

America's future in outer space

Arts & Issues to welcome former astronaut

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Photo: For The Intelligencer

Dr. Guion Bluford Jr. will speak at SIUE on Feb. 19 as part of the Arts & Issues series.

EDWARDSVILLE – Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's Arts & Issues program, in coordination with the SIUE Department of Physics Shaw Lecture Series, presents the next Arts and Issues program, Dr. Guion "Guy" Dr. Bluford Jr., the first African-American to fly into space, as he discusses "The Future of the Space Program and International Space Station."

This event, which is sponsored by the SIUE Graduate School and the Dr. William Shaw Lectureship Endowment, begins at 7:30 p.m. on Feb. 19 in the Meridian Ballroom located in the Morris University Center on campus.

Dr. Bluford has achieved many "firsts" in his aeronautical career. He's not only the first African-American to fly into space, but is also the first African-American to be awarded NASA's coveted Astronaut Pin as well the U.S. Air Force's Command Pilot Astronaut Wings. He was also the first African-American to return to space four times.

A Philadelphia native, Dr. Bluford obtained his bachelor of science degree in aerospace engineering from Pennsylvania State University in 1964, a master's degree in aerospace engineering with distinction for the Air Force Institute of Technology in 1974, a doctor of philosophy degree in aerospace engineering with a minor in laser physics from the Air Force Institute of Technology in 1978 and a master in business administration from the University of Houston, Clear Lake, in 1987.

After graduating from Penn State, Dr. Bluford earned his Air Force pilot wings and flew 144 combat missions in southeast Asia as an F-4C fighter pilot. Sixty-five of those missions were over North Vietnam.

He served as a T-38 instructor pilot at Sheppard Air Force Base in Texas from 1967 to 1972 where he trained future Air Force and German fighter pilots.

After graduating from the Air Force Institute of Technology in 1974, Dr. Bluford 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 until his selection to the astronaut program in 1978.

According to Dr. Bluford's biography on APBspeakers.com, "he flew as a mission specialist and flight engineer aboard STS-8 on the first night launch and landing of the Space Shuttle. He assisted the commander and pilot in developing techniques for night time operations. He also deployed the Indian National Satellite and operated the Continuous Flow Electrophoresis System."

"In 1985, Dr. Bluford flew as a mission specialist on STS-61A, and led the international on-orbit payload team in the training and on-orbit operations of 76 experiments in the German D-1 Spacelab," his biography further

states. “In 1991, Dr. Bluford flew on STS-39, managing the operation of several experiments in support of the DOD Strategic Defense Initiative Office and then flew in 1992 on STS-53, a classified Space Shuttle flight.”

He was inducted into the International Space Hall of Fame in 1997, in the U.S. Astronaut Hall of Fame in 2010, and he has logged more than 5,200 hours in high performance jet aircraft. In addition, Dr. Bluford has flown 688 hours in space on four space shuttle missions.

Dr. Bluford resigned from the Air Force and NASA in 1993 to become the Vice President/General Manager of the Engineering Services Division of NYMA Inc, in Greenbelt, Maryland. 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.

Dr. Bluford has served on numerous boards including the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics Board (AIAA), the National Research Council’s Aeronautics and Space Engineering Board, the Aerospace Corporation Board, the Space Foundation Board, and the ENSCO Corporation Board. In 2003, he was the Executive Director of Investigative Activities for the Columbia Accident Investigation Board. Dr. Bluford is currently the President of the Aerospace Technology Group in Cleveland, Ohio.

He has been awarded numerous awards including the Department of Defense’s Superior Service, and three Meritorious Service Medals; the Air Force’s Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service, Commendation and ten Air Medals; NASA’s Distinguished Service, Exceptional Service and four Space Flight Medals; the State of Pennsylvania’s Distinguished Service Medal and fourteen honorary doctorate degrees.

Don’t miss this opportunity to hear personally about Dr. Bluford’s experiences and his thoughts on “The Future of the Space Program and International Space Station” on Feb. 19.

Tickets range in price from \$20 for general admission, \$18 for SIUE staff, faculty, retirees, alumni and those 55 and older or \$13 for students at any school or university.

Arts & Issues tickets can be ordered online at artsandissues.com or in-person at the Morris University Center (MUC) Welcome Desk. The MUC Welcome Desk is open Monday through Friday 7:30 a.m. until 7:30 p.m. and Saturday 11 a.m. until 3 p.m. The Welcome Desk is closed on Sunday. To place your order by phone call 1-866-698-4253.