

# Astronaut Twins Ready To Make Space History

October 10, 2010



Scott, left, and Mark Kelly on Friday. **Dmitry Lovetsky**

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida — The stars may have finally aligned for the world's only space sibling team.

Astronaut Scott Kelly is circling the planet, fresh into a 5 1/2-month space station mission. His identical twin, Mark, will join him next year, if NASA's shuttle schedule holds up.

Together, they will become the first blood relatives to meet up in space.

"It's something we hoped would happen," Mark said. "It wasn't done by design. But we're fortunate. I think it will be fun for us."

Scott is the international space station's next commander. He took off aboard a Russian Soyuz rocket early Friday — texting and joking with his brother right until the launch — and arrived at the orbiting complex Saturday night.

Mark is space shuttle Endeavour's next commander. He's due to take off at the end of

February and knock on the space station door March 1. It's currently slated to be NASA's last shuttle flight.

Mark couldn't resist a little twin humor in a congratulatory call to his brother at the space station.

"Hey Mark, this is Scott," Mark radioed from mission control outside Moscow. "You know, six months is a long time in space. So thanks for switching spots with me. Just hope I can remember how to fly that space shuttle."

Don't expect any handshakes when the Kellys unite more than 320 kilometers up. The 46-year-old brothers — Navy captains and former fighter pilots — have never shaken each other's hands and don't plan to start just because the space station cameras are rolling.

Rather, count on embraces and even arm-wrestling when the hatches pop open between the space station and Endeavour, and the world does a double take.

For now, anyway, there's a little difference — Scott is clean-shaven and Mark has a mustache.

The Kellys promise no gags or matching outfits in space. They insist that they've never done any of that.

While there have been father-and-son astronauts and cosmonauts, decades have separated their space missions.

A husband and wife flew together in space in 1992 — Mark Lee and Jan Davis — but NASA permitted it only because they were not married at the time they were picked for the shuttle mission and had no children. They divorced several years later.

The brothers expect their parents — retired police officers — to be stressed out more than usual as Endeavour's flight nears, not to mention their 94-year-old grandmother, who still asks if they might prefer becoming a lawyer or dentist.

"Fortunately, my brother's the one that's going to have to deal with it because I'll be in space," Scott said.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2010/10/10/astronaut-twins-ready-to-make-space-history-a2059>