

NASA's yearlong spaceman still has sore feet, fatigue

May 26 2016, by Marcia Dunn



In this Thursday, May 19, 2016 file photo, retired astronaut Scott Kelly, center, and his twin brother Mark Kelly, back, are greeted by children in the hallway of the Kelly Elementary School after the school was named in their honor in West Orange, N.J. On Wednesday, May 25, 2016, NASA's yearlong spaceman, Scott Kelly, says even after 2 ½ months back on Earth, his feet are still sore. (AP Photo/Julio Cortez)

NASA's yearlong spaceman still is nursing sore feet, stiff legs and fatigue, even after nearly three months back on Earth.

Retired astronaut Scott Kelly gave his first major address to NASA employees Wednesday, confiding that while he may have looked good upon landing in Kazakhstan at the beginning of March, he didn't feel that well after returning from the International Space Station. His 340-day mission was the longest single U.S. spaceflight ever.

"When I got out of the Soyuz ... I didn't really look too bad," Kelly told a packed auditorium at NASA headquarters in Washington. "But that was only because I'm a very good actor. I think I should be nominated for an Academy Award.

"My goal here was not to look great. I just had to make sure I didn't look worse than the two guys I was with. My colleagues would never let me hear the end of it," he added with a smile.

Kelly was accompanied back to Earth by two Russians, one of whom shared his entire nearly yearlong flight.

Back home in Houston, Kelly said he had burning skin, rashes and flu-like symptoms. He said he felt so bad that if he hadn't just returned from space, he would have gone straight to the emergency room.

"But that's why we do this," he said. "We need to learn these things if we're going to go to Mars."

NASA wants to understand how the body copes with a year of weightlessness, as it gears up to send humans on much longer journeys to Mars beginning in the 2030s.

Kelly, 52, who retired from NASA shortly after his mission, is now on the speaker circuit and working on a book. He and identical twin brother Mark, a retired astronaut who took part in his brother's medical experiments as a ground subject, sometimes share center stage these

days. Last week, they were honored at their elementary school in New Jersey, now named for them both.

During Wednesday's presentation, which was broadcast to NASA centers nationwide, Kelly joked that on the [space station](#), "I changed positions so many times, you would have thought I was running for president." No longer a civil servant, "I can say that now."

Someone in the audience wanted to know if Kelly ever felt as though he had to get off the space station, at any point during his mission.

"I never felt quite like I was climbing the walls," he replied, although not even halfway through, "I'm thinking this is a really, really long time."

In fact, as his Russian Soyuz capsule approached the orbiting outpost in March 2015, Kelly said to himself, "Man, this is probably a really dumb idea to be spending a year on the space station." His previous station stay, five years earlier, had lasted barely five months.

"This flight was twice as long and I felt twice as bad," he said.

It took Kelly about six months to recover completely from his five-month station flight. This time, he said, "I suspect it's probably going to be much longer, especially considering how sore my feet still are after 2 ½ months. But the good news is I do feel better all the time."

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