Nicole Stott, Astronaut: It took a little while for me to really decide, make that decision, you know, that, "Well, I'm going to fill out the application" kind of thing. And it really wasn't until I was working here at KSC that that happened. It was after a few years of working here at KSC when people that I considered to be mentors encouraged me to do it. Once they knew I was interested in it all, they encouraged me to do it. And I honestly think without that, I would never have even picked up the pen and filled out the application. I really don't. Because I didn't feel like there was anything special about what I had done, and especially after seeing the people around me that were in the astronaut office, or even people that were working here at KSC with me, I'm like, "How do I stand out at all?"

So I'm very thankful. 'Cause what cooler place to fly than space? Which is what led me down the whole path to wanting to work for NASA to begin with. But I'm very thankful to the people that maybe knew a little bit more about me or saw something in me that I didn't necessarily see in myself.

Stott: In preparing to fly, the training for a space station flight especially, is a lot of time out of the
country. So over 50 percent of my time, for about three years before my first flight, was in Russia, or Japan, or Europe, or Canada. So a lot of back and forth a month here, a month there. The biggest challenge is how do you manage, kind of, that balance of family and getting ready to fly in space, or flying in space. And I think the key to that is, like it would be with any balancing work and family, is just keeping them engaged as much as possible, and making them feel like they're part of the training and the mission, too. And that was what worked best for me, I think, in overcoming that challenge, which I think overall has been the biggest one.

Music

Stott: From my own self, from looking out the windows of the station and looking at Earth, looking out into space and seeing kind of this depth to the stars, and kind of that connection that you get to that, the word "awesome" just totally applies. I really believe I have a better understanding of the definition of the word "awe" because of it all. It's one of those things that I wish anybody that wanted to do it could do it, if it was just for five minutes, could get up there and have that view, and have that feeling of how your body adjusts to something like that. Our bodies and our brains are pretty amazing things,
and the way that they just take the signals that they're being given and deal with the different

environment. And we're doing some really cool stuff with the exercise equipment we have, and some

of the studies going on, to figure out how do we counter that so, since we know we're coming back to

gravity, that we'll be ready to do that, too.

Music

Stott: The international relationships we've developed, and kind of overcoming the challenge to build

something that complex in space, with 15, 16 different countries involved, and the positive

relationships that we've developed from doing that, have benefited us here on Earth in many ways as

well. I think we, because of those relationships, deal with our international partners on other issues in

a much more positive way. I also think that the station is this perfect example of getting a dual benefit

out of something. Everything about it -- the science that's going on, the way the space station works,

the solar arrays for generating electricity, the systems that clean our air,

all of that kind of self-contained thing -- every aspect of it is helping life get better here on Earth,

and helping us figure out how to explore further off our planet, get further out of low Earth orbit.
Stott: The parallels are perfect. And after flying in space, I think back on it, and I look and I try to find what was the one best training experience I had in preparation for what it would be like to live on the space station.

And living in Aquarius, and its 60 feet underwater, was in this habitat that was like the size of a school bus, was the perfect analog to that.

Stott: If you combine what was done, with the history of the space shuttle, with what we did with Apollo and the programs before that, there really is this wealth of knowledge for how we live in space, how we assemble things in space, how we do science in space, I don't think you could look for any better example of preparation for future spaceflight. And certainly the lessons that we learned over time, and how you manage a program like that, the things that you need to do to keep yourself safe, and then allow yourself to prosper are just represented very well by what went on with the Space Shuttle Program. And I'll tell you what, you couldn't look for a better group of people to assemble and care for and feed spacecraft than you have here at Kennedy Space Center.
The expertise that's here is amazing. And I hope for that future, we'll be taking advantage of that expertise as well.