

ASAA'S FRIEND IN SPACE

It was quite a surprise when Peggy's cell phone rang in Pensacola while I was participating in the Slide Critique on Saturday Morning, the 14th of May, the last morning of our 2011 ASAA Forum. Our daughter Nancy raced in and handed me the phone saying you have to talk to this gentleman. The voice said this is Ron Garan wishing you a Happy Birthday! Ron was calling from the International Space Station! He thought he was calling New Jersey but we had our phone forwarded to Peggy's cell phone. Ron is no stranger to ASAA. He had been one of our valued-speakers at ASAA's sixth Forum in San Diego in 1992. He was quite surprised to find himself calling into our 25th Annual Forum. He asked me to congratulate attendees and tell them that he sure wished we could be up there with him..... "photography just does not do this justice". He then said, "I think I will be losing you shortly." which he did. Ron sounded like he was right next door.



I had met F-16 combat veteran Ron Garan at Nellis in 1992 when I flew with him in the F-16D when he was an Instructor in the Air Force F-16 Weapons School. I was introduced to the then new LAN-TIRN Navigating and Targeting system when we launched carrying two 500 lb GBU-12 LGB (Laser Guided Bombs) up to the Nellis Live Ordnance Ranges to put bombs through the windshields of trucks from 18,000 feet and many, many miles away. We also demonstrated the system's terrain-following ability to fly hands-off at 100 feet at 500 Kts. I remember one of the other pilots in the four-ship flight warning from well above: "Ron, do you see that rock up ahead?" (I did see it....briefly!) We held that 100 ft altitude hands-off through all sorts of terrain and then flat desert with the sage brush flashing by below. Ron said: "Keith, see that road crossing us up ahead?" We passed right in front of a car at over 700 feet-per-second! That was almost twenty years ago.



Ferris and Garan after mission with F-16 Weapons School at Nellis in 1992

Ron went on to Eglin AFB engaged in weapons development test flying, followed by attending the U. S. Naval Test Pilot School. Returning to Eglin, he was Director of the Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile Combined Test Force. Retiring from the Air Force in 2009, He was selected as a NASA pilot in July 2000. Before becoming an Astronaut, Ron was to become an Aquanaut, part of a six person crew to spend 18 days in Aquarius, the world's only undersea research laboratory. His life since has been quite productive as an Astronaut.

RON GARAN - ASTRONAUT

Astronaut Ron Garan completed his first space flight in 2008 on STS-124 Discovery as Flight Engineer when he spent 20 hours and 32 minutes of EVA in three spacewalks. Millions watched on TV as he and another astronaut worked with the STS-124 delivered 37 foot Japanese Kibo Lab and its Remote Manipulator System.

Ron launched with Russian Cosmonauts Andrey Borisenko and Alexander Samokutyaev on April 4, 2011 from Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on Soyuz TMA-21 for ISS Expeditions 27 & 28. The space craft was named "Gagarin" in honor of the first human space flight launched from the same pad fifty years and two weeks earlier. The astronaut and two cosmonauts replaced three on the ISS to make up the 6 person ISS crew. Three more crew will be replaced in May at the beginning of Expedition 28. The mission included the arrival of the next to last shuttle flight, STS-134, and expects the final Shuttle Mission STS-135 when Ron Garan and the next ISS Commander Mike Fossum are scheduled to conduct a spacewalk. They expect the arrival of two Russian Progress resupply vehicles and potentially the first commercial cargo vehicle, the Space-X Dragon. There will be up to three Russian spacewalks and possibly more US spacewalks. Ron invites us to follow progress on the NASA website: www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/station/expeditions/index.html Ron returns to earth on the same Soyuz for a landing in Kazakhstan in September. Here are some photos of the mission so far.



Ron Garan - Ready to go!



Soyuz Docked!



How about a little Exercise?



Endeavor Arrives



Missouri Floods



Ron and Agricultural Camera

ASAA joins Ron's wife Carmel and family in wishing Ron and the crews of Expeditions 27 & 28 Great Success, Bon Voyage and Safe trips home!

Keith