



STORYTIME:
MEETING
NEIL
ARMSTRONG



1
00:00:01,860 --> 00:00:07,500

[Music]

2
00:00:08,060 --> 00:00:14,660

>>Our Center here, in case you didn't already know, is named NASA Armstrong- Neil A. Armstrong.

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00:00:14,660 --> 00:00:21,490

Neil was a test pilot here, actually, from the late 1950s to the early 1960s.

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00:00:21,490 --> 00:00:30,000

Neil had these old English sports cars- they were called MGs...MGA, and they were very

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00:00:30,000 --> 00:00:31,529

unreliable.

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00:00:31,529 --> 00:00:33,300

And Neil had four of them.

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00:00:33,300 --> 00:00:38,820

And he lived on a hill in the south end of Palmdale and Neil would go out in the morning

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00:00:38,820 --> 00:00:43,020

and he would jump into one of the MGs and he would roll down the hill...and when he

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00:00:43,020 --> 00:00:47,689

got to the bottom of the hill, he would put the car in second gear and let the clutch

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00:00:47,689 --> 00:00:49,580

out to see if the car would start.

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00:00:49,580 --> 00:00:53,339

And if the car started, then he would drive off to work.

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00:00:53,339 --> 00:00:57,980
If the car didn't start, then he would continue rolling down to the bottom of the hill and

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00:00:57,980 --> 00:01:01,269
put it back in neutral and then there was a gas station at the bottom of the hill with

14
00:01:01,269 --> 00:01:02,420
a garage.

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00:01:02,420 --> 00:01:05,280
And he would roll in there and he would take the keys and he would throw them under

16
00:01:05,280 --> 00:01:06,780
the mat.

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00:01:06,780 --> 00:01:10,670
And then he would walk back up the hill and he'd get into his second MG.

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00:01:10,670 --> 00:01:12,060
And he repeat this.

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00:01:12,060 --> 00:01:17,700
There were days when all four of the MGs would be parked in front of the garage there and

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00:01:17,700 --> 00:01:23,590
Milt or Bill Dana would have to drive down and pick Neil up to give him a ride to work.

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00:01:23,590 --> 00:01:27,799
Milt loved to tell the story about Neil and his unreliable cars.

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00:01:27,799 --> 00:01:33,179

All the way through the Apollo program, I understood that Neil drove rather, I would

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00:01:33,179 --> 00:01:38,429

say, pedestrian sort of vehicles, he was not one of the guys that would run around in a

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00:01:38,429 --> 00:01:43,590

Corvette or anything like that, that was not Neil's style.

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00:01:43,590 --> 00:01:51,229

He flew a variety of aircraft, the F-4D Skyray, the F-5D Skyray...he ended up flying the X-15.

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00:01:51,229 --> 00:01:55,740

He had a very famous story that happened on the X-15- he ended up pulling out a little

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00:01:55,740 --> 00:02:01,859

bit too soon and the X-15 skipped back out of the atmosphere...he ended up over-flying

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00:02:01,859 --> 00:02:04,279

Pasadena before he got it turned around.

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00:02:04,279 --> 00:02:08,600

He ended up just barely making it all the way back to Edwards and landing on the lakebed.

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00:02:08,600 --> 00:02:11,100

He was a very experienced test pilot.

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00:02:11,100 --> 00:02:15,890

He was very calm, even when things were not necessarily going his way.

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00:02:15,890 --> 00:02:20,070

This would actually play out several times after he was selected as an astronaut.

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00:02:20,070 --> 00:02:23,890
He had an incident that happened about a year before he landed on the moon.

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00:02:23,890 --> 00:02:29,239
He was flying the LLTV actually, one of the trainer vehicles, down at Johnson.

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00:02:29,239 --> 00:02:36,701
The gyroscope that was the feedback inside to keep the vehicle stabilized failed, and

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00:02:36,701 --> 00:02:42,299
as a result of that vehicle started tilting over, and he was perhaps three hundred feet

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00:02:42,299 --> 00:02:47,710
off the ground, and he was about a second and a half from the point where it probably

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00:02:47,710 --> 00:02:50,830
would have been a fatal accident, and he ejected.

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00:02:50,830 --> 00:02:53,829
Neil was very very calm under pressure.

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00:02:53,829 --> 00:02:58,660
During the actual moon landing, if you go back and listen to the tape replay of that,

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00:02:58,660 --> 00:03:01,450
they're down to about twenty seconds of fuel.

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00:03:01,450 --> 00:03:06,370
You have to imagine an entire Saturn V, about six and a half million pounds, seven

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00:03:06,370 --> 00:03:09,420

and a half million pounds of thrust when it lifts off the pad.

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00:03:09,420 --> 00:03:14,599

You have all this rocket, all this hardware, all this fuel, they go a quarter of a million

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00:03:14,599 --> 00:03:20,629

miles in space to the moon, and they arrive at the moon and he lands on the moon with

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00:03:20,629 --> 00:03:23,040

twenty seconds of fuel remaining.

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00:03:23,040 --> 00:03:26,670

That's how ragged-edge everything was in getting there.

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00:03:26,670 --> 00:03:30,980

And there was a lot of thought at that time that even then, that Apollo 11 would not

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00:03:30,980 --> 00:03:34,459

succeed, that we wouldn't make it.

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00:03:34,459 --> 00:03:38,159

And ultimately that didn't play out that way.

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00:03:38,159 --> 00:03:39,390

Everything worked out.

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00:03:39,390 --> 00:03:45,469

It wasn't perfectly smooth- there were alarms, the 1201 alarm, 1202 alarm during the approach

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00:03:45,469 --> 00:03:46,500

to the moon.

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00:03:46,500 --> 00:03:51,390

Neil was told to ignore those and so the alarms were going off and Neil kept right on going.

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00:03:51,390 --> 00:03:55,900

They looked at the ground where they were supposed to land and it was a boulder field.

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00:03:55,900 --> 00:04:00,980

And Neil had to fly downrange for quite some distance before he found a level spot that

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00:04:00,980 --> 00:04:04,480

was clear of boulders and he was able to set down, he and Buzz Aldrin.

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00:04:04,480 --> 00:04:08,599

It's just such an amazing story that he was able to pull all this off with twenty seconds

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00:04:08,599 --> 00:04:12,090

of fuel left after going all the way to the moon.

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00:04:12,090 --> 00:04:17,791

And Charlie Duke was the CapCom at that time, and Charlie makes this great statement, over

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00:04:17,791 --> 00:04:22,390

the radio to Neil after Neil announces that they had landed.

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00:04:22,390 --> 00:04:25,660

Charlie says >>"Roger Tranquility, we copy you on the ground, you got a bunch of guys about

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00:04:25,660 --> 00:04:30,410

to turn blue, we're breathing again, thanks a lot."

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00:04:30,410 --> 00:04:35,449

>>It was quite the event for Neil to have been able to pull that off.

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00:04:35,449 --> 00:04:42,460
Everyone seemed to have a great deal of respect for Neil's piloting skills.

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00:04:42,460 --> 00:04:46,790
So the day I met Neil, it was actually a quiet day here at the Center, there wasn't much

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00:04:46,790 --> 00:04:47,790
going on.

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00:04:47,790 --> 00:04:53,510
I knew that there was this committee that Neil had been assigned to be the chair of.

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00:04:53,510 --> 00:04:58,200
And they were tasked with trying to figure out how we could fly more experimental airplanes

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00:04:58,200 --> 00:04:59,200
here.

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00:04:59,200 --> 00:05:02,539
There was not going to be any sort of a press conference, there was not gonna be any sort

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00:05:02,539 --> 00:05:07,160
of a meet and greet or him coming out to the auditorium and talking to people.

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00:05:07,160 --> 00:05:12,120
And so I really didn't anticipate running into him or seeing him or anything at all.

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00:05:12,120 --> 00:05:15,819
And I happened to be walking by the conference room where they were meeting at one point.

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00:05:15,819 --> 00:05:19,990
And a friend of mine stuck his head out and he grabbed me by the arm and said "you need

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00:05:19,990 --> 00:05:20,990
to come in here."

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00:05:20,990 --> 00:05:23,880
He dragged me in and there were a series of younger people.

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00:05:23,880 --> 00:05:25,090
Neil was standing there.

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00:05:25,090 --> 00:05:27,590
And he was talking about flying airplanes.

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00:05:27,590 --> 00:05:32,539
There were only like five or six people and I got put into this circle and here's Neil

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00:05:32,539 --> 00:05:36,220
Armstrong just talking about flying airplanes.

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00:05:36,220 --> 00:05:40,260
Completely unanticipated, a total surprise to me.

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00:05:40,260 --> 00:05:44,199
And I was just so blown away by the moment.

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00:05:44,199 --> 00:05:47,389
There's very...there's actually big pieces of it that I don't recall.

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00:05:47,389 --> 00:05:52,990
But he was talking about onto and off of aircraft carriers during the Korean War.

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00:05:52,990 --> 00:06:04,639
He was just such a quiet, humble...incredible...it's just so amazing to think you have this image

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00:06:04,639 --> 00:06:11,080
of what your heroes are like and he was none of those things, bigger than life, he was

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00:06:11,080 --> 00:06:13,050
none of those things.

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00:06:13,050 --> 00:06:16,550
Very very calm, quiet, excited to talk about airplanes.

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00:06:16,550 --> 00:06:21,440
If you asked him a question about airplanes, you got this excited, almost like boyhood

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00:06:21,440 --> 00:06:23,699
"yeah, I wanna talk about this stuff."

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00:06:23,699 --> 00:06:26,259
He had a glider and he use to fly gliders.

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00:06:26,259 --> 00:06:31,970
He would go out on the weekends and just fly, just for the fun of it because it was fun

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00:06:31,970 --> 00:06:33,670
to him to actually do this.

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00:06:33,670 --> 00:06:38,690
I have to admit just, even just sitting here talking about this, the hairs on my arms and

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00:06:38,690 --> 00:06:43,229
back of my neck are standing up, just thinking

about this is the guy that went all the way

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00:06:43,229 --> 00:06:48,060
to the moon and landed on the moon and walked
on the moon and came back.

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00:06:48,060 --> 00:06:51,580
And he didn't really appreciate talking about
that.

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00:06:51,580 --> 00:06:53,710
To him, it was about flying.

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00:06:53,710 --> 00:06:57,330
And to him, flying was airplanes.

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00:06:57,330 --> 00:07:01,819
And that was really an incredible thing about
Neil.