

PATRIOT OF THE YEAR

Captain Kathryn Hire, USN (Ret)

A graduate of Murphy High School, Captain Kay Hire attended the U. S. Naval Academy where she graduated and received a commission in the U. S. Navy in 1981.

After completing her training as a Naval Flight Officer, she flew worldwide oceanographic research missions to 25 countries aboard specially configured P-3 Orion aircraft with Oceanographic Development Squadron Eight. She later taught airborne navigation for three years to



over 600 student naval flight officers. In 1991 Hire obtained her master's degree in space systems. On May 13, 1993, Hire became the first female in the U. S. military to be assigned to a combat aircrew, when she reported to Patrol Squadron Sixty-Two. Flying aboard the P-3 maritime patrol aircraft, she participated in Atlantic and Caribbean operations. She was recalled to active naval duty supporting Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom as a member of U. S. Naval Central Command staff. Rising to the rank of Captain, she retired after completing 35 years of service with the U. S. Navy.

In 1989, Hire left full time naval ranks and began parallel but separate civilian and military careers as a Space Shuttle Engineer and as a Navy Reserve Officer. Hire joined the NASA team in 1989 where she worked as a space shuttle orbiter mechanical systems engineer, test project engineer, and supervisor of space shuttle orbiter mechanical systems and launch pad access swing arms at Kennedy Space Center. Hire processed space shuttles from landing through ground preparations and launch countdowns for more than 40 missions.

In 1995 Hire was selected as a member of Astronaut Group 15 and flew to space for the first time as a mission specialist aboard Space Shuttle Columbia for the 16-day Spacelab Neurolab mission, STS-90, in 1998. The seven-member crew played both the role of experiment subjects and operators for 26 life science experiments focused on the effects of microgravity on the brain and central nervous system.



Hire flew to space on a second mission aboard Space Shuttle Endeavour for STS-130 in 2010 to help assemble the International Space Station. Hire and her crewmates delivered and outfitted Node 3, also known as the Tranquility module, and the Cupola, a seven-windowed portal for the space station which has been a focal point of the station since installation. As a mission specialist, Hire operated the robotic arms, led the transfer of 4,500 pounds of cargo, and helped install water recycling, air cleaning and cooling, and crew exercise equipment in Node 3 and Cupola.

Between her space flights, Hire supported missions in various roles including Capsule Communicator (CAPCOM) in mission control, and management astronaut in which she helped develop procedures for commercial spacecraft carrying cargo to the International Space Station. After a 30-year career with NASA, Astronaut Kay Hire retired from the agency on February 28, 2019. Captain Hire logged over 3,400 flight hours in various aircraft, and more than 711 hours in space.

