

# NASA News

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## FRIENDSWOOD, TEXAS RESIDENT NOMINATED FOR SPACELAB CREW POSITION

William E. Thornton, 1963 graduate of the University of North Carolina Medical School, has been nominated for a crew position aboard Spacelab 1, an orbiting scientific laboratory scheduled for launch in mid-1980. Dr. Thornton, an astronaut with the Johnson Space Center in Houston, is one of 18 scientists from across the country being considered for the position of Spacelab "payload specialist."

The first Spacelab mission is scheduled to have two such payload specialists aboard. Because this particular mission is a joint venture of NASA and the European Space Agency, one of these scientists will be a European.

Spacelab, which fits inside NASA's new Space Shuttle, consists of a pressurized, "shirtsleeve" environment laboratory module and an outside pallet for instruments which require exposure to space. The payload specialists who will operate this laboratory are unique in several ways.

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They will be selected by the scientists who have experiments aboard the mission, not by NASA. They will be trained specifically for the one mission, unlike NASA's permanent astronaut-mission specialists. The responsibility of flying and maintaining the Space Shuttle vehicle will rest with the astronauts, leaving the payload specialists free to concentrate on operating the instruments and experiments put aboard by their scientific colleagues.

Thornton, a member of the highly successful 56-day Skylab medical experiments simulation team, and the other 17 American candidates for this position aboard the first Spacelab were interviewed recently at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama, where the first payload specialists are expected to undergo more than a year of training prior to their flight. Early next year the selection committee is expected to recommend two American and two European candidates for training. One pair will actually fly in space to operate the experiments of the scientists who selected them. The other two will provide support from the ground control center during the mission.

The Spacelab 1 mission emphasizes stratospheric and upper atmospheric research, but research will also be done in plasma physics, biology, medicine, astronomy, solar physics, Earth observations and in technology areas such as thermodynamics, materials processing and lubrication.

The flight will last seven days.

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