuttle Discovery at age 77. Cobb argued unsuccessfully that the research should include an older woman.



In this May 4, 1961 file photo, Jerrie Cobb of Oklahoma, the first woman to

undergo tests for space travel, stands beside her jet fighter. Cobb, NASA's first female astronaut candidate, died in Florida at the age of 88 on March 18, 2019. (AP Photo)



This May 26, 1961 file photo shows Jerrie Cobb, the nation's first female astronaut candidate, with a display of rockets at a national conference where the

leading space experts gathered in Tulsa, Okla. Cobb died in Florida at the age of 88 on March 18, 2019. (AP Photo/William P. Straeter)



In this March 13, 1962 file photo, Jane Hart, left, wife of Sen. Philip Hart, D-Mich., and Jerrine Cobb of Oklahoma City pose with a model of a Saturn rocket at Capitol Hill in Washington. Two days later, they met with Vice President

Lyndon B. Johnson in an effort to have the U.S. launch a program for female astronauts. Both women had successfully passed the physical tests given to male astronauts. Cobb, NASA's first female astronaut candidate, died in Florida at the age of 88 on March 18, 2019.(AP Photo/Henry Griffin)



In this 1995 file photo, members of the FLATs, also known as the "Mercury 13," gather for a photo as they attend a shuttle launch in Florida. From left are Gene Nora Jessen, Wally Funk, Jerrie Cobb, Jerri Truhill, Sarah Rutley, Myrtle Cagle and Bernice Steadman. They were the invited guests of space shuttle pilot Eileen Collins, the first female shuttle pilot and later the first female shuttle commander. Cobb, NASA's first female astronaut candidate, died in Florida at the age of 88 on March 18, 2019. (NASA via AP)

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