

Six-man crew aboard shuttle Atlantis' last flight

May 14 2010, By MARCIA DUNN , AP Aerospace Writer



STS-132 crew members, from left, British-born, U.S. astronaut Piers Sellers, Stephen Bowen, Michael Good, Garrett Reisman, Dominic Antonelli, and Kenneth Ham, share a laugh as they pose for a photo after leaving the Operations and Checkout Building for a trip to launch pad 39-A and a planned lift off on the space shuttle Atlantis Friday, May 14, 2010, at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla. The final launch of Atlantis is planned for later this afternoon. (AP Photo/Chris O'Meara)

(AP) -- It's an all-male, all-veteran crew for space shuttle Atlantis' final flight.

Six astronauts are aboard for this third-to-last [shuttle mission](#). NASA is retiring its three remaining shuttles so it can focus on getting astronauts back into true outer space.

Atlantis' astronauts are putting off any commemorations and, for now at

least, focusing on the work awaiting them at the [International Space Station](#).

"This is probably the kind of thing that's really going to hit all of us after we're done with the mission and we realize what part of history we may have played," said commander Kenneth Ham.

A brief look at each:

Commander Kenneth Ham uses "the avoidance technique" when it comes to dealing with the dangers of spaceflight.

"I've convinced myself that my old job of flying jets in the Navy was far more dangerous than this one, and if I managed to live through all of that, this a piece of cake," he said. "I really don't think about it."

Ham, 45, a Navy captain whose call sign is "Hock," flew missions over Iraq and Bosnia. He served as an air wing strike leader as well as a night vision goggle instructor.

Picked as an astronaut in 1998, Ham flew to the space station as a co-pilot in 2008. This is his first time heading a mission.

Wife Michelle is an instructor for space station astronauts, teaching them how to live and work up there. He has two sons, ages 16 and 17.

Ham plans to leave NASA after this flight and return full time to the Navy. He was born in Plainfield, N.J.

Pilot Dominic "Tony" Antonelli is making his second space flight in just over a year.

"This is how it should be for everybody," he said. "We should be flying these things every couple of weeks and giving as many people a chance to do it as we can."

It's sad so few missions are left, he said. "The space shuttle's such a great machine. But I think we really need to leave low-Earth orbit at some point and that's our one limitation. So moving on to something new, whatever that is, that's going to be pretty exciting."

Antonelli, 42, a Navy commander who grew up in Indiana and North Carolina, became an astronaut in 2000.

He and his wife Janeen have two sons, ages 6 and 9.

Flying back-to-back missions means Antonelli hasn't gone snowboarding - a passion right up there with flying - for more than two years. It's one of the high-risk activities that are banned for astronauts who are within a year of launching. He figures he'll get back on the slopes this winter.

Garrett Reisman, one of the astronaut corps' shorter astronauts at 5-foot-4 1/2, is jokingly called "Big G" by his crewmates.

He can't wait to grow temporarily in weightlessness, as all astronauts do thanks to elongated spines. He stretched to 5-foot-6 during his three-month stay at the space station in 2008. Going back for a short visit is reward for the four years of training he put in last time. He'll perform two spacewalks.

Reisman, 42, became an astronaut in 1998 after working as an engineer on spacecraft navigation for what was then TRW Inc.

He's taking up the original federal document proclaiming May as Jewish American Heritage Month.

"As a Jewish kid growing up in New Jersey, the concept of being an astronaut was really something I didn't think was possible," he said. As he watched films of the Apollo moon shots, "it was all a bunch of white men, non-Jewish people flying, test pilots."

Now, his message to all Americans is, "this is something that's within their realm of possibility."

"There's nothing more powerful than making a child believe there's nothing they can't do, and that's turned out to be true for me."

Wife Simone Francis is an oceanographer. Home is Parsippany, N.J.

Michael Good's only other space flight was to the Hubble Space Telescope last May.

"I thought Hubble was big, so I can't imagine what the station's going to look like as we rendezvous with it," he said.

Working on Hubble in the shuttle's payload bay "was like going out and working in your garage," he said. This time, he'll "get to wander around the neighborhood," venturing out to the fringes of the space station on two spacewalks to replace batteries.

Good, 47, specialized in weapons systems for the Air Force. He became

an astronaut in 2000 and retired from the military as a colonel last year.

With the shuttle program winding down, long station missions will be "the only game in town" so he plans to check out the place and see if it's somewhere he'd like to live in the future.

He and wife Joan, an emergency room nurse, have two sons in their 20s and a 12-year-old daughter, as well as a 1-year-old grandson. He's from Broadview Heights, Ohio.

Stephen Bowen took a lot of kidding from his tile-laying, house-painting brothers when he spent his first shuttle mission working with caulk guns.

This time, he'll change out batteries and do other chores during a pair of spacewalks.

"It's not changing double-A batteries. It's a little more complicated than that. But they still give me a hard time," Bowen said.

Bowen, 46, a Navy captain from Cohasset, Mass., spent the 1990s in submarines. In 2000, he became the first submarine officer selected as an astronaut. Like working underwater, [spaceflight](#) is "an understood risk," he said.

"These are the choices I've made. I don't think anybody has a big question about that. I'm sure it stresses my mother out."

Bowen and wife Deborah, a former schoolteacher, have three teenage children.

As for this being Atlantis' last flight, "It's kind of hard to be wistful when

you're spending your whole life trying not to be overwhelmed by the history of what you're doing."

From his home in England, Piers Sellers followed NASA's moon landings in the late 1960s and was "completely captivated" when he saw the movie "2001: A Space Odyssey" at age 13.

"It made a huge impression on me and it stayed with me," he said. "And the real thing has not disappointed."

"Of course, we all wish we were further along," he added. "But I think we're going to get there. I think that during our lifetime, we're going to see people on Mars."

Sellers, 55, a biometeorologist, grew up in Sussex. He moved to the United States to work and, in 1991, became a U.S. citizen. [NASA](#) chose him as an astronaut five years later.

On his first two trips to the space station, Sellers racked up six spacewalks. This time, he'll stay indoors and operate the big robot arm. He's taking up a small piece of the tree from which an apple fell nearly 350 years ago in England and inspired Sir Isaac Newton to formulate his theory on gravity.

Sellers and his wife, Mandy, a nurse, have a daughter and son, both in their 20s.

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