

Lewiston History Mysteries



Nighttime Launch

This is Bill Gregory's launch into space on March 2, 1995. The flight was designated STS-67 (Space Transportation System). It was one of 135 Shuttle missions that were flown over 30 years between 1981 and 2011.

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Ranked "Top Ten Best Small Towns in America"
— USA Today & Rand McNally

Lockport's William Gregory: Niagara County's Only Astronaut in Space (so far!)

533 People Have Orbited the Earth

You are 20 times more likely to win an Olympic Gold Medal than to fly in space. Out of the Earth's population of 7.5 billion people, only 533 people have had the opportunity to orbit our planet (1 in 14 million). Only 24 have traveled beyond Earth's orbit and 12 have walked on the Moon.

Space tourism is coming but it will be expensive. To date, there have been 7 space tourists — the first 3 tourists spent over \$20 million each for their tickets provided by the Russian Space Agency.

Several private companies are developing space tour programs.

Virgin Galactic wants to be the first to offer sub-orbital spaceflights to paying passengers. The first of these spaceplanes, VSS Enterprise, was intended to commence its first commercial flights in 2015, and tickets were \$250,000 each. However, the company suffered a major setback when the Enterprise broke up over the Mojave Desert during a test flight in October 2014. Over 700 tickets had been sold prior to the accident.

SpaceX announced in 2018 that it planned to send two space tourists on a trajectory around the Moon.

Astronaut Bill Gregory Made History by Piloting Shuttle Endeavour in 1995 Spent 16 Days and 262 Orbits in Space

Only one person from Niagara County has ever been in space — and that's astronaut William Gregory from Lockport.

Gregory graduated from Lockport High School in 1975 and was selected to go to the Air Force Academy and was awarded his commission. He became a fighter pilot and test pilot and accumulated over 8000 hours of flight time.

Selected by NASA in

January 1990, Lt. Col. Gregory became an astronaut in July 1991.

Gregory now lives in Arizona and is a corporate pilot. We recently had a chance to interview him and asked if he had any recollections of Lewiston. "Oh yes," he explained, "I have several memories. First, as a kid, I remember coming out to Harding's Restaurant and was thrilled to meet Tommy Cottonaro. He was one of the Wizard of Oz munchkins and was managing Harding's at the time. And I loved the frozen custard in Lewiston too. A few years ago I gave the Lockport High School graduation speech at Artpark. I can remember everyone went down to the restaurant on the river afterwards and we ended up in a violent storm and the power went out. Still, we had a great time."



Here's the Endeavour landing at Edwards Air Force base in Southern California. Lockport astronaut Bill Gregory piloted Endeavour's 8th mission in 1995. The Endeavour was built to replace the Challenger that was lost in 1986. It flew a total of 25 times between 1992 and 2011. It is now on display at the California Science Center in Los Angeles.



Lockport native, Bill Gregory (circled) with his 7-person crew in 1995. The scientific mission aboard the Shuttle focused on ultraviolet light, astronomy and motion in space.

Two Other Area Astronauts



Ed Gibson graduated from Kenmore Senior High School. He served on the support crew for Apollo 12, and in 1973-74, he was a

science pilot aboard *Skylab 4*. He and his two colleagues spent 84 days in space. He took three space walks logging over 15 hours outside of Skylab. Today, he resides in South Dakota.



Jim Pawelczyk is from Elma and served as a Payload Specialist aboard the space shuttle Columbia (STS-90 Mission)

in 1998 as part of a seven person crew. He orbited the Earth 256 times. He is the first American astronaut of full-blooded Polish descent to go into space.

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