

Astronaut Scholarship Foundation

Frank Culbertson

Frank L. Culbertson, Jr. (Captain, USN, Ret.) joined the Astronaut Corps in May 1984 and flew three space shuttle missions before leaving the Corps in August 2002.

In November 1990, he piloted the STS-38 Atlantis classified Department of Defense mission, which was the first to land at Kennedy Space Center since 1985. Following the flight, Culbertson became Deputy Chief of the Space Station Crew Support Office and a team member for the early planning for Russian Space Station Mir Operations.

He commanded STS-51 Discovery in September 1993 which successfully deployed both the Orbiting and Retrievable Far and Extreme Ultraviolet Spectrograph-Shuttle Pallet Satellite (ORFEUS-SPAS), the first in a series of Astronomical SPAS missions and the first shuttle payload controlled from the Kennedy Space Center, and the Advanced Communications Satellite with its Transfer Orbital Stage (ACTS-TOS). This mission concluded with the first night landing at KSC. Following STS-51, he served as Chief of the Astronaut Office Mission Support Branch, followed by assignment as Chief of the Johnson Space Center (JSC) Russian Projects Office and Deputy Manager of the Shuttle-Mir Program.

Culbertson became Manager of the Shuttle-Mir Program in 1995 and managed nine shuttle docking missions over the next three years. Following this he served as Deputy Program Manager of the ISS until assigned to the 3rd Expedition to the International Space Station. As Commander of Expedition 3, he and his crew launched aboard STS-105 in August 2001. They spent 129 days in space. He commanded the station for 117 days, including during the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, and returned to Earth aboard STS-108 in Dec 2001. He has a total of 144 days in space.

Culbertson was employed as a Senior Vice President for SAIC for 6 years, overseeing space and climate-related programs. In 2008, Culbertson was named Senior Vice President and Deputy General Manager of the Advanced Programs Group at Orbital Sciences Corporation. In this role he oversees all human spaceflight for the company.

Frank Culbertson was inducted into the U.S. Astronaut Hall of Fame on June 5, 2010.