

A close-up profile of astronaut Anna Fisher looking out a window. The Earth's horizon is visible below. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows.

*Anna
Fisher
american
astronaut*

1
00:00:00,506 --> 00:00:04,546
[Music]

2
00:00:05,046 --> 00:00:07,286
My name is Anna Lee Fisher,

3
00:00:07,286 --> 00:00:09,900
and I'm a mission
specialist astronaut.

4
00:00:13,300 --> 00:00:15,580
What was I like growing up?

5
00:00:15,640 --> 00:00:17,100
I was a nerd.

6
00:00:17,320 --> 00:00:20,000
[laughs] I loved
science and math.

7
00:00:20,000 --> 00:00:21,180
I loved to read.

8
00:00:21,200 --> 00:00:23,520
I was very shy, very quiet.

9
00:00:23,520 --> 00:00:26,820
My interests in space
started when we were listening

10
00:00:26,886 --> 00:00:29,396
to Al Shepard's suborbital
flight.

11
00:00:29,666 --> 00:00:32,176
We were outside standing
around our PE teacher

12

00:00:32,176 --> 00:00:34,176
with her little transistor
radio.

13
00:00:34,446 --> 00:00:36,436
I went to UCLA.

14
00:00:36,436 --> 00:00:38,216
I started out as a math major.

15
00:00:38,216 --> 00:00:39,326
I switched to chemistry.

16
00:00:39,326 --> 00:00:41,206
I graduated with
my BS in chemistry.

17
00:00:41,206 --> 00:00:45,586
I went to graduate school
for a year and wound

18
00:00:45,586 --> 00:00:47,556
up getting my master's,
although at the time,

19
00:00:47,676 --> 00:00:49,596
I was on the PhD program.

20
00:00:50,106 --> 00:00:53,506
And then I went to medical
school at UCLA and wound

21
00:00:53,506 --> 00:00:55,800
up going into emergency
medicine.

22
00:00:57,420 --> 00:01:01,940
I found out about the NASA
selecting mission specialists

23

00:01:01,996 --> 00:01:05,206
for the space shuttle
program quite serendipitously,

24

00:01:05,386 --> 00:01:09,936
and I can still remember my
husband paging me and saying,

25

00:01:10,206 --> 00:01:11,706
"Anna, we have a
month to apply."

26

00:01:12,116 --> 00:01:14,676
So it happened pretty quickly
from the time you apply

27

00:01:14,676 --> 00:01:17,786
to when I interviewed was
only a couple of weeks.

28

00:01:18,566 --> 00:01:22,146
But then when the phone call
came, it was so surreal because,

29

00:01:22,146 --> 00:01:24,686
you know, [laughs]
you're thinking, wow,

30

00:01:24,686 --> 00:01:27,186
I'm getting this call and
I'm actually being selected

31

00:01:27,186 --> 00:01:27,916
as an astronaut.

32

00:01:28,216 --> 00:01:29,866
I think my friends
were surprised

33

00:01:29,866 --> 00:01:31,886
because I'd never really
told anyone I wanted

34

00:01:31,886 --> 00:01:32,796
to be an astronaut.

35

00:01:33,376 --> 00:01:37,506
And so when they found out
I applied and got accepted,

36

00:01:37,506 --> 00:01:40,946
you know, they remembered
me as the shy nerd person,

37

00:01:41,046 --> 00:01:43,176
[laughs] so I think they
were a little surprised,

38

00:01:43,180 --> 00:01:44,600
but everybody was happy.

39

00:01:48,980 --> 00:01:50,380
Everyone was so supportive.

40

00:01:50,836 --> 00:01:54,806
I knew that I belonged there,
and I really feel strongly

41

00:01:54,806 --> 00:01:58,826
that certainly the six of us and
many of the women really stood

42

00:01:58,826 --> 00:02:02,426
on the shoulders of the
women that had gone before.

43

00:02:02,906 --> 00:02:07,006
I've described it before as
I felt like I caught a wave

44

00:02:07,196 --> 00:02:10,096
like a surfer right at the
right moment in history

45

00:02:10,096 --> 00:02:14,546
when the social attitudes were
changing and just happened

46

00:02:14,726 --> 00:02:16,606
to come along at the right time

47

00:02:16,840 --> 00:02:19,640
to where the doors
were opening for women.

48

00:02:21,020 --> 00:02:22,520
Well, once we were selected,

49

00:02:22,956 --> 00:02:25,986
the astronaut candidate
year was just, you know,

50

00:02:26,276 --> 00:02:28,496
learning what the
shuttle was all about,

51

00:02:28,886 --> 00:02:30,396
learning about orbital
mechanics,

52

00:02:30,896 --> 00:02:34,726
getting science briefings,
but it was kind of fun to be

53

00:02:34,726 --> 00:02:36,276
at the beginning and to try

54

00:02:36,476 --> 00:02:38,096

to be developing
all of these things.

55

00:02:38,186 --> 00:02:41,346

For example, one of the
things I was assigned to early

56

00:02:41,346 --> 00:02:44,026

on was they wanted one of
the smaller women to get

57

00:02:44,026 --> 00:02:46,616

in the space suits
and start seeing

58

00:02:46,616 --> 00:02:48,586

if we could do EVAs, spacewalks.

59

00:02:49,286 --> 00:02:53,436

I was just told to get in a suit
and start working in the tank

60

00:02:53,656 --> 00:02:56,656

with my colleagues, and we did
a lot of the development runs

61

00:02:56,836 --> 00:02:59,796

for the mini workstation
that we still fly today.

62

00:02:59,796 --> 00:03:02,126

The tethers -- how they
fastened, and, could you do

63

00:03:02,126 --> 00:03:04,076

that without being
able to see them?

64

00:03:04,076 --> 00:03:06,806

We did all those early runs.

65

00:03:07,516 --> 00:03:10,816

[Music]

66

00:03:11,320 --> 00:03:13,220

Well, that was a

very interesting time

67

00:03:13,220 --> 00:03:15,296

because I was assigned

68

00:03:15,296 --> 00:03:19,236

to my flight two weeks before

I delivered my daughter,

69

00:03:19,236 --> 00:03:20,166

my oldest daughter.

70

00:03:20,426 --> 00:03:23,886

I remember I delivered

Kristin on a Friday,

71

00:03:24,416 --> 00:03:27,506

and I was at the Monday morning

eight o'clock meeting the

72

00:03:27,546 --> 00:03:28,506

following Monday.

73

00:03:29,126 --> 00:03:33,756

Now, I didn't stay at work

all day long, but I wanted

74

00:03:33,826 --> 00:03:36,366

to make a statement that, you

know, yes, I have a child,

75

00:03:36,456 --> 00:03:38,636

but I'm committed to this

and I'm going to be here.

76

00:03:39,126 --> 00:03:41,786

So I was, kept coming at the same time I had a new baby

77

00:03:41,786 --> 00:03:43,396

and training for my flight,

78

00:03:43,396 --> 00:03:45,366

so it was quite the challenging time,

79

00:03:45,656 --> 00:03:50,066

but I was absolutely blessed with the lady who took care

80

00:03:50,166 --> 00:03:52,296

of Kristin, and it was teamwork.

81

00:03:52,496 --> 00:03:55,596

And without her, I never could've done what I did

82

00:03:55,686 --> 00:03:59,716

because I knew that Kristin was 100% safe

83

00:03:59,876 --> 00:04:02,256

and was getting all the love and care.

84

00:04:02,716 --> 00:04:04,596

And so it worked out.

85

00:04:05,416 --> 00:04:09,996

You know, walking out to launch, and I remember I'm walking out

86

00:04:10,106 --> 00:04:12,576
and I'm looking to see Kristin.

87

00:04:12,986 --> 00:04:14,686
And then once I saw
Kristin, that was it.

88

00:04:14,756 --> 00:04:16,286
You know, I was good to go.

89

00:04:17,986 --> 00:04:20,456
[laughs] I was the flight
engineer, so I trained

90

00:04:20,456 --> 00:04:21,736
with the commander and pilot.

91

00:04:22,026 --> 00:04:23,796
I had three things
I was watching --

92

00:04:24,366 --> 00:04:26,016
airspeed, altitude, engine.

93

00:04:26,176 --> 00:04:27,586
Airspeed, altitude, engines.

94

00:04:28,176 --> 00:04:30,276
I just wanted those
eight and a half minutes

95

00:04:30,876 --> 00:04:32,186
to be over successfully.

96

00:04:33,516 --> 00:04:37,096
[Music]

97

00:04:37,596 --> 00:04:39,676
If I could've picked

a flight to fly on,

98

00:04:40,106 --> 00:04:41,526
that would certainly
have been one

99

00:04:41,526 --> 00:04:42,760
of the ones I would've picked.

100

00:04:46,360 --> 00:04:49,200
It was so exciting because
we launched two satellites

101

00:04:49,366 --> 00:04:52,576
on day two and day three.

102

00:04:54,520 --> 00:04:59,660
[Music]

103

00:05:09,120 --> 00:05:13,360
We were instrumental in
helping design the concept

104

00:05:14,076 --> 00:05:16,466
for how we got those
satellites because they were,

105

00:05:16,896 --> 00:05:20,796
a huge 376 satellite has solar
arrays all the way around.

106

00:05:20,796 --> 00:05:22,346
It's a cylindrical satellite.

107

00:05:22,666 --> 00:05:26,156
And so there's very few areas
where you can actually touch it

108

00:05:26,156 --> 00:05:28,856

to hold it and figure out
how you're going to hook it

109
00:05:28,856 --> 00:05:31,066
into the shuttle payload
bay to bring it back.

110
00:05:31,416 --> 00:05:33,906
So we go to be a part
of the design of it.

111
00:05:34,026 --> 00:05:37,296
We figured out the procedures
together with our trainers

112
00:05:37,296 --> 00:05:38,666
and with our flight controllers.

113
00:05:38,876 --> 00:05:40,476
So that was from
February to November.

114
00:05:40,586 --> 00:05:44,176
That's a pretty short time
to come up with all this

115
00:05:44,346 --> 00:05:46,376
and design the hardware,
build the hardware,

116
00:05:46,376 --> 00:05:47,726
the procedures, the training.

117
00:05:48,736 --> 00:05:51,706
And then I was the arm operator

118
00:05:52,026 --> 00:05:56,016
for retrieving the two
satellites and I was the lead

119

00:05:56,086 --> 00:05:57,686

for deploying one
of the satellites.

120

00:05:57,806 --> 00:06:03,036

So it was a really busy
flight, but just so much fun.

121

00:06:05,516 --> 00:06:19,796

[Music]

122

00:06:20,296 --> 00:06:22,936

Oh, I think the future for
NASA is really exciting.

123

00:06:22,966 --> 00:06:25,106

You know, I thought that
when I came at the beginning

124

00:06:25,106 --> 00:06:28,506

of the shuttle program, but
now we have the Commercial Crew

125

00:06:28,606 --> 00:06:30,946

Program under the
Orion spacecraft

126

00:06:30,946 --> 00:06:33,796

to go beyond low Earth
orbit and just figuring

127

00:06:33,856 --> 00:06:37,536

out how these different
spacecrafts are going to work,

128

00:06:37,536 --> 00:06:41,126

and the suits that you're going
to fly in, and the procedures.

129

00:06:41,836 --> 00:06:44,026

I just think it's just
going to be so exciting

130

00:06:44,026 --> 00:06:45,706

to have these multiple vehicles,

131

00:06:46,196 --> 00:06:48,576

multiple opportunities
to go into space.

132

00:06:48,956 --> 00:06:53,826

And then slowly, as the general
population gets a chance to go

133

00:06:53,826 --> 00:06:56,666

into space, then maybe they'll
understand why it's just

134

00:06:56,766 --> 00:06:59,766

so amazing, and be
able to see our planet

135

00:07:00,326 --> 00:07:03,926

from the vantage point that
we have been able to see,

136

00:07:04,176 --> 00:07:07,046

and hopefully realize that
there's one little planet

137

00:07:07,196 --> 00:07:09,816

that we have in this
vast blackness of space

138

00:07:10,486 --> 00:07:13,176

and that we really need to take
care of it and of each other.

139

00:07:13,176 --> 00:07:17,746

So I think it's a really
exciting time and I'm jealous.

140

00:07:17,976 --> 00:07:21,456

[laughs] Have to hand it over to
the new people that are waiting