



Debora Fairbrother



1

00:00:00,010 --> 00:00:04,040

<click> My name is Debbie Fairbrother, I'm the

2

00:00:04,040 --> 00:00:08,070

Chief of the NASA Balloon Program Office and I am

3

00:00:08,070 --> 00:00:12,120

the management structure for the balloon program.

4

00:00:12,120 --> 00:00:16,130

(music)

5

00:00:16,130 --> 00:00:20,150

I don't know what I wanted to do when I grew

6

00:00:20,150 --> 00:00:24,190

up. When I went into college, I liked math and

7

00:00:24,190 --> 00:00:28,220

science, so I picked engineering. I didn't know what engineering

8

00:00:28,220 --> 00:00:32,240

job could do. My aunt was an engineer so I knew

9

00:00:32,240 --> 00:00:36,280

that a female could do engineering. But, I was more just getting

10

00:00:36,280 --> 00:00:40,300

tools for my tool box and doing something

11

00:00:40,300 --> 00:00:44,340

and I'd enjoyed. I enjoyed the math and I enjoyed the science. I didn't really

12

00:00:44,340 --> 00:00:48,380

understand balloons until I was in grad school and some of my

13

00:00:48,380 --> 00:00:52,390

fellow students were working on balloon film research. But, I didn't

14

00:00:52,390 --> 00:00:56,420

quite understand balloons until I actually got the job.

15

00:00:56,420 --> 00:01:00,440

It was at international and realize how unique

16

00:01:00,440 --> 00:01:04,460

and enormous and just cool balloons could be.

17

00:01:04,460 --> 00:01:08,470

(music)

18

00:01:08,470 --> 00:01:12,510

My first day at NASA, I was

19

00:01:12,510 --> 00:01:16,520

kind of in shock that I had actually taken the leap

20

00:01:16,520 --> 00:01:20,590

to leave Texas, to leave my family and friends

21

00:01:20,590 --> 00:01:24,630

and venture out on the eastern shore of Virginia

22

00:01:24,630 --> 00:01:28,650

for a job following balloons. So it was

23

00:01:28,650 --> 00:01:32,690

nervous, but I knew some of the people I worked

24

00:01:32,690 --> 00:01:36,740

with because I had done research for them and so that made me feel

25

00:01:36,740 --> 00:01:40,770

a little bit more comfortable and ultimately has become home.

26

00:01:40,770 --> 00:01:44,790

(music)

27

00:01:44,790 --> 00:01:48,830

In my life my family has been a huge influence. Growing up both

28

00:01:48,830 --> 00:01:52,870

sets of grandparents owned small businesses. One owned a small country

29

00:01:52,870 --> 00:01:56,910

store and the other a tavern and I remember

30

00:01:56,910 --> 00:02:00,960

one pair of my grandparents in their will it said

31

00:02:00,960 --> 00:02:04,980

that first thing that their money would go to if they

32

00:02:04,980 --> 00:02:09,010

died would put my brother and I through college.

33

00:02:09,010 --> 00:02:13,060

So before any money would go to my dad or his sisters

34

00:02:13,060 --> 00:02:17,080

they wanted to make sure we had an education.

35

00:02:17,080 --> 00:02:21,120

Understanding that education was so important to them

36

00:02:21,120 --> 00:02:25,140

really instilled in us how important it was to do well in school

37

00:02:25,140 --> 00:02:29,160

and to get our degrees.

38

00:02:29,160 --> 00:02:33,190

The great barrier I had to overcome was, going out of my

39

00:02:33,190 --> 00:02:37,200

comfort zone. Sometimes change is not

40

00:02:37,200 --> 00:02:41,230

easy, so the decision to leave Texas and take a job

41

00:02:41,230 --> 00:02:45,250

at Wallops was kind of taken me out of my

42

00:02:45,250 --> 00:02:49,270

comfort zone. My decision to apply for the chief

43

00:02:49,270 --> 00:02:53,290

position took me out of my comfort zone and

44

00:02:53,290 --> 00:02:57,330

sometimes you need to push yourself and

45

00:02:57,330 --> 00:03:01,360

its amazing what you could do.

46

00:03:01,360 --> 00:03:05,390

(music) My greatest accomplishment is being part of the super pressure balloon

47

00:03:05,390 --> 00:03:09,460

team. So, the super pressure balloon is kind of the next generation

48

00:03:09,460 --> 00:03:13,460

balloon development and any research and development we've had

49

00:03:13,460 --> 00:03:17,490

our highs and our lows. So, getting through

50

00:03:17,490 --> 00:03:21,530

the lows and understanding what happen when you had a failure or anomaly

51
00:03:21,530 --> 00:03:25,560
and being able to fix it and move on, has been

52
00:03:25,560 --> 00:03:29,580
very rewarding. It's frustrating but rewarding.

53
00:03:29,580 --> 00:03:33,630
We went to Antarctica back in 2009 with a balloon

54
00:03:33,630 --> 00:03:37,670
and we launched it and went up to float and

55
00:03:37,670 --> 00:03:41,700
it failed. So, here you're half way around the world

56
00:03:41,700 --> 00:03:45,740
it's right around Christmas time and

57
00:03:45,740 --> 00:03:49,760
you got to regroup and investigate and try to find out why

58
00:03:49,760 --> 00:03:53,790
did this balloon fail, so you can move the project forward.

59
00:03:53,790 --> 00:03:57,810
(music)

60
00:03:57,810 --> 00:04:01,830
The advice that I would pass on to the next generation is

61
00:04:01,830 --> 00:04:05,870
to find something you like to do. If you work hard

62
00:04:05,870 --> 00:04:09,940
and enjoy what you do. It makes things so much easier.

63
00:04:09,940 --> 00:04:13,960

I typically like going to work.

64

00:04:13,960 --> 00:04:18,000

I mean there are some days when you got meetings or reviews that you dread going to.

65

00:04:18,000 --> 00:04:22,060

But I enjoy what I do. I light up when I get to talk about

66

00:04:22,060 --> 00:04:26,070

balloons. I enjoy going

67

00:04:26,070 --> 00:04:30,080

the travel and doing that. So, if they are doing something that they are not

68

00:04:30,080 --> 00:04:34,120

enjoying, find something else. Because you've got to have it

69

00:04:34,120 --> 00:04:38,150

in your heart, you want to do this. It will make

70

00:04:38,150 --> 00:04:42,180

life so much easier and so much happier.