

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

COMMANDER M. SCOTT CARPENTER, UNITED STATES NAVY, RETIRED

Malcolm Scott Carpenter was born in Boulder, Colorado, on May 1, 1925, son of Dr. Scott Carpenter and Mrs. (Florence Kelso Noxon) Carpenter. He graduated from Boulder High School and in 1943 entered Colorado College and there participated in the V-12 college training program (USNR) sponsored by the U. S. Navy. After a year there, he transferred to the V-5 Program (Aviation Cadets-USNR), and spent six months in training at St. Mary's Pre-flight School, Moraga, California, and four months in primary flight training at the Naval Air Station, Ottumwa, Iowa. When the V-5 program ended at the close of World War II, he was released to inactive duty, September 1945 and entered the University of Colorado to major in aeronautical engineering. (The degree of Bachelor of Science was awarded him in 1962).

Commissioned Ensign in the U. S. Navy on June 15, 1949, he subsequently advanced in rank to that of Commander, to date from August 1, 1964.

Reporting for active naval service in November 1949, he had flight training at the Naval Air Stations, Pensacola, Florida, and Corpus Christi, Texas, until April 1951. Designated Naval Aviator, he was a student at the Fleet Airborne Electronics Training School, San Diego, California, during May and June 1951, after which he had instruction while attached to the Lockheed Transitional Training Unit at Whidbey Island, Washington.

In October 1951 he joined Patrol Squadron SIX, based at Barbers Point, Oahu, Territory of Hawaii. That squadron was deployed to the Korean area during the hostilities there and participated in anti-submarine patrol, shipping surveillance and aerial mining activities in the Yellow Sea, South China Sea and the Formosa Straits. He is entitled to the Ribbon for, and a facsimile of the Navy Unit Commendation awarded Patrol Squadron SIX for duty in the Japanese-Korean Theater from July 30, 1951 to January 16, 1952.

Detached from Patrol Squadron SIX in July 1954, he next had test pilot training at the Naval Air Test Center, Patuxent River, Maryland. He remained at the Patuxent Air Test Center, serving until January 1957 in the Electronics Test Division. In that assignment, he conducted flight test projects with the A3D, F11F, and F9F and also assisted in other flight test programs.

He next had instruction at the General Line School, Monterey, California, and from November 1957 until August 1958 attended the Naval Air Intelligence School, Washington, D. C. Ordered to duty afloat, he served until the spring of 1959 as Air Intelligence Officer on board the USS HORNET (CVS-12).

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He was one of seven military test pilots selected in April 1959, by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to participate in Project MERCURY--the United States manned satellite program. He was assigned to the Langley Research Center, Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, for preliminary man-in-space flight training and instruction. He was attached to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, serving at the Missile Test Center, Cape Canaveral, Florida, and Langley Air Force Base, Headquarters for the Project MERCURY Program. He was the backup pilot for Lieutenant Colonel John H. Glenn, Jr., USMC, when Glenn made this Nation's first orbital flight on February 20, 1962.

On May 24, 1962, he completed the second United States' successful orbital flight. After three orbits of the earth in his AURORA 7, his time four hours and twenty-six minutes at a top speed of 17,532 mph., he "splashed down" two hundred and fifty miles below the planned recovery area. Following an hour of silence, contact was made and he was rescued by helicopter, having spent three hours in the water in a liferaft. He was awarded the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Distinguished Service Medal upon his return to Cape Canaveral "for outstanding contribution to space technology." The citation further states: "His flight as one of the first United States Astronauts to orbit the earth was an outstanding contribution to the advancement of human knowledge of space technology and a demonstration of man's capabilities in space flights." He also received the Distinguished Flying Cross and was cited as follows:

"For heroism and extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an Astronaut with NASA on May 24, 1962 aboard AURORA 7. (He) was in flight 4.9 hours for a total of three orbits. During the final orbit, both automatic and manual control fuel tanks were less than half full, and in order to conserve the remainder for the critical tumble, (he) performed a valuable engineering experiment by drifting gracefully through space for more than an hour..."

In 1963, he monitored the design and development of the lunar module in the APOLLO Program. He also served temporarily as Executive Assistant to the Director of the Manned Spacecraft Center, Houston, Texas.

He volunteered to participate in SEALAB II, and NASA gave him a temporary leave of absence during the spring and summer of 1965. He was Training Officer for the aquanauts who were to live and work on the ocean floor for extended periods of time to develop improved ocean engineering capabilities. When the experiment began on August 28, 1965, he and nine other aquanauts entered a habitat submerged at a depth of 205 feet off LaJolla, California. He worked and lived on the ocean floor for thirty consecutive days as Team Leader for the first two Aquanaut teams in the 45-day experiment which ended on October 13, 1965. "For exceptionally meritorious service...during Project SEALAB..." he was awarded the Legion of Merit. The citation further states in part:

"Commander Carpenter was responsible for and directly supervised the preparations and the operational activities of the Aquanaut teams that trained and conducted the deep ocean explorations of Project SEALAB II. Living at a depth of 205 feet beneath the surface of the Pacific Ocean for a period of thirty days, in a hostile and artificial environment, he skillfully guided his teams through their arduous and potentially hazardous tasks, demonstrating the capability of highly trained and motivated naval personnel to live and work effectively as inhabitants of the oceanic environment..."

Returning to the Manned Spacecraft Center, Houston, he was responsible for Underwater Zero "G" training and liaison with the Navy until August 1967 when, at the request of the Navy, he was detached from the Space Program for duty as Assistant for Aquanaut Operations with the Navy's Deep Submergence Systems Project, Washington, D. C. There he assisted in the planning and preparation for SEALAB III. He served as such until released from active duty pending his retirement, effective July 1, 1969. He is currently President of the Sea Science Corporation of Los Angeles, California.

In addition to the NASA Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross, and the Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon, Commander Carpenter has the American Campaign Medal; the World War II Victory Medal; China Service Medal; National Defense Service Medal with bronze star; Korean Service Medal; and the United Nations Service Medal. He also has the Korean Presidential Unit Citation. He has the Navy Astronaut Wings and has been awarded the University of Colorado Recognition Medal; and the New York City Gold Medal of Honor.

He is a member of the Society of Experimental Test Pilots.

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