

**VALENTINA TERESHKOVA
CELEBRATES 80th ANNIVERSARY**



The Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova was born on March 6, 1937 in *Bolshoye Maslennikovo*, a village in West Russia. During World War II, when she was only two years old, her father was killed while fighting in the Red Army. Her mother raised Valentina, her sister Lyudmila, and her brother Vladimir, supporting the family by working in a textile plant. Valentina began attending school in 1945, but in 1953 she left school and became a textile-factory assembly worker. She continued her education by correspondence courses and parachuted as a hobby. Later on her parachuting hobby led her being chosen for training as a cosmonaut in the Soviet space program. She continued her education after

her space flight and graduated with distinction from the *Zhukovsky* Military Air Academy in 1969.

During the late 1950s and 1960s, the Space Race between the United States and the Soviet Union escalated for space travel supremacy. The competitiveness between the two nations for "one upping" achievements was fierce and the Soviets were determined to be the first to send a woman into space. After the flight of Yuri Gagarin in 1961, Sergey Korolyov, the chief Soviet rocket engineer, came up with the idea of putting a woman into space. Qualifications included that they should be parachutists less than 30 years of age, less than 170 cm tall, and less than 70 kg in weight. Only five were selected to become cosmonauts out of more than 400 applicants but Tereshkova actually went into space.

Valentina Tereshkova was chosen to be trained as a cosmonaut in the USSR's space program on March 12, 1962. On June 16, 1963, she became the first woman to travel into space aboard *Vostok 6*. Her call sign in this flight was *Chaika*. While the rocket was taking off Tereshkova called out, "Hey sky, take off your hat. I'm on my way!" In just less than three days, she orbited the Earth 48 times. The *Vostok 6* was the final *Vostok* flight. It was launched two days after *Vostok 5*, which carried Valery Bykovsky, into a similar orbit. The *Vostok 5* was in orbit for five days, landing three hours after *Vostok 6*. After she returned from her voyage,

parachuting from her spacecraft to earth from 8000 m, Tereshkova was given the title Hero of the Soviet Union.

On November 3, 1963, Tereshkova married cosmonaut Andrian Nikolayev. On June 8, 1964, was born their daughter, Elena Adrianovna Nikolayeva. Elena was a subject of medical interest because she was the first child born from parents who had both been into space. Elena later on became a medical doctor. Tereshkova and Nikolayev divorced in 1980.

She became a prominent member of the Communist Party, and represented the USSR at numerous international events, including the United Nations conference for the International Women's Year in 1975. She headed the Soviet Committee for Women from 1968 to 1987, was pictured on postage stamps, and had a crater on the Moon named after her.

Despite the success of Tereshkova's flight, there was a 19 year gap before another woman, the Soviet cosmonaut Svetlana Savitskaya, travelled to space in 1982. Many authors suggest that women cosmonauts did not receive the same treatment as their male counterparts. For instance, the first American woman to go into space was Sally Ride in 1983.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tanya Ivanova