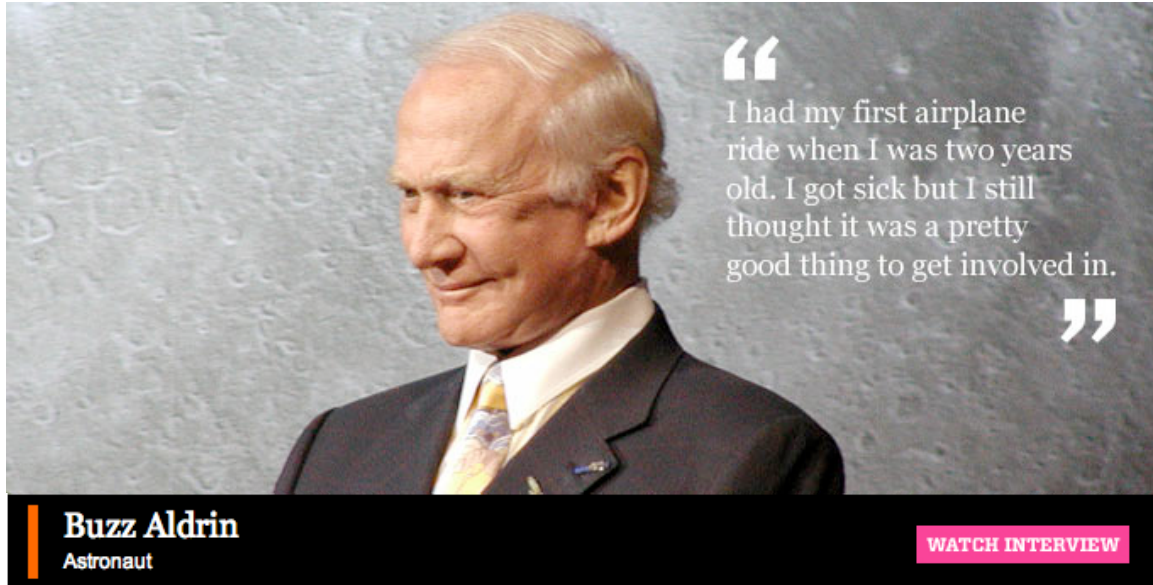


04.06.08

Careers in Science: Astronaut

by *WIRED Science Education*



Profession: Astronaut

Education: **BS**, United States Military Academy, West Point, New York, 1951
Doctorate of Science , MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Pilot and astronaut Buzz Aldrin served as the Lunar Module Pilot for Apollo 11 which landed on the Moon on July 20, 1969. He was the second person to step on the Moon, following Neil Armstrong. Armstrong was selected by NASA as part of its third group of astronauts in 1963. He has logged a total of more than 289 hours in space. Prior to NASA, Aldrin served as a jet fighter pilot for the United States Air Force during the Korean War.

What first motivated you to become interested in flight?

Young kids get motivated around the age of six, eight, elementary school, middle school as to what really fascinates them and there's a big movement underfoot in this country to improve out standing internationally in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. I had my first airplane ride when I was two years old. I got sick but I still thought it was a pretty good thing to get involved in.

What steps did you take to pursue a career in aviation?

My father was a pioneer of aviation. So I just fulfilled the steps, got into the military, fought in combat in the Korean War. Being a part of the Air Force during the time of Sputnik over in Europe, delivering potentially nuclear weapons to our targets, it appeared as though there was going to be a competitiveness. It looked like it could be fascinating to be involved in.

How did you become involved with the space program?

Not having elected to go through test pilot training, but preferring professional education instead, I wasn't sure if I was eligible to be part of this. But, I wisely chose to examine "man orbited rendezvous" as my thesis and that began to open the door and I got into the space program. By being in the right place at the right time, and as events unfolded I was dealt wonderful opportunities to participate in future exploration.