



Mechanical Engineering
Academy of Distinguished Alumni

Karen L. Nyberg, Ph.D.

Outstanding Young Mechanical Engineer, 2008

BSME, University of North Dakota, 1994

MSME, The University of Texas at Austin, 1996

Ph.D., The University of Texas at Austin, 1998

Astronaut

NASA

Karen Nyberg was born and raised in the central Minnesota town of Vining and is the fifth of six children born to Kenneth and Phyllis Nyberg. After graduating from Henning High School, Karen attended the University of North Dakota, studying mechanical engineering. During her time at UND, she gained experience as an engineer in design, operations, and analysis at the Johnson Space Center through the Cooperative Education Program.

After her graduation from UND, Karen moved to Austin to attend The University of Texas at Austin where she worked under Dr. Ken Diller in the BioHeat Transfer Laboratory. Her research, through NASA, focused on regulation of body temperature in the Extravehicular Activity Spacesuit. Following the completion of her studies and research at UT, Karen accepted a position at the Johnson Space Center in the Crew and Thermal Systems Division as an Environmental Control Systems Engineer.

In the year 2000, Karen was selected by NASA as a Mission Specialist Astronaut. Her career as an astronaut has offered a host of incredible experiences, from flying in high performance aircraft, to living and working in the Aquarius underwater laboratory as an aquanaut, testing concepts for future planetary exploration.

Karen made her first trip to space in 2008 aboard Space Shuttle Discovery. STS-124 was the 123rd space shuttle flight, and the 26th shuttle flight in support of the construction of the International Space Station (ISS). Discovery launched from the Kennedy Space Center, Florida, carrying the Japanese Experiment Module and spent nine days docked with the ISS as the crew installed and activated the laboratory.

In 2013, Karen made her second trip to space aboard Soyuz TMA-09M, which launched from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. As a member of Expeditions 36 and 37, she lived and worked aboard the ISS for nearly six months, conducting research and maintaining the systems of the orbiting laboratory. Over the course of her two spaceflights, Karen has accumulated 180 days in space.

Karen is married to fellow astronaut Doug Hurley and they have a son, Jack. Away from work, she enjoys textile arts, running, and promoting Earth and animal conservation.