

Storytime: Nils & Neil



1
00:00:00,840 --> 00:00:04,340
[Music]

2
00:00:04,420 --> 00:00:07,200
[Radio Chatter]

3
00:00:07,440 --> 00:00:09,420
>>I didn't want to go to bed that night.

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00:00:09,429 --> 00:00:14,200
My parents told me 'don't worry, you won't miss it, we'll wake you up'.

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00:00:14,200 --> 00:00:18,020
They did, and I remember watching him.

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00:00:18,020 --> 00:00:25,250
And I remember splashdown and also going into the quarantine and seeing all that on television.

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00:00:25,250 --> 00:00:28,750
When I was a little kid, I used to play astronaut in the backyard.

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00:00:28,750 --> 00:00:34,110
Neil Armstrong and others like him are what inspired me, they were my heroes.

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00:00:34,110 --> 00:00:41,710
I'm Nils Larson, I'm the lead project test pilot for NASA on the X-59 from NASA Armstrong

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00:00:41,710 --> 00:00:44,300
Flight Research Center.

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00:00:44,300 --> 00:00:49,150
Neil Armstrong flew the X-15, there were a couple other aircraft that he flew, the early

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00:00:49,150 --> 00:00:55,230
DinoSoar program, which was somewhat similar to a space shuttle.

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00:00:55,230 --> 00:01:00,000
I sit approximately where his desk was when he was here.

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00:01:00,000 --> 00:01:06,680
All these guys that were our heroes, you know, to kind of see that you're sitting where they

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00:01:06,680 --> 00:01:09,909
used to sit, that's pretty cool.

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00:01:09,909 --> 00:01:14,859
Well I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Armstrong a couple of times.

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00:01:14,859 --> 00:01:19,251
Back when I was in the Air Force flying U-2s, he did a program called 'First Flights' and he

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00:01:19,251 --> 00:01:20,719
came out to fly the U-2.

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00:01:20,719 --> 00:01:24,969
One of my friends was the instructor who got to fly with Mr. Armstrong.

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00:01:24,969 --> 00:01:29,289
The U-2 is a difficult airplane to fly, it's very challenging, especially in the landing

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00:01:29,289 --> 00:01:30,289
phase.

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00:01:30,289 --> 00:01:33,920
One of the things that will happen with the

U-2 is it has a tendency to skip back into

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00:01:33,920 --> 00:01:36,710

the air if you don't flare it out quite enough.

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00:01:36,710 --> 00:01:41,859

Mr. Armstrong on his first landing had a very slight skip, maybe six inches, you know, something

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00:01:41,859 --> 00:01:43,990

that everyone of us would have taken any day.

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00:01:43,990 --> 00:01:49,069

The instructor keyed the mic and said 'That's one small skip for man' and then said 'Sorry,

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00:01:49,069 --> 00:01:50,159

sir, I had to.'

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00:01:50,159 --> 00:01:51,920

So we all thought that was kind of funny.

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00:01:51,920 --> 00:01:57,560

And I remember asking him later, I go 'so what's it feel like to have flown with Christopher

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00:01:57,560 --> 00:01:58,780

Columbus?'

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00:01:58,780 --> 00:02:03,159

And he had to pause for a second and he goes 'Oh, wow that is pretty cool.'

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00:02:03,159 --> 00:02:07,509

The really cool part when everything was done, we had a squadron bar and he came up to the

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00:02:07,509 --> 00:02:11,070

squadron bar and we all got a chance to meet

him and talk to him.

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00:02:11,070 --> 00:02:13,220
Everybody wanted to know what he thought of
our airplane.

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00:02:13,220 --> 00:02:17,579
You hear a lot of different stories about
the man, and he really truly was an engineer and

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00:02:17,579 --> 00:02:21,900
a test pilot first, it was really great, because
we kept asking him 'what'd you think of our

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00:02:21,900 --> 00:02:27,370
airplane', and he told us, you know, and talked
about what he thought it was like to land

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00:02:27,370 --> 00:02:33,069
and all the different aspects of the airplane,
and so, you know, for the first minutes, maybe

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00:02:33,069 --> 00:02:38,560
even half hour that we were there, we didn't
talk about the Moon or going to space or anything

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00:02:38,560 --> 00:02:39,560
like that.

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00:02:39,560 --> 00:02:42,750
It was about our airplane and what he thought
of our airplane and we were excited to hear

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00:02:42,750 --> 00:02:45,200
his thoughts on our airplane.

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00:02:45,200 --> 00:02:47,220
Eventually we got to talk about the Moon.

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00:02:47,220 --> 00:02:51,900

And as time went on, other people would come in and we'd talk about their flight that day,

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00:02:51,900 --> 00:02:57,519

and, you know, the pilot community likes a little good-natured ribbing, people, you know,

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00:02:57,519 --> 00:02:59,790

gave each other a little guff back and forth.

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00:02:59,790 --> 00:03:04,810

I remember Mr. Armstrong standing there with a beer in his hand and says 'This is what

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00:03:04,810 --> 00:03:08,819

I really miss, the camaraderie of the squadron.'

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00:03:08,819 --> 00:03:13,069

It was like he was a member of our squadron for that day, so that was really pretty cool.

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00:03:13,069 --> 00:03:18,090

Of course, everybody wanted to buy him a beer, everybody chalked it up on their tab, you know,

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00:03:18,090 --> 00:03:22,730

so we could make sure that we all had the chance to buy him a beer, even though he only

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00:03:22,730 --> 00:03:23,730

drank one.

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00:03:23,730 --> 00:03:28,320

That was the first time I got to meet him, and that was pretty special, that was pretty

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00:03:28,320 --> 00:03:29,320

interesting.

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00:03:29,380 --> 00:03:32,659
One of the other times I got to meet with
Mr. Armstrong, it was early in my career here

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00:03:32,659 --> 00:03:38,239
at NASA, we were working on a study for a
lunar lander research vehicle, or training

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00:03:38,239 --> 00:03:39,239
vehicle.

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00:03:39,239 --> 00:03:43,849
We were down in Houston for a meeting with
several of the moon walkers, we were sitting

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00:03:43,849 --> 00:03:49,079
there at breakfast, Harrison Schmitt was already
there, so he was at one end of the table,

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00:03:49,079 --> 00:03:53,480
and I was the last guy through the line, so
I was way at the other end of the table.

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00:03:53,480 --> 00:03:58,650
Luckily for me, I wasn't truly the last guy
there, the last one was Mr. Armstrong.

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00:03:58,650 --> 00:04:01,430
So he came and sat right next to me.

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00:04:01,430 --> 00:04:05,340
So we all knew who he was, that was kind of
obvious, so we went around the table and all

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00:04:05,340 --> 00:04:06,609
introduced ourselves.

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00:04:06,609 --> 00:04:13,019
I was the last one to introduce myself and

at the time I said 'Well, I'm you about forty-five

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00:04:13,019 --> 00:04:17,350

or so years ago.' and he just kind of looked at me, and I said 'Well, I'm the, you know,

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00:04:17,350 --> 00:04:25,290

Dryden test pilot assigned to the LLRV/LLTV', which originally before he became an astronaut,

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00:04:25,290 --> 00:04:31,690

he was the guy that was on the study back in the 1960s, and here I was in the 2009,

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00:04:31,690 --> 00:04:36,030

somewhere around in there, a guy on that study, so that was pretty cool, to, you know, get

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00:04:36,030 --> 00:04:37,810

to meet him and talk to him about that.

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00:04:37,810 --> 00:04:44,450

Watching the astronauts going to the Moon he first time is what put me on this path

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00:04:44,450 --> 00:04:47,250

to go study and become a test pilot.

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00:04:47,250 --> 00:04:52,540

I think it's really interesting that I get to sit in about the same place that he used

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00:04:52,540 --> 00:05:00,000

to sit and it's pretty daunting and inspiring and just plain awesome when you think about

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00:05:00,000 --> 00:05:04,910

it, when you're looking out the same window and looking down the taxiway and kind of reflect

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00:05:04,910 --> 00:05:09,190

back on how you got here.