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RESPONSE FROM SPACE TO CURIERUL ROMÂNESC'S QUESTIONS

WILLIAM SURLS "BILL" MCARTHUR, JR.

EXPEDITION 12 COMMANDER AND NASA SCIENCE OFFICER:

“THE QUALITIES NEEDED TO MAKE IT TO SPACE ARE PATIENCE AND HARD WORK. PATIENCE BECAUSE IT TAKES A LONG TIME. AND HARD WORK BECAUSE THE EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCES NEEDED TO BECOME AN ASTRONAUT REQUIRE SIGNIFICANT EFFORT.”

I have always been and will remain a great admirer and supporter of space research and exploration (not conquest!), of humanity's journeys to new horizons in outer space.

I'm convinced that, during these journeys of space exploration, we will meet other forms of life and all that we learn from space research will assist the prosperity of the human species. I read about and follow the news surrounding space research involving astronauts as well as cosmonauts and I listen to my son Marc Ciupitu, who works at NASA, full of fascination and admiration, when he talks about the American and Russian space suits, about training activities at the Johnson Space Center in Houston and the Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center in Star City and about his interaction with the astronauts and cosmonauts who work onboard the International Space Station (ISS). Marc describes them as extraordinary people, with exceptional and extensive education and work experience, but who are yet kind and extremely modest, and very friendly. These images presented by Marc gave me the courage to send, through him, who as one of the founders and a current sponsor

of the CURIERUL ROMÂNESC could not deny my request, a few questions to the Expedition 12 commander Bill McArthur and flight engineer Valeri Tokarev onboard the ISS. Marc forwarded them my questions through the following message: "Hello Bill and Valeri, how are you? I trust you're enjoying your stay on the ISS so far. Gentlemen, I have a small request to ask. My parents Silvia and Octavian, who live in Sweden, have a small quarterly news publication, of which my mother is the editor-in-chief, for Romanians living in exile. This publication just celebrated its 25th anniversary last month and reaches Romanians in countries stretched all over the world. I mentioned to my folks what great guys you and Valeri are and so they've asked if you might want to be featured in their publication. My



Astronaut William S. McArthur,
Expedition 12 commander and
NASA Space Station Science Officer
Foto: © NASA.

mother forwarded some questions that I've translated and included below. You might be too busy for this, and if so, it's totally understandable. Just figured I'd ask. Best wishes, Marc."

I wasn't sure that we would receive a response, because Marc told us they were extremely busy "up there", and just when I started to lose hope, I received the following message from Marc: "Hello Mom, Bill sent a response from space!" Bill's response began as follows: "Hi Marc, how's the family? How about the neighborhood? I'd be happy to answer a few questions. Looking forward to the Orlan EVA in February. Take care. Bill".

Below follows the interview conducted via a "great distance" with William Surlis "Bill" McArthur, Jr.

Silvia Constantinescu: Please say a few words about yourself.

William S. "Bill" McArthur, Jr.: Dear Silvia and Octavian, I've worked for the government all my life, first as an Army officer and pilot and then as an astronaut. I've been married for 30 years and have two daughters, 26 and 24 years old. The older daughter, an attorney, has been married for 3 years. The younger daughter just completed graduate school with a Masters in Anthropology.

S.C.: Why did you choose to become an astronaut?

W.M.: As a boy, I was very interested in the military (my father fought in WW II and was a general) and in flying. I was always interested in math and science and therefore studied engineering at West Point. As a young helicopter pilot, I learned about the opportunity to apply for the Astronaut program and did so, not because I thought I would be successful but because I wanted to tell people one day that I had at least tried. I did not really choose to become an astronaut.

My interests led me to choose to become an aerospace engineer, a pilot, and later a test pilot. That education and those experiences created the opportunity to become an astronaut.

S.C.: What qualities are needed to get "up there", in space?

W.M.: The qualities needed to make it to space are patience and hard work. Patience because it takes a long time. And hard work because the education and experiences needed to become an astronaut require significant effort.

S.C.: What sensation do you feel when you look from "up there" onto our Earth full of people?