Richard Francis Gordon Encyclopedia Article

Richard Francis Gordon

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Richard Francis Gordon

1929-

American astronaut who made several space flights in the 1960s. Born in Seattle, Washington, Gordon completed his initial schooling by graduating from the nearby University of Washington in 1951. He was accepted into the naval aviation program and, six years later, became a test pilot. He first came to public attention when he won the Bendix Trophy Race in 1961 and was chosen for astronaut training in 1963. His first flight into space was in September 1966 aboard the *Gemini II* with Pete Conrad, during which he took a 45-minute space walk between *Gemini* and an Agena target vessel. In November 1969, along with Alan Bean and Conrad, Gordon piloted the command module on the *Apollo 12* mission. He remained in orbit while Bean and Conrad conducted the lunar exploration. He retired from the Navy and space program in 1972.