

# William A. Anders '55

By Dick Nelson '64

Today's Exemplary Graduate was an over-achiever with what we might call "stellar ambitions." He had an unusual career, taking a commission in the Air Force, becoming a fighter pilot, and achieving a Master's in nuclear engineering. If that were not enough, he then became an Astronaut and was a member of the Apollo 8 crew that first reached (and orbited) the Moon. Apparently that was not enough either, so he became a top executive in the defense industry before he retired: Maj.Gen. William Alison "Bill" Anders USAFR (Ret.), USNA Class of 1955.

Anders was born on October 17, 1933, in Hong Kong, to U.S. Navy Lt. Arthur F. Anders (d. 2000) and Muriel Adams Anders (d. 1990), and was active in the Boy Scouts of America where he achieved its second-highest rank, Life Scout. His father retired as a Commander, and was a survivor of the Japanese attack on USS Panay in 1937. Anders attended St. Martin's Academy and graduated from Grossmont High School in La Mesa, California, in 1951.

He received a Bachelor of Science degree from the United States Naval Academy in 1955, and a Master of Science degree in Nuclear Engineering from the U.S. Air Force Institute of Technology at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, in 1962. Anders completed the Harvard Business School's Advanced Management Program in 1979.

He was born and raised Catholic. Anders married Valerie Hoard in 1955. The couple have four sons and two daughters: Alan (born February 1957), Glen (born July 1958), Gregory (born December 1962), Eric (born July 1964), Gayle (born December 1960), and Diana (born August 1972). They live in Washington State.

Following graduation from the U.S. Naval Academy, Anders took his commission in the U.S. Air Force and after receiving his pilot wings in 1956, he served as a fighter pilot in all-weather interceptor squadrons of the Air Defense Command in California and in Iceland, where he participated in early intercepts of Soviet heavy bombers who were then challenging America's air defense borders. He later was responsible for technical management of nuclear power reactor shielding and radiation effects programs while at the Air Force Weapons Laboratory in New Mexico. He has logged more than 8,000 hours of flight time.

In 1963, Anders was selected by NASA in the third group of astronauts. He became involved in the NASA work in the areas of dosimetry, radiation effects, and environmental controls. He was the backup pilot for the Gemini 11 mission. Then in December 1968, he flew as Lunar Module Pilot for the Apollo 8 mission, the first mission where humans traveled beyond Low Earth orbit (also the first to reach the Moon, and first to orbit the Moon). Anders took a celebrated photograph of an earthrise. He served as backup Command Module pilot for the Apollo 11 mission, before accepting an assignment with the National Aeronautics and Space Council, while still remaining an Astronaut.

From 1969 to 1973, Anders served as Executive Secretary for the National Aeronautics and Space Council, which was responsible to the President, Vice President and Cabinet-level members of the Council for developing policy options concerning research, development, operations and planning of aeronautical and space systems. He was also a consultant to the Times-Mirror organization in Los Angeles, during which he visited one of T-M's several publishing companies, Jeppesen & Co., in Frankfurt, Germany.

On August 6, 1973, Anders was appointed to the five-member Atomic Energy Commission, where he was lead commissioner for nuclear and non-nuclear power R&D. He was also named as U.S. Chairman of the joint U.S./USSR technology exchange program for fission and fusion power.

Following the reorganization of national nuclear regulatory and developmental activities on January 19, 1975, Anders was named by President Ford to become the first chairman of the newly established Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which is responsible for nuclear safety and environmental compatibility. At the completion of his

term as NRC chairman, Anders was appointed Ambassador to Norway and held that position until 1977, when he left the federal government after 26 years.

Anders briefly served as a fellow of the American Enterprise Institute, then joined General Electric in September 1977. As Vice President and General Manager of GE's Nuclear Products Division in San Jose, California, he was responsible for the manufacture of nuclear fuel, reactor internal equipment, and control and instrumentation for GE boiling-water reactors at facilities located in San Jose and Wilmington, North Carolina. He also oversaw GE's partnership with Chicago Bridge and Iron for making large steel pressure vessels in Memphis, Tennessee.

In August 1979, Anders was sent to attend Harvard Business School's Advanced Management Program. On the first day of 1980, Anders was appointed General Manager of the GE Aircraft Equipment Division. Headquartered in Utica, New York. The division included more than 8,500 employees in five locations in the northeastern U.S. Its products included aircraft flight and weapon control systems, cockpit instruments, aircraft electrical generating systems, airborne radars and data processing systems, electronic countermeasures, space command systems, and aircraft/surface multi-barrel armament systems.

In 1984, he left GE to join Textron as Executive Vice President for aerospace, and two years later became Senior Executive Vice President for operations. In 1990, Anders became Vice Chairman of General Dynamics, and on January 1, 1991, its Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO). He retired in 1993, but remained Chairman until May 1994.

Anders was a consultant to the U.S. Office of Science and Technology Policy, and was a member of the Defense Science Board and the NASA Advisory Council. He is a retired Major General in the USAF Reserve.

In his spare time, he flies a modified P-51 Mustang. He established the William A. Anders Foundation, a philanthropic organization dedicated to supporting educational and environmental issues. The foundation was a primary sponsor of the American Experience episode, "Race to the Moon." The foundation also founded the Heritage Flight Museum in 1996 at Bellingham International Airport in Bellingham, Washington. Anders serves as its President, and until 2008 was an active participant in its air shows.

The Anders crater on the Moon was named in his honor. On November 13, 2008, Anders and fellow Apollo 8 crew members Frank Borman (West Point '50) and Jim Lovell (USNA '52) appeared on the NASA TV channel to discuss their Apollo 8 mission.

On June 27, 2009, Anders was a guest of the first World Moon Bounce Day. His interview was bounced off the Moon by radio signals and back to Earth as part of the activities. The first World Moon Bounce Day was timed to precede the 40th anniversary of Apollo 11.

In 2011, Anders spoke at the first Starmus Festival in the Canary Islands, delivering a lecture on the early American space program. His talk was published in the book "Starmus: 50 Years of Man in Space."

Anders is a member of Tau Beta Pi National Engineering Honor Society, American Nuclear Society, American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, and Society of Experimental Test Pilots.

His decorations and awards include the Air Force Distinguished Service Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal, NASA Distinguished Service Medal, Nuclear Regulatory Commission Distinguished Service Medal, National Geographic Society's Hubbard Medal for Exploration, the Collier, Harmon, Dr. Robert H. Goddard and General Thomas D. White USAF Trophies, the American Astronautical Society's Flight Achievement Award, inductee to the International Space Hall of Fame (1983), inductee to the U.S. Astronaut Hall of Fame (1997), and the American Defense Preparedness Association's Industry Leadership Award (May 1993).

(Sources: Wikipedia; [jsc.nasa.gov](http://jsc.nasa.gov); [usna.com](http://usna.com))

*Photo legend: Top: Anders, as a Midshipman. Second Row (left to right): official NASA photo, with Apollo 8 crew in 1968, Anders today. Third Row: a series of photos taken by Apollo 8 (Anders). Fourth Row: crew recovery by USS Yorktown.*

