

Richard Alan Mastracchio

1960 -

"You are a tribute to your family, the City of Waterbury and the State of Connecticut."

- Governor John G. Rowland

Richard A. "Rick" Mastracchio, Waterbury's only astronaut, was born February 11, 1960 in the Brass City to Ralph and Georgianna Mastracchio. He attended Chase grammar school and was a 1978 graduate of Crosby High School. He received a bachelor of science degree from the University of Connecticut in 1982, and master's degrees from both Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and the University of Houston.

He began his career as an engineer at Connecticut's Hamilton Standard and in 1987, he moved to Houston, Texas, where he worked for Rockwell International, builder of the Space Shuttle, and then joined NASA in 1990 as a specialist in flight crew operations. Beginning in 1993 he supported seventeen space flights as a flight controller at the Johnson Space Center. Mastracchio was interviewed for an astronaut position three times and was selected in 1996 from a group of over 2,400 candidates.

On September 8, 2000, at 8:45 a.m. Mastracchio followed in the tradition of John Glenn, Alan Shepard, and Neil Armstrong, as he blasted off into space from Cape Canaveral on STS-106 Atlantis. The successful 12-day mission that orbited the Earth 185 times, covered 4.9 million miles and included five American astronauts and two Russian cosmonauts, was designed to prepare the International Space Station for the arrival of its first permanent members. It was the first crew to enter the Service Module while it was in orbit. Mastracchio was the Atlantis ascent/entry flight engineer, the primary robotic arm operator and was responsible for the crucial task of moving equipment from the shuttle to the space station.

Ever cognizant of his unique position as role model, Mastracchio has never lost touch with the youth of his hometown, returning whenever possible to offer encouragement. "That's one of the reasons why I'm here - I never had someone say to me, 'This is how to do it,'" he said on a visit to Crosby in May of 2001. During her expression of gratitude for his inspirational



appearance, Principal Barbara Carrington noted "Rick followed his dreams and took them all the way to outer space." "I don't think I was a hero, all I did was my job", Mastracchio modestly stated.

Waterburians have been pre-eminent in most fields of endeavor known to mankind, having left their mark around the world. They continue to be recognized for their many achievements and astronaut, pioneer and engineer, Rick Mastracchio is a most worthy addition to this legacy.