

NOTABLE MISSOURIANS AND TIGERS COLLECTION

Wally Funk (Stephens College, AA, 1958) Pioneering Aviator and Second Oldest Person to Fly to Space



Mary Wallace "Wally" Funk (b. February 1, 1939) earned her pilot's license at the age of 17 as a member of the "Flying Susies" at Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri. The wool suits pictured here were worn by Funk after graduating from Stephens in 1958 with an Associate of Arts degree; both suits are embroidered with the monogram "MFW" on the left cuff (see page 2.) In 1961, Funk volunteered for the "Women in Space Program." Of the twenty-five women selected, only thirteen graduated, including Funk who was also the youngest at age 21. This group was dubbed the "Mercury 13." Funk now qualified for space travel and applied to the NASA program three times but was turned down. Read more on page 2.

ARTIFACTS: Wool Suiting; Labels: The Arthur Richards Woman; Evan Picone. Late 1970s. Gift of Wally Funk (b.1953-) through Stephens College; Portrait Image Credit: The Sun, PA



Wally Funk Day

July 20, 2021

In 1971, Funk became the first female examiner for the Federal Aviation Agency (FAA) and in 1973, the first female specialist in the FAA Systems Worthiness Analysis Program. In 1974, Funk became the first female Air Safety Investigator for the National Transportation Safety Board.

After six decades of flight, Ms. Funk has logged over 19,600 flying hours. At the age of 82, her lifelong dream of flying to space was finally achieved on July 20, 2021, when Funk rocketed into space with Jeff Bezos aboard Blue Origin's New Shepard spacecraft. With this successful flight, Funk became the oldest person to fly to space, exceeding John Glenn's record at the age of 77 in 1998.

ARTIFACT: Wool Suit Jacket Sleeve Detail with M.W.F. Monogram. Late 1970s. Gift of W. Funk through Stephens College.

ARTIFACT: Cotton T-Shirt, Detail: "Girls who go to space begin at Stephens. Stephens College, Columbia, MO. Wally Funk Day. July 20, 2021." 2021. Gift of Stephens College.