

Women astronaut hopefuls to begin preliminary tests

United Press International
HOUSTON—The first women to undergo preliminary evaluation as astronaut candidates began the five-day series of physical checks, psychological probes and interviews at Johnson Space Center Monday.

The 8 women ranged from Navy flight surgeon who always wanted to be a space woman, to a civilian biochemist with no flight training who first thought of the program six months ago.

The women were among 20 "mission specialist" semifinalists announced by the space agency last week. More women could be among later candidates.

NASA is naming and examining 20 candidates every other week, for an eventual total of 200. In December, 15 or 20 will be chosen in each of the pilot and mission specialist categories for final training and evaluation. They then become part of the astronaut corps.

The Navy flight surgeon, Lt. Cmdr. Victoria Voge, 34, and the civilian biochemist, Dr. Nitza Cintron, 27, agreed. "It's very exciting."

Their backgrounds were quite different, reflecting the new flexibility the Shuttle has brought to the nation's space program.

"I've been thinking about it since I was a little girl," said Lt. Cmdr. Voge, who was born in Minneapolis, Minn., and is now stationed in Pensacola, Fla.

The wife of a Navy maintenance officer currently stationed in Sigonella, Italy they have no children, she has been interested in unusual pursuits since her father took her for her first plane ride when she was "about six months old."

"My father Donald Voge was a barnstormer and a race car driver," she said, and she also was influenced by "watching Captain Video on television and then the space program came along and, my gosh, that just made things better."

Miss Cintron, a native of San Juan, Puerto Rico, who works as a PhD in research at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, said she had the idea very recently.

"Half a year," she said. "It wasn't structured in such a way that I had thought of it before. I have no flying experience. I'm not trained in any medical aspect of aerospace."

B1 bomber buried but idea not dead

LOS ANGELES, Ca. — Is the B1 bomber really dead and buried? Yes — and no.

While production of the B1 itself is canceled by President Carter, will be any of the technologies developed in 1978 on the proposed advanced bomber will be applied in other forms of air transport, including commercial air travel.

And while several billion dollars are spent by prime contractor Rockwell International Corp. and hundreds of subcontractors developing four B1 prototypes, aerospace engineers say the money wasn't entirely wasted.

Technology breakthroughs in the later years since Rockwell won the contract to build the B1 will mean a more economical and more comfortable civilian and military aircraft for the next several decades.

An aerial shock-absorber system developed for the B1, for example, could take the bounce out of inflight turbulence.

The B1 — intended to fly towards any targets at tree-top level to avoid radar detection — contained a control system designed to automatically smooth out turbulence at higher levels where air is usually thicker. Experts say this system, which eliminates reading instruments and eases pilot fatigue, can be used for commercial jets.

Other innovations may begin appearing in the next generation of

commercial jetliners now on the drawing boards.

Meanwhile, although the B1 may be destined to join its B70 predecessor in Air Force museums as a sleek project that was never completed, the general outlook for the aerospace business remains strong. Aerospace stocks recovered quickly following the B1's grounding and most analysts are generally optimistic about the industry.

Commercial plane orders continue holding firm as airlines seek to increase capacity and replace aging aircraft while meeting tougher noise and fuel consumption requirements.

Auto registration increases in Texas

United Press International
AUSTIN — Texas has 10 motor vehicles for every 12 people, according to statistics released yesterday by the Texas Highway Department. Highway officials said motor vehicle registrations increased more than half a million during the 12-month registration period ending April 1, 1977.

The preliminary total of 10,220,919 is expected to increase when the final results are tabulated. The U.S. Census Bureau's latest figures estimate Texas' population at 12.2 million.

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