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NASA NAMES ASTRONAUT CREWS FOR EARLY SHUTTLE FLIGHTS

Four two-man crews have been selected to begin training for early orbital flights of the Space Shuttle. They are:

John W. Young, 47, commander; Robert L. Crippen, 40, pilot
Joe H. Engle, 45, commander; Richard H. Truly, 40, pilot
Fred W. Haise, 45, commander; Jack R. Lousma, 42, pilot
Vance D. Brand, 46, commander; Charles G. Fullerton,
41, pilot

Young and Crippen will be the prime crew for the first orbital flight test (OFT-1) scheduled for launch from NASA's Kennedy Space Center, Fla., in the spring of 1979.

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Engle and Truly will be their backup crew.

Flight assignments for the others named today will be made at a later date.

NASA plans a series of six orbital flight tests, each of increasing complexity, to check out the nation's first reusable spacecraft. On the first four flights, the 75-ton orbiter will return from space to an unpowered landing on a dry lakebed at NASA's Dryden Flight Research Center, Edwards, Calif. Thereafter, the spacecraft will return to a specially constructed runway at the Kennedy Center launch site.

NASA is currently considering a mission to boost Skylab into a higher orbit during one of the OFT flights. If the decision is made to implement that plan, prime and backup flight crews will be selected from those named today.

Young is Chief of the Astronaut Office and a veteran of four space flights. He was pilot of the first manned Gemini flight, Gemini 3, in 1965; command pilot of Gemini 10 in 1966; command module pilot of Apollo 10 in 1969; and commander of Apollo 16, a lunar landing mission in 1972. He has been a member of four backup crews. Young, a retired Navy captain, has been an astronaut since 1962.

Crippen will be making his first space flight. A Navy commander, he has been a NASA astronaut since 1969 when he was transferred from the cancelled USAF Manned Orbiting Laboratory program. Crippen was a crew member of the Skylab Medical Experiments Altitude Tests (SMEAT), a 56-day simulation of a Skylab mission. He was a member of astronaut support crews for Skylab and Apollo Soyuz Test Project missions.

Engle, an Air Force colonel, commanded one of the two crews which flew the Space Shuttle approach and landing tests in 1977. Prior to his selection as a NASA astronaut in 1966, he was a test pilot in the X-15 research program and had qualified for astronaut wings in X-15 rocket plane flights exceeding 50 miles altitude. Engle was backup lunar module pilot for the Apollo 14 mission.

Truly flew with Engle in the Shuttle approach and landing tests. He is a Navy commander and was a MOL astronaut prior to transferring to NASA in 1969. Truly was on astronaut support crews for Skylab and Apollo Soyuz missions.

Haise, a civilian, was lunar module pilot for Apollo 13 in 1970 and commanded one of the two flight crews for the Shuttle approach and landing tests last year. He was backup lunar module pilot for the Apollo 8 and 11 missions and backup spacecraft commander for Apollo 16.

Haise became an astronaut in 1966 after several years as a NASA research pilot.

Lousma, a Marine Corps lieutenant colonel, was pilot for Skylab 3 in 1973. He was backup docking module pilot for the Apollo Soyuz mission and served on astronaut support crews for the Apollo 9, 10 and 13 missions. Lousma has been an astronaut since 1966.

Brand was command module pilot for the Apollo Soyuz mission in 1975. An astronaut since 1966, he was a support crewman for Apollos 8 and 13, backup command module pilot for Apollo 15 and backup commander for the Skylab 3 and 4 missions. Brand is a civilian.

Fullerton flew Shuttle approach and landing tests with Haise. An Air Force lieutenant colonel, he was assigned to the MOL program before becoming a NASA astronaut in 1969. Fullerton served on astronaut support crews for the Apollo 14 and 17 missions.