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Tennessee astronaut talks about time on space station

An astronaut from Tennessee who recently returned from the International Space Station says he was most surprised by the mental gymnastics of working in zero-gravity.

Barry "Butch" Wilmore, a Mt. Juliet High School graduate, told WPLN radio that he and five colleagues worked on dozens of science experiments to record how space affect everything from 3D printing to zebra fish.

"You think you'll adjust quickly, and physically, I adjusted fine," he said. "But, I mean, you lose stuff. Things float away. You have to think about every single thing that you're doing at every moment, because what you're doing can have dramatic consequences if you don't do it right."

It was also a social experiment of sorts with the six astronauts essentially trapped together in a vessel for 167 days.

Wilmore served as commander of the mission and as such he set some ground rules so everyone would enjoy the experience.

"You know, you're thrust in to live with people that you didn't choose to live with, and that experience needs to be the most wonderful, most professionally rewarding thing that you do in your professional life," he said.

In order to accomplish that, he said they'd get together once every other month and give each other one piece of constructive criticism.

"You couldn't say anything back. You just listened, you'd take it on board and evaluate it and try to make things better," he said. "And sometimes just saying those things, sharing those things openly, makes it better."

Wilmore returned from space earlier this month and says it will take some adjusting.

"Oh yeah, things feel heavy," he said. "You haven't really had to lift anything, weight-wise, for six months."

He is currently in Houston, where debriefings started last week

Sources:

The Tennessean

Associated Press 7:25 pm CDT March 28, 2015

<http://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2015/03/28/tennessee-astronaut-talks-time-space-station/70607984/>



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