

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Leland Melvin

PERSON

Melvin, Leland, 1964-

Alternative Names: Leland Melvin;

Life Dates: February 15, 1964-

Place of Birth: Lynchburg, Virginia, USA

Work: Washington, D.C.

Occupations: Astronaut

Biographical Note

Aerospace engineer Leland D. Melvin was born in Lynchburg, Virginia on February 15, 1964 to Deems and Grace Melvin. Upon graduating from Heritage High School in 1982, Melvin was awarded a football scholarship to attend the University of Richmond. He earned his B.A. degree in chemistry from the University of Richmond in 1986, and his M.S. degree in materials science engineering from the University of Virginia in 1991.

From 1982 to 1985, Melvin was a wide receiver on the University of Richmond football team, where he became the all-time reception leader and was an Associated Press All-America selection in 1984 and 1985. The Detroit Lions selected Melvin in the eleventh round of the 1986 National Football League player draft. Several months later, he suffered a hamstring injury and was unable to fully recover. Melvin's NASA career began in 1989 in the Fiber Optic Sensors group of the Nondestructive Evaluation Sciences Branch at NASA Langley Research Center, where he conducted research in the area of physical measurements for the development of advanced instrumentation for nondestructive evaluation. In 1994, Melvin was selected to lead the vehicle health monitoring team for the cooperative Lockheed/NASA X-33 Reusable Launch Vehicle program.

In 1998, Melvin was selected into the NASA Astronaut Corps. He flew into space twice on the STS-122 in 2008 and STS-129 in 2009. Both missions were aboard the orbiter Atlantis. Melvin has logged more than 565 hours in space. Additionally, Melvin has served the Astronaut Office Space Station Operations Branch and the Robotics Branch of the Astronaut Office. In 2010, NASA Administrator Charles Bolden selected Melvin as the associate administrator for education. In this position, Melvin travels throughout the U.S. engaging thousands of students and teachers in the excitement of space exploration and inspiring them to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Melvin was also selected to serve on the White House National Science and Technology Council's Committee on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Education and is the U.S. representative on the International Space Education Board.

Melvin is a member of the American Chemical Society and the Society for Experimental Mechanics. He also holds honorary doctorates from Centre College, St Paul's College and Campbellsville University.

Leland D. Melvin was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on January 15, 2013.

Related Entries

Heritage High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Diploma

University of Richmond [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

B.S.

University of Virginia [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

M.S.

**National Aeronautics and Space Administration
(NASA) Langley Research Center** [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1989 to 1998]

Research Scientist

**National Aeronautics and Space Administration
(NASA) Johnson Space Center** [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1998 to 2010]

Astronaut

**National Aeronautics and Space Administration
(NASA)** [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 2010 to ?]

AA for Education

American Chemical Society (ACS) [MEMBEROF]
[from ? to ?]

Member, The Society of Experimental Mechanics

Graduate Society of Black Engineers [MEMBEROF]

[from 20181 to ?]

President, UVA

National Technical Association [MEMBEROF]

[from 19981 to ?]

Secretary, Hampton Roads Chapter