

# **THE SPACE LESS TRAVELED**

**STRAIGHT TALK FROM  
APOLLO 14 ASTRONAUT  
EDGAR MITCHELL**

**COMPILED BY CAROL MERSCH**

PEN-L PUBLISHING

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*The Space Less Traveled: Straight Talk From  
Apollo 14 Astronaut Edgar Mitchell*  
Compiled by Carol Mersch

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“There is a saying in the world of public communications that if you can't dazzle them with brilliance, baffle them with bullshit. Since I can do neither, I will attempt to be articulate.”

Dr. Edgar Mitchell  
*When Foxes Guard the Hen House*

## Introduction

On January 31, 1971, Navy Captain Dr. Edgar Mitchell embarked on a journey into outer space, resulting in his becoming the sixth man to walk on the Moon. The Apollo 14 mission was NASA's third manned lunar landing. This historic journey ended safely nine days later on February 9, 1971. It was an audacious time in the history of mankind. For Mitchell, however, the most extraordinary journey was yet to come.

As he hurtled earthward through the abyss between the two worlds, Mitchell became engulfed by a profound sensation—a sense of universal connectedness. He intuitively sensed that his presence, that of his fellow astronauts, and that of the planet in the window were all part of a deliberate universal process—and that the glittering cosmos itself was in some sense conscious. The experience was so overwhelming, that Mitchell knew his life would never be the same: “You don’t look at our little planet from that perspective without its having a profound impact on your thinking.”

And while Mitchell regarded his experience, his education, and his lunar endeavors as invaluable milestones, they would become mere stepping stones to what would eventually become his true life passion—exploring the power of the conscious mind. It is a subject he embraces passionately once one gets past the predictable discussions of his spaceflight experience.

The palpable presence of collective mind, ever present and ever at work in the universe, is something he is sure of and something he feels bears examination, not only in the euphoric musings of mystics, zealots, and dreamers, but in the harsh light of science. When Mitchell left NASA, it was to devote his life to the area he believed society had overlooked—man’s potential, particularly the power of the mind.

In 1973 Mitchell founded the Institute of Noetic Sciences, an organization dedicated to exploring the underlying principles of consciousness in nature and how to apply this knowledge to the sustainability of our fragile spinning planet, spaceship Earth.

When Mitchell talks about these things, he loses the shyness and stiffness he takes on with strangers. He is not an easy person to get to know. Still, start Mitchell talking about planet Earth and the role of its inhabitants, and there is passion in his voice and the thoughts come tumbling out. He likes this role of

maverick, explorer, forger of new frontiers.

This is what Mitchell wants to be remembered for. Yes, it's nice to be known as one of the twelve men who stood on the moon and looked back at Earth. But what Edgar Mitchell considers his major contribution is helping to transform the whole way we think about ourselves and our capabilities.

And he's not finished yet.

~ Carol Mersch

## Perspective of a Moonwalker

“Although I have recorded the story of Apollo 14 and my impressions of that flight elsewhere, there is a particular experience that occurred on the flight that I think is worthy of a separate telling. It is a story all its own. It is the story of the powerful emotional experience I had in space as I looked upon the beauty of our planet as it appears in the cosmos.

Imagine the Earth, moon, and sun on plane. We are flying in ‘barbeque mode’ perpendicular to the elliptic plane and rotating in order to maintain a thermal balance. As we rotate every two minutes, I can see the Earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, the galaxies coming in parade across the window.

During my doctoral studies at MIT and Harvard I had studied about astronomy, star formation, and galactic formations, so I presumably knew how matter on Earth and the universe were formed in the furnace of those ancient stars. But I suddenly realized on the way home from the moon as I looked out at this, that the



molecules of my body and the molecules of the spacecraft and my partners had been prototyped in some ancient generation of stars. That's good astrophysical theory—but suddenly those were *my* molecules. It wasn't an intellectual exercise anymore.

There was a sense of oneness, a connectedness that was very personal. What were my molecules doing out there? The sense of unity was overwhelming. It was staggering. I realized that our story of ourselves—who are we and how we got here—needed to be asked anew from the perspective of the first generation to travel into space.

Any questions that my curious mind might have had about our progress, about our destiny, about the nature of the universe, suddenly melted away as I experienced that oneness. I could reach out and touch the farthest parts and experience the vast reaches of the universe. It was clear that those tiny pinpoints of light in brilliant profusion were a part of the plan. They were linked together as part of the whole as they framed and formed a backdrop for this fragile planet Earth. I knew then that we were not alone in this universe—that earth was only one of millions, perhaps billions of planets like our own with intelligent life, all playing a role in that great divine plan in the evolution of life.

In an instant I knew for certain that what I was seeing

was no accident, that it did not occur randomly and without a plan, and that life did not, by accident, arise from the primordial earthly sea.

The story of ourselves as created from a scientific cosmology is incomplete and possibly flawed. And the story of ourselves as created by our cultural cosmologies is archaic and most certainly flawed.

The universe is interconnected in a way that we've never thought about before. It took me many months after that experience to understand what took place. This was a jarring awakening experience—a life-changing moment that could not be ignored.”

~ Apollo 14 Astronaut Edgar Mitchell  
*The View from Space*



# THE SPACE LESS TRAVELED





“Suddenly from behind the rim of the moon, long, slow-motion moments of immense majesty, there emerges a sparkling blue and white jewel, a light, delicate sky blue sphere, laced with slow swirling veils of white, rising gradually like a small pearl in a thick sea of black mystery. It takes more than a moment to fully realize this is Earth—home.”

*The Way of the Explorer*







# EARTH



## *The Space Less Traveled*

“I have the home planet out the hatch window and it’s passing very low. We only have a few moments in each window, but it’s a most inviting and magnificent view. I’m very glad that we have the Earth as a home planet. I hope that we can keep it so inviting.”

Reporting to Mission Control from Apollo 14  
February 3, 1971





## *Earth*

“It is quite apparent in the view from space how tiny, how fragile, how limited the Earth is if required to support a civilization determined to destroy itself by the misuse of its greatest gifts.”

*The View from Space*



## *The Space Less Traveled*

“We humans must learn to transcend our greed and self service in order to serve the greater good for all living creatures on this planet. It means we learn to realize, at individual and societal levels, that we are all interconnected and thus what we do to one, we do to all—and to ourselves.”

IONS Summary Report  
October 23, 2008



## *Earth*

“The issue is not just about saving nature—it’s about saving *us*.

“It’s not pay now or pay later. Its pay now or there will be no later.”

“Toward a Sustainable Global Future”  
IONS 2009



## *The Space Less Traveled*

“An image of the Earth for those of us who have been in space evokes a sense of unity, because when you see Earth from space you don’t see the disharmony, you don’t see the boundaries, you see a unified magnificent beautiful planet that is our home. And only when you’ve been down here and realize how we humans fight and squabble and tear things up and destroy the environment and are insensitive to what we do, does it hit you pretty hard.

“We need to see it and understand it from the point of view of what it looks like when you’re out and away from Earth. It looks harmonious, unified, and consistent, and without boundaries—but we don’t live that way.”

Documentary: “Voices for Sustainability”  
*Living Dreams Films*, 2010



## *Earth*

“We now possess the power and knowledge to control Earth, but do we yet have the wisdom and sense of destiny necessary to control the technological genie we have set free? Has the lid to Pandora’s Box been opened ever so little? Has the sorcerer’s apprentice opened the great book of magic?”

*The View from Space*



## *The Space Less Traveled*

“As humans, we all think our thoughts, dream our dreams, of a better and peaceful place to live. But thoughts, dreams, and visions alone do not change the world.”

*The View from Space*



## *Earth*

“For Earth to survive as a planet and to provide for the nurturing, the growth, and well-being of its inhabitants, then we, humankind, must rise to the challenge of learning to be stewards to the planet and to each other.”

*The View from Space*



## *The Space Less Traveled*

“Unrestrained exponential growth in any closed system is not sustainable. It cannot be sustained indefinitely on a finite space.”

“Toward a Sustainable Global Future”  
IONS 2009





## *Earth*

“We are the crew of spaceship Earth and we are in mutiny. And how can you run a spaceship with a crew that is mutinous?”

“A Voyage into Mind and Space”  
Chicago Planetary Studies Foundation, March 2004



## *The Space Less Traveled*

“The United States is the largest energy-consuming country on Earth—and with no comprehensive energy strategy.”

“Toward a Sustainable Global Future”  
IONS 2009



## *Earth*

“It is time we concentrate on leaving this planet in a little better shape than it was when we arrived.”

*Albuquerque Journal*  
March 30, 1971



## *The Space Less Traveled*

"The journey to the moon was a very powerful experience; it was life changing. We have been saying since the early days of the Apollo program that if we could ever get our political leaders to have a summit meeting in space, we'd have a totally different world."

*San Francisco Chronicle*  
September 16, 2007



## *Earth*

“Civilization needs to give a great deal of thought  
to exactly what it’s doing to itself.”

Response to a visitor  
Spacefest Conference, Phoenix, AZ  
August 2007



## *The Space Less Traveled*

“We have within us the seeds to create ourselves as a harmonious, kind, and loving crew of spaceship Earth. But we have missed the message.”

“A Voyage into Mind and Space”  
Chicago Planetary Studies Foundation  
March 2004



## *Earth*

*Excerpt from exchange between Edgar Mitchell and India's revered Sadhguru, founder of the Isha Foundation, a profound mystic, a visionary humanitarian, and a prominent spiritual leader.*

*Sadhguru:* Food is the raw material. What you call a body is a heap of cauliflower. Before we came to this planet, a boundless number of people walked this planet. Where are they? They're topsoil! We will also be topsoil one day.

*Mitchell:* Okay, we're getting closer together.

*Sadhguru:* We've never been far apart.

*Mitchell:* But there has got to be more meaning to life than just topsoil!

*Sadhguru:* So there is something in you that is capable of making a cauliflower into a human being. This is not a small thing. It is a phenomenon!

IONS Conference, Tucson, AZ  
June 2009

