

# US astronaut's memoir provides blunt take on year in space

October 11 2017, by Marcia Dunn

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In this Wednesday, March 2, 2016 photo provided by NASA, International Space Station (ISS) crew member Scott Kelly of the U.S. reacts after landing near the town of Dzhezkazgan, Kazakhstan. In his new autobiography, the retired astronaut writes about his U.S. record-breaking year in space and the challenging life events that got him there. (Bill Ingalls/NASA via AP)

In his new autobiography, retired astronaut Scott Kelly gives an

unflinchingly blunt take on his U.S. record-breaking year in space and the challenging life events that got him there.

This isn't your usual astronaut's memoir.

Kelly recounts dumpster diving on the International Space Station for discarded meals after a supply capsule was destroyed and ending up with "some dude's used underwear" in his hands. He writes about the congestion, headaches and burning eyes he endured from high carbon dioxide levels and the feeling no one cared at Mission Control in Houston.

In his book, Kelly tells how prostate cancer surgery almost got him banned from space station duty, and how his vision problem during an earlier spaceflight almost cost him the one-year mission, which spanned from March 2015 to March 2016.

He tells how he visited a tattoo parlor before launch and got black dots all over his body to make it easier to take ultrasound tests in orbit, and how he fashioned extra puke bags for a nauseous crewmate.

Kelly said his goal in writing "'Endurance: A Year in Space, A Lifetime of Discovery,' was to tell the whole story.

So many other NASA astronauts' memoirs "focus on the good stuff and not necessarily the personal things that happened in their lives, things they might not be proud of, things that we all have that makes us normal, relatable people," he told The Associated Press. "So I felt like sharing is good, but ... the bad stuff, too, makes the story more believable."



In this Friday, March 4, 2016 file photo, NASA astronaut Scott Kelly speaks during a news conference in Houston. In his new autobiography, the retired astronaut writes about his U.S. record-breaking year in space and the challenging life events that got him there. (AP Photo/Pat Sullivan)

In the book, he writes about a little-known incident that he says occurred during his first space station stint in 2010, when a Russian cosmonaut came untethered during a spacewalk and began floating away. Luckily, Oleg Skripochka happened to hit an antenna that bounced him back toward the space station, enabling him to grab on and save his life,

according to Kelly.

Even though he was aboard the space station at the time, Kelly said he didn't learn about it until his yearlong mission five years later, when it casually came up in conversation with other cosmonauts. "I was like really? Holy crap. Crazy," Kelly recalled in an AP interview.

He remembered Skripochka had looked shaken, but thought it was because he had been out on his first spacewalk.

On Wednesday, the Russian Space Agency's press department said it contacted Skripochka, who did not confirm Kelly's account. No other comment was provided.



In this July 12, 2015 photo, Astronaut Scott Kelly takes a photo of himself inside the Cupola, a special module of the International Space Station which provides a 360-degree viewing of the Earth and the station. In his new autobiography, the



retired astronaut writes about his U.S. record-breaking year in space and the challenging life events that got him there. (Scott Kelly/NASA via AP)

"I've often pondered what we would have done if we'd known he was drifting irretrievably away from the station," Kelly writes. "It probably would have been possible to tie his family into the comm system in his spacesuit so they could say good-bye before the rising CO<sub>2</sub> or oxygen deprivation caused him to lose consciousness—not something I wanted to spend a lot of time thinking about as my own spacewalk was approaching."

Published by Knopf, "Endurance" comes out Tuesday. So does a version for children, "My Journey to the Stars," put out by Penguin Random House.

The 53-year-old Kelly said he didn't discover his passion for aviation and space until reading Tom Wolfe's 1979 book "The Right Stuff" in college. Kelly writes that he was a terrible student and likely suffered from attention deficit disorder.

The former spaceman also tells how he realized right before his wedding that he didn't want to go through with it, but did anyway, leading to a troubled marriage and eventually divorce, and how he initially didn't want "that space station stink" on him—getting space station assignments—for fear it would limit his shuttle-flying opportunities. He flew twice on space shuttles and had two extended stays at the space station, sharing the entire 340-day mission, his last, with Russian Mikhail Kornienko.



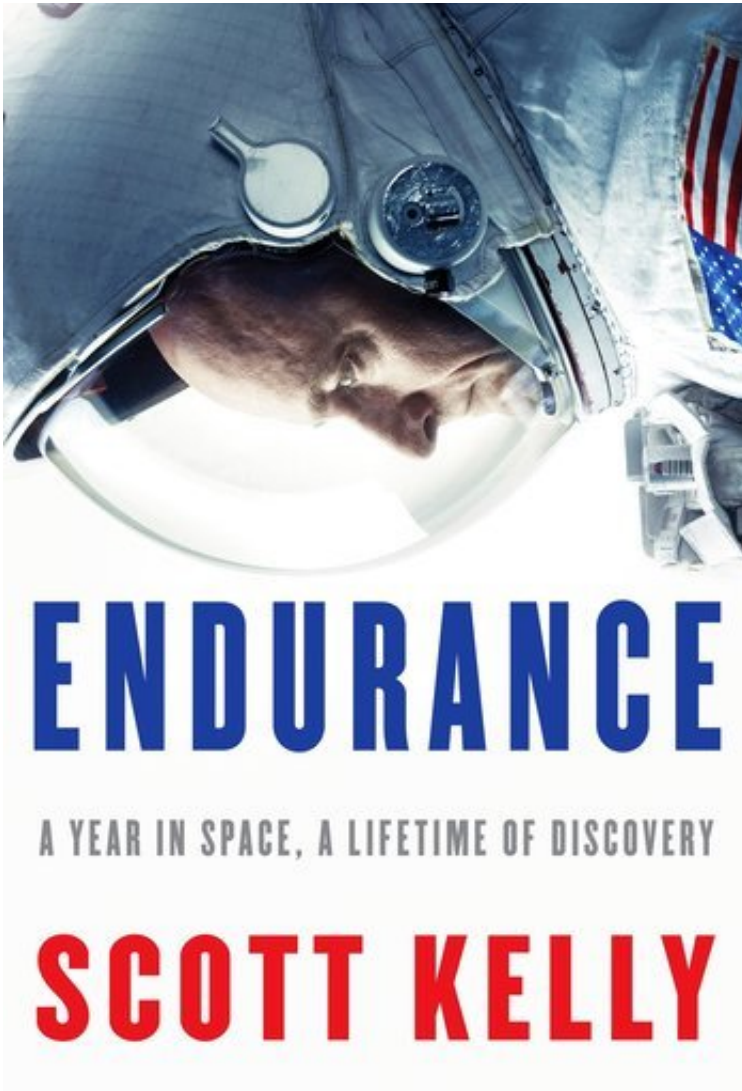
In this Dec. 21, 2015 photo provided by NASA, Expedition 46 Commander Scott Kelly participates in a spacewalk outside the International Space Station in which he and Flight Engineer Tim Kopra, not pictured, moved the station's mobile transporter rail car ahead of the docking of a Russian cargo supply spacecraft. In his new autobiography, the retired astronaut writes about his U.S. record-breaking year in space and the challenging life events that got him there. (NASA via AP)

When asked if it was difficult exposing his weaknesses when astronauts are supposed to be perfect or close to it, Kelly replied, "Naw, I feel like I'm like a below-average guy doing slightly above-average stuff."

Kelly figured he might write a book, given it was NASA's longest single spaceflight ever. So he kept a journal in orbit and took notes about how the place looked, smelled and felt "to make someone feel like they were on the space station."

"The book hasn't come out yet," Kelly said, "and as I get closer to it coming out, I'm thinking, 'Man, I've got to live with this for the rest of my life.' "

Kelly's identical twin brother, Mark, also a former Navy pilot and NASA astronaut as well as author, was among the several people who read early drafts. Scott Kelly devotes several pages to the 2011 shooting of his sister-in-law, former U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords. Aboard the space station at the time, Kelly wondered whether he was calling his family too much—"whether in my effort to be there for them I was becoming intrusive."



This cover image released by Knopf shows "Endurance: A Year in Space, A Lifetime of Discovery," by retired astronaut Scott Kelly. (Knopf via AP)

Back on Earth and now retired for 1 ½ years, Kelly said he misses being in space. Of course, when he was in space, he missed Earth. He credits that saying to a Russian crewmate, Gennady Padalka, the world's most experienced spaceman, and isn't sure the saying made it into the book.

"I need to write a sequel of all the stuff I left out."





This Aug. 10, 2015 photo made available by NASA shows a sunrise from the vantage point of the International Space Station, about 220 miles above the surface of the Earth. Traveling at a speed of approximately 17,500 mph, the station completes each orbit around the planet in about 92 minutes, with 16 sunrises and sunsets each 24-hour period. (Scott Kelly/NASA via AP)



In this April 9, 2015 file photo made available by NASA, astronauts Terry Virts, bottom, and Scott Kelly perform eye exams in the Destiny Laboratory of the International Space Station as part of ongoing studies on vision health in microgravity. In his new autobiography, the retired astronaut writes about his U.S. record-breaking year in space and the challenging life events that got him there. (NASA via AP, File)



In this Friday, Aug. 10, 2007 image made from video provided by NASA, commander Scott Kelly sits in the flight deck of the space shuttle Endeavour as he prepares to dock with the International Space Station. In his new autobiography, the retired astronaut writes about his U.S. record-breaking year in space and the challenging life events that got him there. (AP Photo/NASA TV)





In this Wednesday, March 4, 2015 photo provided by NASA, astronaut Scott Kelly sits inside a Soyuz simulator at the Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center (GCTC) in Star City, Russia. In his new autobiography, the retired astronaut writes about his U.S. record-breaking year in space and the challenging life events that got him there. (Bill Ingalls/NASA via AP)



In this March 25, 1999 file photo, NASA astronauts Scott, left, and Mark Kelly, who are twins, pose for a picture in front of a mural at Johnson Space Center in Houston. In his new autobiography, the retired astronaut Scott Kelly writes about his U.S. record-breaking year in space and the challenging life events that got him there. (AP Photo/Michael Stravato)





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)

**More information:** Kelly: [www.scottkelly.com/](http://www.scottkelly.com/)

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