

AIR FORCE

MAGAZINE



Apollo astronaut and retired USAF Col. Al Worden is shown in a NASA portrait. NASA photo.

Col. Alfred M. Worden, 1932-2020

March 18, 2020 | By John A. Tirpak

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Alfred M. "Al" Worden, retired USAF Colonel and Apollo astronaut, died

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Apollo 15 mission in 1971, the only Apollo mission on which all of the crew were Air Force pilots.

Worden performed the first “deep space” extravehicular activity, performing a spacewalk far from the Earth or moon to retrieve samples and film cartridges from the ship’s service module. He made 74 solo orbits of the moon.

He grew up in Michigan, graduated from West Point in 1955, and was commissioned in the Air Force, receiving his wings in 1956. After service as a fighter pilot, he earned masters’ degrees in astronautical and instrumentation engineering from the University of Michigan in 1963. In 1965, he graduated from both the Aerospace Research Pilots School and the British Empire Test Pilot’s School.

Houston, Texas March 18, 2020 – It is with great sadness that the family of Colonel Al Worden, (USAF Ret.) CMP Apollo 15 share the news that “Al” died in his sleep last night. The family thank you all for your kindness, thoughts, and prayers.

pic.twitter.com/K82iUyVbjm

— Alfred M Worden (@WordenAlfred) [March 18, 2020](#)

In 1966, Worden was one of 19 new astronauts selected by NASA. He was assigned as the backup command module pilot for the Apollo 12 mission, and to the prime crew of Apollo 15.

The first of the “J” Missions—how NASA referred to more elaborate scientific missions—Apollo 15 was the first to employ the lunar rover, the first to launch a microsat during the mission, and achieved the longest stay on the moon at that point. Worden stayed in lunar orbit in the *Endeavor* command

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pounds of lunar samples during nearly 67 hours on the lunar surface. Worden's record-setting EVA in deep space lasted 38 minutes. He received the NASA Distinguished Service Medal in 1971.

The Apollo 15 crew drew public ire when it was learned they had agreed to carry stamped envelopes to the moon for later sale, franking them on launch day and upon their return. Though they declined the agreed payment, all three were reprimanded by NASA for seeking to profit from their mission. None of the crew flew in space again.

After his Apollo mission, Worden was Senior Aerospace Scientist at the NASA Ames Research Center, later becoming Chief of Systems Study. He retired from NASA and the Air Force in 1975. In later years he was president of Maris Worden Aerospace, Inc., and staff vice president of Goodrich Aerospace. He chaired the Astronaut Scholarship Foundation until 2011, at which point he published a memoir, "Falling to Earth: An Apollo 15 Astronaut's Journey to the Moon," which was an LA Times bestseller.

Worden ran unsuccessfully for Congress in Florida's 12th congressional district in 1982. He was inducted into the International Space Hall of Fame in 1983 and the U.S. Astronaut Hall of Fame in 1997.

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