

## Leland Devon Melvin



Leland Devon Melvin is an American engineer and a retired NASA astronaut. He served on board the Space Shuttle Atlantis as a mission specialist on STS-122, and as mission specialist 1 on Space Transportation System (STS) -129.

Melvin was born in Lynchburg, VA in 1964 and attended Heritage High School and then went on to the University of Richmond on a football scholarship, where he received a bachelor's degree in Chemistry.

Melvin was a wide receiver on the University of Richmond football team from 1982–85. Melvin is first on the University of Richmond's career lists with 198 receptions for 2,669 yards and fourth on Richmond's career touchdown receptions list with 16. He was an AP honorable mention All-America selection in 1984 and 1985 and second team Apple Academic All-America in 1985. He was in the University of Richmond Athletic Hall of Fame Inductee Class of 1996–97 and selected for the All-UR Stadium Team in 2009, which commemorates the greatest Spiders to have played at the stadium in its 81-year history.

Melvin was chosen by the Detroit Lions in the 11th round of the 1986 NFL Draft as a wide receiver. During training camp, he pulled a hamstring and was released from the team in late August. He reported to the Dallas Cowboys the following spring but pulled a hamstring a second time, officially ending his professional football career.

In 1991, he received a Master of Science degree in Materials Science Engineering from the University of Virginia.

Melvin began working in Nondestructive Evaluation Sciences Branch at NASA Langley Research Center in 1989. In 1994, he was selected to lead the Vehicle Health Monitoring team for the cooperative NASA/ Lockheed Martin X-33 Reusable Launch Vehicle program. In 1996, he co-designed and monitored construction of an optical nondestructive evaluation facility capable of producing in-line fiber optic sensors.<sup>[12]</sup>

Selected as an astronaut in June 1998, Melvin reported for training in August 1998.

Melvin flew two missions on the Space Shuttle *Atlantis*: as a mission specialist on STS-122, and as mission specialist 1 on STS-129. STS-122 was the 24th shuttle mission to visit the International Space Station. Mission highlight was the delivery and installation of the European Space Agency's Columbus Laboratory. STS-129 was the 31st shuttle flight to the International Space Station. During the mission, the crew delivered two Express Logistics Carriers (ELC

Melvin has logged over 565 hours in space.

Subsequently he was assigned to the Astronaut Office Space Station Operations Branch, and the Education Department at NASA Headquarters, Washington, D.C. As co-manager of NASA's Educator Astronaut Program, Melvin traveled across the country, discussing space exploration with teachers and students, and promoting science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). He next served in the Robotics Branch of the Astronaut Office.

In October 2010, Melvin was named as associate administrator for the Office of Education. As associate administrator, Melvin was responsible for the development and implementation of NASA's education programs that inspire interest in science and technology and raise public awareness about NASA goals and missions.

He retired from NASA in February 2014.

After retiring from NASA, Leland actively conducts STEM lectures of his experience in space to a wide range of audiences, as well as his football career in the NFL.

He is described as being one of the most inspiring and influential NASA astronauts of all time.

Melvin has published two books; *Chasing Space: An Astronaut's Story of Grit, Grace, and Second Chances* and *Chasing Space: Young Reader's Edition*.

He has been featured in several National Geographic Space documentaries and videos.

Melvin resides in Lynchburg, Virginia.