

Leading the Most Complex and Successful Space Life Science Research Mission in History

Being an astronaut is about much more than just flying the missions. Particularly for those select few chosen to command missions, it's about leadership, building teams, executing exquisitely, and operating innovatively in one of the most challenging and difficult operational environments possible. Colonel Rick Searfoss, astronaut, mission commander, expert speaker, consultant, and author, represents the best of that remarkable venture of completing human space missions.

During the thirty-year history of the Space Shuttle program, never was there a more more focused, complex, or diverse science research spaceflight than the STS-90 Neurolab research mission. In fact, it is the only one of 135 missions to have had its own book published of peer-reviewed, world-class science papers, all produced by some of the planet's most accomplished neuroscientists. As the last and by far most intricate Spacelab mission NASA ever flew, the success of this critical flight required the collaboration of hundreds of teams of thousands of individuals from virtually every engineering and science discipline. These teams came not just from within NASA, but represented the National Institutes of Health, research institutions, and nations around the world.

NASA chose as the key leader of the Neurolab mission an experienced Astronaut Commander of impeccable credentials and demonstrated leadership successes, Colonel Rick Searfoss. Under his guidance, teambuilding expertise, and refined people skills, this unique mission succeeded far beyond expectations. The Neurolab project set a new and never again equaled standard of how to accomplish productive, complex science in the dynamic, difficult, and dangerous environment of space.

Prior to the capstone of commanding the STS-90 mission, Colonel Searfoss consistently proved himself as a rarely talented real-world leader. Beginning with graduating number one in his United States Air Force Academy class overall, in academics, and in engineering, extending to distinguished military service as a U.S. Air Force pilot, during which he earned the Distinguished Flying Cross and Legion of Merit, and continuing as an astronaut, he has walked the talk, modeling every aspect of leadership and teamwork about which he speaks.