

Celebrating the Remarkable Contributions of Katherine Johnson

"You lose your curiosity when you stop learning."

"If you attack the problem right,
you'll get the right answer."



In 1953, Johnson began work at the West Area Computing unit of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA). NACA became NASA in 1958. The West Computers, as they were known, were a group of African American women. They studied data and provided mathematical computations that were essential to the success of the U.S. space program.

At NASA, Johnson was a member of the Space Task Group. She calculated the flight path for the spacecraft that put the first U.S. astronaut in space in 1961. The year before, she had coauthored a paper with an engineer; it was the first time a woman in her division received credit as an author of a research report.

Her work as a teacher prior to working at NASA, and her role in mathematical contributions while at NASA, significantly shaped and positively impacted our country. At the age of 97 in 2016, she received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor in the United States.

Born: Aug. 26, 1918

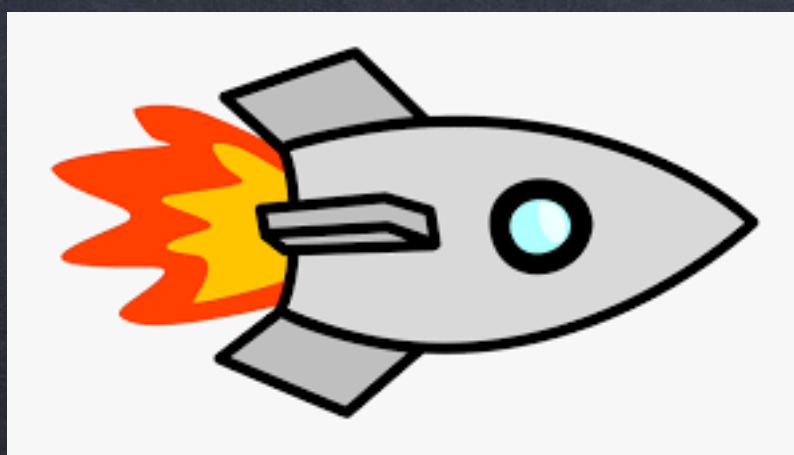
Died: Feb. 24, 2020

Hometown: White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia

Education: B.S., Mathematics and French, West Virginia State College 1937

Hired by NACA: June 1953

Retired from NASA: 1986



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