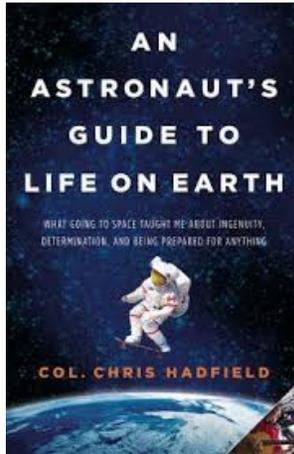


Book Review – An Astronaut’s Guide to Life on Earth – What going to space taught me about ingenuity, determination, and being prepared for anything
by Col. Chris Hadfield

Review by Chris Hope, Master CFI



Growing up with the space age, I have read my share of space biographies. From John Glenn and Neil Armstrong, through stories from shuttle pilots, I have had a front-row seat to the conquest of space. While they have all been fascinating, they have generally all been a straight-forward telling of the events and the sensations of the teller. From the title to the end, Col Hadfield’s book is different. He does talk about his life prior to NASA, and he does talk about his three space missions. But he really wants to talk about how training for space, and actually flying the shuttle and commanding the International Space Station affected his outlook on life.

For example, he talks about fitting in as “the new guy”, and he relates how he realized that he could either be a “minus one”, a person who is a detriment to the mission, a “plus one”, a person who is an asset to the mission, or “zero”, someone who is just there. And he points out that most of us want to be plus one, but sometimes when we are the new guy on the team it is better to be a zero. If you really don’t know what you are doing yet, better to watch and learn rather than jump in with ignorance and make a situation worse.

Or, is a good idea to “don’t sweat the small stuff”? His recommendation is to sweat all of the small stuff. By having all of the “small stuff” covered, the big stuff will be covered as well.

And what about multi-tasking? Astronauts really don’t multi-task. They focus single-mindedly on the task at hand, and when that task is past, they ask themselves, “What is the next thing that could kill me?” Let’s deal with it.

And what about moving up the career ladder? Chris was selected by the Canadian Space Agency in 1992, but his first mission did not launch until November 1995 when he held the position of mission specialist. Six years would pass before he would fly again, and again as a mission specialist. And then he would not return to space until the end of 2012 when he commanded the International Space Station. And like all of the astronauts, during the twenty year



period, he held command positions within NASA, and he held supporting positions. His note – we all serve in the position that required at the moment.

How do you deal with being the number-one guy? By realizing that you would not be the number one guy if you did not have a thousand one other guys attending to every detail. And then understanding that your next role is going to be one of those thousand and one other guys supporting a different number-one guy.

Col Hadfield tells a fascinating story of just being a guy who knew what he wanted to be from the time he was a child watching Neil Armstrong step on to the moon. And even though at the time there were no Canadians involved in space, he knew he had to be ready. And in relating his experiences on the Shuttle, in Russia, and on the ISS, he also relates the skills we all need to get along with our fellow man on earth. An enjoyable book.



Chris loves to read, write, and fly, but not necessarily in that order

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And here are more favorites: www.ChrisHopeFAAFlightInstructor.com/books/books.html