Virgil Ivan Grissom Encyclopedia Article

Virgil Ivan Grissom

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Virgil Ivan Grissom

1926-1967

American engineer and astronaut who was the second American in space during a 1961 suborbital Mercury test flight in the *Liberty Bell 7* spacecraft, which sank in the Atlantic after splashdown (the capsule was recovered in 1999). After earning his Air Force wings (in 1951) and flying over 100 combat missions in Korea, "Gus" Grissom was the command pilot on the first manned *Gemini* flight (1965). He died tragically with two other astronauts in the *Apollo 1* launch pad fire (1967) during a countdown simulation test.