

John B. Lee Biography

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WW-II: John Lee grew up in a family of 5 children. During the Depression his Parents and Grandparents were Tenant Farmers in Virginia. In September of 1941 at the age of 17, John entered VPI (the Virginia Polytechnic Institute) at Blacksburg, Virginia. He majored in Mechanical Engineering and was in the Corp of Cadets. He joined the Army Air Corp when he was 18 years old. John was assigned to the Gulf Coast Training Command, in Texas. On March 15, 1944 at the age of 19, he received his Commission and Wings as a Fighter Pilot, at Foster Field in Victoria, Texas. As a Fighter Pilot in WW-II, he flew 52 combat missions with the 8th Air Force, in England, in the P-51 Mustang Fighter Aircraft over Europe. He conducted High Altitude Escort Missions of the B-17 and B-24 Bombers, and he escorted the British Mosquito's on Photo Reconnaissance Missions over Czechoslovakia. He also conducted Strafing Missions of Airports, Trains and Train Marshalling Yards. He became a Flight Commander. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, 6 Air Medals and 3 Battle Stars. The 3 battle stars included "The Battle of France", "The Battle of the Ardennes" (also known as "The Battle of the Bulge"), and for "The Battle of Europe".

NACA & NASA: After World War-II, John received his Bachelors Degree in Mechanical Engineering with additional courses in Aeronautical Engineering at VPI in Blacksburg, Va.

In 1948 John went to work for the NACA, (the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics) at Langley Field, Hampton, Va. He was hired by Robert Gilruth, Chief of PARAD, (the Pilotless Aircraft Research Division). John was assigned to the Propulsion and Aerodynamics Branch that included Max Faget. John was responsible for the development of the system for the drop testing of Scale Modules of Atomic Warheads from Supersonic Aircraft using the Wallops Island Preflight Jet Facility. He is the author and coauthor of 10 Research Memorandum and books. (See Enclosure)

In 1958, President Eisenhower established NASA (the National Aeronautics and Space Administration). The NACA became the Nucleus for NASA that conducted the Manned Space Flight Program. Robert Gilruth organized and became the Chief of the Mercury Space Task Group that started the Manned Space Flight Program. John was one of the first 35 people assigned to the Mercury Space Task Group. On the Mercury Project, John was Chief of the Mechanical Systems Section. He was a lead Engineer on one of the 3 parallel feasibility studies conducted, to show that man could go to the moon, which became the Apollo

Program. On the Apollo Program he became a Technical Assistant to Dr. Max Faget, the Director of E&D, (The Engineering Development Directorate), at the Johnson Space Flight Center.

He was the head of the Directorates Program Offices for Mercury, Gemini and Apollo. He was on the Evaluation Committees that picked the contractors for Mercury, and Apollo Spacecraft Programs.

Also, as a lead engineer in E&D, John was involved in the design concepts for:

1. The Docking Module used for the docking of the Apollo Command & Service Module with the Russians Soyuz Spacecraft,
 2. Several Space Station Design Concepts
 3. The concept for putting up the Space Station with the Shuttle Spacecraft
- Some of the awards received by John included: (See Enclosures)

- **The NASA Group Achievement Awards for:**

1. **Project Mercury**, (the first US Manned Space Flights)
2. **The Apollo Operations Support Team:** (for the first Apollo Flight)
3. **The Apollo 11 Program**, (the first landing of man on the moon)

- **The Snoopy Award:**

He received one of the first Snoopy awards presented by the Astronauts, from Neil Armstrong, the Commander of the Apollo 11 Crew for the first Manned Lunar Landing.

- **The Presidential Medal of Freedom**, to the Apollo XIII Operations Team: from President Richard Nixon

- **Certificates of Commendations for:**

1. **Apollo11:** The First Manned Lunar Landing.
2. **Apollo XIII Accident:** For performance as the Lead Engineer in the Mission Evaluation Room from E&D, that led to the successful return of the Astronauts.

John Lee retired from NASA in 1980 and Lives in Nassau Bay, Texas. He is on the Board of Directors for the Johnson Space Center NASA Alumni League. He is a member of the Space Center Rotary Club, NARFE, (the National Association of Retired Federal Employees).

John has been inducted into the Va. Tech Corp of Cadet's "Wall of Fame" for both Aviation and Aerospace.

He has two Daughters, Dr. Laurie Lee VanArsdale and Dottie Mae Lee

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