

exemptions or play qualifying tournaments. In late 2009, Wie contributed to the United States team's victory at the Solheim Cup, a tournament in which professional women golfers compete on two teams representing Europe and the United States. Three months later, in her sixty-seventh LPGA event, she won the Lorena Ochoa Invitational in Guadalajara, Mexico, against a limited field of competitors, with a 15-under-par 275. This victory, her first since she began playing LPGA events in 2002, heralded for many the arrival of a matured athlete who had proven her ability to persevere by shaking off past disappointments and challenging expectations. Wie's second tour victory came at the 2010 CN Canadian Open, a three-stroke, twelve-under-par win against a full field of women professional golfers.

SIGNIFICANCE

Wie has become one of professional golf's most recognizable figures. Though her endorsement contracts have dwarfed her golf earnings, Wie has ignored her detractors. Wie challenged golf's gender barriers when

she openly sought competition against top male players before she turned professional at fifteen. An outstanding student, Wie has multiple interests outside of golf. Regardless of her future accomplishments, Wie has established herself as a pioneer in women's golf, who has helped add vitality to the game.

P. Graham Hatcher

FURTHER READING

Adelson, Eric. *The Sure Thing: The Making and Unmaking of Golf Phenom Michelle Wie*. Ballentine: 2009. Print. Reviews ten years of coverage about Wie's career.

Hawkins, John. "Wie-markable." *Golf World*. 23 Jan 2004: 14. Print. Discusses Wie's 2004 Sony Open performance, where she was the youngest female to compete in a full-field PGA event.

Mario, Jennifer. *Michelle Wie: The Making of a Champion*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2006. Print. Chronicles the rise of Wie's career to her turning professional in 2005.

SUNITA WILLIAMS

Astronaut

United States Navy Captain Sunita Williams is a highly versatile pilot and astronaut who has set several milestones while in space as both a woman and an Asian American. She is best known for her work on the International Space Station and her space walks.

Born: September 19, 1965; Euclid, Ohio

Full name: Sunita Lyn Pandya Williams

Birth name: Sunita Lyn Pandya

Also known as: Suni Williams

Areas of achievement: Science and technology, military

EARLY LIFE

Sunita Williams was born to Deepak N. Pandya, a neuroanatomist from the Indian state of Gujarat, and Ursuline "Bonnie" Zalokar Pandya, an x-ray technician of Slovenian ancestry from Cleveland, Ohio. When her father accepted a new appointment in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1966, the family moved to nearby Needham, where Williams was raised and graduated from high school in 1983. She was active in athletics, especially competitive swimming, and contemplated a career in

veterinary medicine because she loved animals. When both Columbia University and the United States Naval Academy offered her admission, she selected the latter, in part because she could avoid assuming student loans, and in part because her brother Jay was already enrolled there. After graduating in the middle of her Naval Academy class in 1987, Williams attended flight school in Pensacola, Florida. In 1989, she joined a helicopter support squadron in Norfolk, Virginia, and was deployed to the Middle East as part of Operation Desert Shield in 1990 and Operation Provide Comfort in 1991 during the first Gulf War.

In 1969, a nearly four-year-old Williams had watched Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin walk on the moon, but never imagined that she might become an astronaut herself. However, after meeting several astronauts at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas, Williams realized she had many of the skills necessary for piloting spacecraft. She graduated from the United States Naval Test Pilot School in Patuxent, Maryland, in 1993 and in 1995 earned a master's degree in engineering management from the Florida Institute of Technology. In 1998, NASA selected her for astronaut training.



Sunita Williams. (Getty Images)

LIFE'S WORK

As a new NASA astronaut, Williams received extensive training in additional skills, including water and wilderness survival techniques, piloting the supersonic T-38 training jet, and operating robotic arms. She lived underwater for eight days in NASA's Aquarius laboratory in 2002. As a result of working with the Russian Space Agency in Moscow, Williams learned to speak Russian, a talent that proved useful when she served with Russian flight engineers on board the International Space Station.

Williams first traveled into space in December 2006 on board the space shuttle *Discovery*. She brought with her a copy of the Hindu scripture *Bhagavad Gita* and a statue of Ganesha, the Hindu god of beginnings, from her Hindu father, as well as a Christian cross from her Slovenian Catholic grandmother. After docking with the International Space Station, Williams joined Expedition 14 and then remained with Expedition 15 until June 2007. In all, Williams spent 195 days on the station, establishing a record for space endurance by women that had not been broken by 2011. During these two expeditions, Williams also logged 29 hours, 17 minutes, of walking in space, setting a new record for

women until it was broken by astronaut Peggy Whitson in 2008.

Several noteworthy events occurred during Williams's six months in space. Shortly after arriving, her long black hair was cut by fellow astronaut Joan Higginbotham and brought back to Earth, where it was donated to children who had lost their hair due to medical problems. In April 2007, while the Boston Marathon was taking place in her home state of Massachusetts, Williams became the first astronaut to run a marathon in space. Williams ran the 26.2 miles in 4 hours, 23 minutes, and 46 seconds, while strapped to a stationary treadmill inside the Space Station. In May 2007, she spoke with Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain via video communication.

By 2011, Williams had logged more than three thousand flight hours as a Navy pilot in more than thirty different aircraft, rising in rank to captain. She is scheduled to take part in Expeditions 32 and 33 on board the International Space Station in 2012 where she will serve as commander.

SIGNIFICANCE

By 2011, Williams was only the second female of Indian heritage to fly in space; she holds the record for the longest spaceflight for a woman. Her numerous honors include two Navy Commendation Medals, the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, and the Humanitarian Service Medal. She has also received international awards such as Russia's Medal of Merit in Space and India's Sardar Vallabhai Patel Vishwa Pratibha Award.

James I. Deutsch

FURTHER READING

Kanin, Zachary. "One Small Step." *New Yorker* 83.15 (2007): 47. Print. A humorous parody, written after Williams ran her own Boston Marathon on the International Space Station, in which author Kanin imagines some other feats Williams might accomplish in space.

Mahanti, Subodh. *Pioneer of Space Travel, Sunita Williams*. New Delhi: Indian Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2007. Print. Places Williams's achievements in the context of recent spaceflight history.

Seshadri, S., and Aradhika Sharma. *Astronaut Sunita Williams: Achiever Extraordinaire*. New Delhi: Rupa, 2007. Print. Contains many details of Williams's personal life and Indian American identity, thanks to the cooperation of her parents.