



1
00:00:05,749 --> 00:00:03,750
hi welcome to the apollo flight control

2
00:00:07,030 --> 00:00:05,759
room we're actually just one floor above

3
00:00:09,430 --> 00:00:07,040
the international space station flight

4
00:00:11,350 --> 00:00:09,440
control room that you normally see but

5
00:00:12,789 --> 00:00:11,360
here today we have with us to talk with

6
00:00:14,549 --> 00:00:12,799
us a little bit about what went on

7
00:00:16,630 --> 00:00:14,559
during the apollo era and even a little

8
00:00:17,990 --> 00:00:16,640
bit before it sounds like a couple of

9
00:00:20,470 --> 00:00:18,000
the women who worked in the apollo

10
00:00:22,150 --> 00:00:20,480
program or in honor of women history

11
00:00:24,310 --> 00:00:22,160
month this month so right now we're

12
00:00:26,070 --> 00:00:24,320
talking with estella gillette

13
00:00:30,230 --> 00:00:26,080

and you said let's see you started in

14

00:00:33,430 --> 00:00:30,240

1964 huh october 19 1964. wow so that

15

00:00:35,510 --> 00:00:33,440

was even before apollo was uh yeah was

16

00:00:37,830 --> 00:00:35,520

flying i think it was sort of just

17

00:00:39,510 --> 00:00:37,840

in the plans uh the gates had just

18

00:00:41,030 --> 00:00:39,520

opened here at jsc in the spring i

19

00:00:43,430 --> 00:00:41,040

believe so

20

00:00:45,990 --> 00:00:43,440

even jsc was brent or mann spacecraft

21

00:00:48,069 --> 00:00:46,000

center was brand new you got in right as

22

00:00:50,069 --> 00:00:48,079

as it was beginning yep so what were you

23

00:00:53,270 --> 00:00:50,079

doing back then i was actually hired as

24

00:00:55,350 --> 00:00:53,280

a clerk steno i was hired into the

25

00:00:56,950 --> 00:00:55,360

structures and mechanics division

26

00:00:59,750 --> 00:00:56,960

in engineering

27

00:01:02,229 --> 00:00:59,760

pretty much still the same same place uh

28

00:01:03,510 --> 00:01:02,239

building 13. okay so it was just uh kind

29

00:01:04,950 --> 00:01:03,520

of keeping track of everything that was

30

00:01:07,030 --> 00:01:04,960

going on and

31

00:01:10,070 --> 00:01:07,040

i was working with

32

00:01:12,550 --> 00:01:10,080

oh i guess about 20 engineers or so and

33

00:01:15,109 --> 00:01:12,560

they were involved with uh i think they

34

00:01:15,830 --> 00:01:15,119

were working on thermals and structures

35

00:01:17,749 --> 00:01:15,840

and

36

00:01:20,390 --> 00:01:17,759

that kind of thing at the at the time i

37

00:01:22,550 --> 00:01:20,400

was sort of on the sideline

38

00:01:24,469 --> 00:01:22,560

okay well and what now what drew you to

39

00:01:26,830 --> 00:01:24,479

nasa to begin with was that on purpose

40

00:01:29,190 --> 00:01:26,840

um i didn't even know nasa existed in

41

00:01:30,870 --> 00:01:29,200

1963 when i graduated from high school

42

00:01:32,390 --> 00:01:30,880

it hadn't that long yeah it was a long

43

00:01:34,950 --> 00:01:32,400

time yeah

44

00:01:37,590 --> 00:01:34,960

but one of the things we did i was class

45

00:01:40,230 --> 00:01:37,600

president so we had

46

00:01:43,190 --> 00:01:40,240

we our theme was children of the space

47

00:01:45,670 --> 00:01:43,200

age so i was the treasurer and i there's

48

00:01:46,469 --> 00:01:45,680

a picture of me and a convertible and it

49

00:01:48,710 --> 00:01:46,479

says

50

00:01:51,670 --> 00:01:48,720

uh space age along with the other

51
00:01:54,230 --> 00:01:51,680
officers and it says nasa space age so

52
00:01:57,270 --> 00:01:54,240
that kind of drew me i couldn't even

53
00:01:59,030 --> 00:01:57,280
apply for the for nasa until i was

54
00:02:01,990 --> 00:01:59,040
naturalized as a citizen because i was

55
00:02:03,830 --> 00:02:02,000
born in mexico i was uh i have to be i

56
00:02:05,510 --> 00:02:03,840
had to be 18 and when i graduated from

57
00:02:06,630 --> 00:02:05,520
high school i was 17 so i had to wait a

58
00:02:09,430 --> 00:02:06,640
little while

59
00:02:11,430 --> 00:02:09,440
so when i became when i passed the exam

60
00:02:13,510 --> 00:02:11,440
i came out here for an interview i

61
00:02:15,990 --> 00:02:13,520
actually had three interviews and i got

62
00:02:18,710 --> 00:02:16,000
three offers and i took the one in

63
00:02:21,110 --> 00:02:18,720

engineering okay not a bad decision yeah

64

00:02:23,110 --> 00:02:21,120

it worked out worked out very well so i

65

00:02:24,790 --> 00:02:23,120

guess you know you're talking about

66

00:02:27,030 --> 00:02:24,800

children in the space age and looking at

67

00:02:28,550 --> 00:02:27,040

that in high school as as a woman and as

68

00:02:30,550 --> 00:02:28,560

somebody who'd been born in mexico did

69

00:02:33,350 --> 00:02:30,560

you consider that was something that you

70

00:02:34,309 --> 00:02:33,360

could have a part in or actually uh when

71

00:03:25,110 --> 00:02:34,319

i

72

00:03:27,350 --> 00:03:25,120

not totally balanced yet but

73

00:03:29,990 --> 00:03:27,360

it was something that

74

00:03:33,190 --> 00:03:30,000

was rooted in where do you find your

75

00:03:34,710 --> 00:03:33,200

your applicants early on and so as the

76

00:03:37,030 --> 00:03:34,720

schools began to

77

00:03:38,710 --> 00:03:37,040

open up and women and minorities started

78

00:03:41,270 --> 00:03:38,720

to take more and more of the

79

00:03:43,350 --> 00:03:41,280

of the technical curriculum then they

80

00:03:45,190 --> 00:03:43,360

became eligible this is a technical

81

00:03:46,949 --> 00:03:45,200

place so you needed people who could do

82

00:03:48,309 --> 00:03:46,959

that kind of work

83

00:03:49,670 --> 00:03:48,319

sure well and now we were talking

84

00:03:52,229 --> 00:03:49,680

earlier you know you certainly didn't

85

00:03:54,229 --> 00:03:52,239

finish your career as a secretary at all

86

00:03:56,309 --> 00:03:54,239

um you finished let's see you were the

87

00:03:58,550 --> 00:03:56,319

head of the equal opportunity office and

88

00:04:01,990 --> 00:03:58,560

then uh deputy of the external relations

89

00:04:04,949 --> 00:04:03,670

this was such a place for great

90

00:04:05,990 --> 00:04:04,959

opportunity

91

00:04:07,990 --> 00:04:06,000

uh

92

00:04:09,670 --> 00:04:08,000

it wasn't like somebody said here do

93

00:04:11,990 --> 00:04:09,680

this and and you'll get there it was

94

00:04:13,190 --> 00:04:12,000

more like what for the others and where

95

00:04:15,350 --> 00:04:13,200

do you want to go

96

00:04:16,629 --> 00:04:15,360

i didn't have a degree until

97

00:04:19,509 --> 00:04:16,639

i was 40

98

00:04:22,069 --> 00:04:19,519

and nasa paid for for most of it

99

00:04:23,990 --> 00:04:22,079

but once i had i didn't even need a

100

00:04:25,909 --> 00:04:24,000

degree to a certain point

101
00:04:28,070 --> 00:04:25,919
but i wanted to be like the rest of the

102
00:04:30,070 --> 00:04:28,080
people here which was you know about 70

103
00:04:31,990 --> 00:04:30,080
percent degree people

104
00:04:34,310 --> 00:04:32,000
so for me the education was very

105
00:04:37,350 --> 00:04:34,320
important and then that opened up other

106
00:04:40,150 --> 00:04:37,360
avenues uh i actually had a career

107
00:04:43,189 --> 00:04:40,160
as chief of the administrative office

108
00:04:44,870 --> 00:04:43,199
in the astronaut office i was uh

109
00:04:47,909 --> 00:04:44,880
deputy director and then director of

110
00:04:50,150 --> 00:04:47,919
equal opportunity with the director job

111
00:04:51,830 --> 00:04:50,160
i was able to be i was served on the on

112
00:04:53,749 --> 00:04:51,840
the selection board for the astronauts

113
00:04:56,070 --> 00:04:53,759

which was you know one of the highlights

114

00:04:57,030 --> 00:04:56,080

of my life

115

00:04:59,030 --> 00:04:57,040

and then

116

00:05:01,590 --> 00:04:59,040

as i got

117

00:05:04,390 --> 00:05:01,600

into the eo world for 10 years i needed

118

00:05:05,990 --> 00:05:04,400

a change so i became the deputy director

119

00:05:08,390 --> 00:05:06,000

for the newly established external

120

00:05:10,710 --> 00:05:08,400

relations office at that time

121

00:05:12,629 --> 00:05:10,720

and then i retired you know six my

122

00:05:15,189 --> 00:05:12,639

husband and i both retired on the same

123

00:05:15,990 --> 00:05:15,199

day with 84 years of service together

124

00:05:17,990 --> 00:05:16,000

wow

125

00:05:19,909 --> 00:05:18,000

four years that's impressive together

126

00:05:22,310 --> 00:05:19,919

not just but still yeah i

127

00:05:24,310 --> 00:05:22,320

didn't think you made it that far

128

00:05:26,230 --> 00:05:24,320

um i'm sure you got to see a lot of

129

00:05:28,390 --> 00:05:26,240

history in the meantime

130

00:05:29,909 --> 00:05:28,400

stories to share lots of stories

131

00:05:30,870 --> 00:05:29,919

probably don't want to share them all

132

00:05:33,749 --> 00:05:30,880

but

133

00:05:35,510 --> 00:05:33,759

i had a wonderful career here i had

134

00:05:37,189 --> 00:05:35,520

wonderful mentors i worked for cliff

135

00:05:38,710 --> 00:05:37,199

charlesworth who was part of the one of

136

00:05:40,870 --> 00:05:38,720

the apollo guys

137

00:05:43,590 --> 00:05:40,880

on 11 and 13.

138

00:05:46,070 --> 00:05:43,600

then i worked for george abbey who is

139

00:05:49,110 --> 00:05:46,080

you know he everybody knows george abbey

140

00:05:51,830 --> 00:05:49,120

i worked for a lot or with or a lot of

141

00:05:53,909 --> 00:05:51,840

the people who are now grown-ups like

142

00:05:55,830 --> 00:05:53,919

mike kincaid i watched them when they

143

00:05:57,830 --> 00:05:55,840

were young people

144

00:05:59,749 --> 00:05:57,840

it came in as co-op so it was just a

145

00:06:01,990 --> 00:05:59,759

really interesting career there's so

146

00:06:03,990 --> 00:06:02,000

much opportunity there's so much

147

00:06:06,629 --> 00:06:04,000

just step out of your comfort zone and

148

00:06:09,270 --> 00:06:06,639

and go reach out to the others that you

149

00:06:11,110 --> 00:06:09,280

would like to become like and and i have

150

00:06:13,510 --> 00:06:11,120

absolutely no regrets

151
00:06:15,909 --> 00:06:13,520
having made the decision to come here

152
00:06:18,950 --> 00:06:15,919
it was scary when i first came but i

153
00:06:22,070 --> 00:06:18,960
certainly never felt excluded after a

154
00:06:23,670 --> 00:06:22,080
little bit that's okay well i'm you know

155
00:06:25,670 --> 00:06:23,680
and you've seen it you know the whole

156
00:06:27,350 --> 00:06:25,680
spectrum but what was it what was the

157
00:06:29,670 --> 00:06:27,360
atmosphere like back when you arrived

158
00:06:32,230 --> 00:06:29,680
was it i mean it had to be it had to be

159
00:06:35,430 --> 00:06:32,240
exciting it was it was

160
00:06:37,430 --> 00:06:35,440
kind of subdued yeah i would say uh

161
00:06:39,990 --> 00:06:37,440
people were more formal you know you see

162
00:06:42,710 --> 00:06:40,000
the pictures of of the uh the the white

163
00:06:44,790 --> 00:06:42,720

men wearing the white the white shirts

164

00:06:46,790 --> 00:06:44,800

little skinny tie and they actually did

165

00:06:48,710 --> 00:06:46,800

that the pocket protector they actually

166

00:06:49,589 --> 00:06:48,720

did that my husband still has his city

167

00:06:52,309 --> 00:06:49,599

somewhere

168

00:06:53,990 --> 00:06:52,319

uh so so it was a very

169

00:06:55,990 --> 00:06:54,000

different environment

170

00:06:57,909 --> 00:06:56,000

but it was a friendly environment and i

171

00:06:59,830 --> 00:06:57,919

think you can still say that you know

172

00:07:03,350 --> 00:06:59,840

it's kind of formal to a point

173

00:07:05,270 --> 00:07:03,360

uh as we all kind of knew our roles

174

00:07:07,110 --> 00:07:05,280

i think the biggest difference is there

175

00:07:08,309 --> 00:07:07,120

was a well-defined

176

00:07:11,430 --> 00:07:08,319

uh

177

00:07:12,230 --> 00:07:11,440

um task that we had to do during that

178

00:07:14,790 --> 00:07:12,240

era

179

00:07:17,110 --> 00:07:14,800

we had to put a man on the moon it was a

180

00:07:19,830 --> 00:07:17,120

very well defined uh

181

00:07:21,029 --> 00:07:19,840

future that we had at the point

182

00:07:23,670 --> 00:07:21,039

we've done

183

00:07:25,749 --> 00:07:23,680

well with with the rest of the time but

184

00:07:28,950 --> 00:07:25,759

i don't think there was as defined a

185

00:07:31,029 --> 00:07:28,960

time as as that time

186

00:07:32,230 --> 00:07:31,039

so people knew where they were going uh

187

00:07:33,670 --> 00:07:32,240

people

188

00:07:36,629 --> 00:07:33,680

were part of it

189

00:07:39,110 --> 00:07:36,639

uh and people were very proud to be a

190

00:07:41,510 --> 00:07:39,120

part of it i think all of those

191

00:07:43,909 --> 00:07:41,520

those of us who are from that era

192

00:07:45,510 --> 00:07:43,919

like to claim that we were a big part of

193

00:07:48,150 --> 00:07:45,520

it even though it was a teeny tiny

194

00:07:49,430 --> 00:07:48,160

little route that we might have planted

195

00:07:52,629 --> 00:07:49,440

but um

196

00:07:55,189 --> 00:07:52,639

worked with some fantastic people

197

00:07:57,270 --> 00:07:55,199

and it was great to watch the evolution

198

00:07:59,909 --> 00:07:57,280

as to what nasa has become you know the

199

00:08:02,230 --> 00:07:59,919

the diversity for me that was a big deal

200

00:08:03,510 --> 00:08:02,240

having come as someone who didn't look

201
00:08:06,150 --> 00:08:03,520
like the rest of the people here

202
00:08:08,070 --> 00:08:06,160
eventually that didn't make a difference

203
00:08:10,550 --> 00:08:08,080
because i brought something that

204
00:08:12,550 --> 00:08:10,560
that nasa could use even if it was my

205
00:08:13,909 --> 00:08:12,560
clerical skills when i first came here

206
00:08:15,830 --> 00:08:13,919
and i think that's what it's all about

207
00:08:18,070 --> 00:08:15,840
right what do you have that you can

208
00:08:19,990 --> 00:08:18,080
you can participate

209
00:08:22,150 --> 00:08:20,000
and then um

210
00:08:23,589 --> 00:08:22,160
plug in and become a part of it

211
00:08:25,749 --> 00:08:23,599
and you mentioned earlier that you were

212
00:08:28,869 --> 00:08:25,759
on the astronaut selection company i was

213
00:08:31,510 --> 00:08:28,879

for 10 years because the uh the director

214

00:08:34,149 --> 00:08:31,520

of eo is the position on the board

215

00:08:35,190 --> 00:08:34,159

wonderful experience i just cannot tell

216

00:08:36,230 --> 00:08:35,200

you how

217

00:08:40,550 --> 00:08:36,240

what a

218

00:08:42,389 --> 00:08:40,560

i think you mentioned you had a hand in

219

00:08:44,470 --> 00:08:42,399

selecting let's see yes to the current

220

00:08:46,150 --> 00:08:44,480

iss commander dan burbank and flight

221

00:08:48,150 --> 00:08:46,160

engineer and don pettit

222

00:08:50,550 --> 00:08:48,160

yes and uh our administrator charlie

223

00:08:53,110 --> 00:08:50,560

baldwin charlie bolden i was on that

224

00:08:55,590 --> 00:08:53,120

on that selection board on the hr site

225

00:08:58,310 --> 00:08:55,600

so so

226

00:08:59,670 --> 00:08:58,320

i can tell stories about charlie

227

00:09:01,829 --> 00:08:59,680

i don't know

228

00:09:03,190 --> 00:09:01,839

we're ready for that

229

00:09:04,470 --> 00:09:03,200

but i'm sure you've got some great

230

00:09:05,829 --> 00:09:04,480

stories thank you so much for sharing