



1

00:00:01,400 --> 00:00:04,390

BILL HARWOOD: I think as long as you're strapping people to rocket ships

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00:00:04,390 --> 00:00:06,850

and accelerating them to five miles a second in eight minutes,

3

00:00:06,850 --> 00:00:09,240

that is inherently exciting

4

00:00:09,240 --> 00:00:11,710

and there'll always be people who want to come cover that,

5

00:00:11,710 --> 00:00:15,930

both because it's a significant technology story, it's a political story,

6

00:00:15,930 --> 00:00:18,270

it's a human interest story, it's all of those things.

7

00:00:18,270 --> 00:00:23,320

Space really wraps that up into one big ball and it's a lot of fun to cover.

8

00:00:23,320 --> 00:00:26,260

TODD HALVORSON: In my mind, covering the space program

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00:00:26,260 --> 00:00:29,750

is probably the best job in journalism

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00:00:29,750 --> 00:00:34,950

and covering the explorers of our generation is just a compelling

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00:00:34,950 --> 00:00:37,040

and wonderful thing to be able to do.

12

00:00:37,040 --> 00:00:41,450

JAY BARBREE: Why I want to cover it - it is so necessary for the advancement

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00:00:41,450 --> 00:00:46,400

of the human race. We only advance because we continue to learn.

14

00:00:46,400 --> 00:00:50,110

NARRATOR: For millions of people in the United States and around the world,

15

00:00:50,110 --> 00:00:53,210

the space shuttle experience was seen on television,

16

00:00:53,210 --> 00:00:56,200

heard on the radio or read in a newspaper.

17

00:00:56,200 --> 00:01:01,740

Increasingly, it's read about in short updates on Internet blogs or in longer discussions

18

00:01:01,740 --> 00:01:03,670

on cable news stations.

19

00:01:03,670 --> 00:01:07,970

The story they receive is relayed through the senses of reporters, correspondents

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00:01:07,970 --> 00:01:12,100

and editors who spent decades learning the intricacies of one of the most technical

21

00:01:12,100 --> 00:01:15,100

operations humankind has devised.

22

00:01:15,100 --> 00:01:18,070

BILL HARWOOD: It was two years down here as a full-time space reporter

23

00:01:18,070 --> 00:01:21,730

before I even felt remotely comfortable covering the shuttle,

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00:01:21,730 --> 00:01:26,860

felt like I really understood what was going on to any degree at all

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00:01:26,860 --> 00:01:34,620

and I think translating that to the public, being able to convey that complexity translated

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00:01:34,620 --> 00:01:39,870

into simpler terms and do it well is an enormous challenge and I think it is,

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00:01:39,870 --> 00:01:41,500

it still is today.

28

00:01:41,500 --> 00:01:44,630

NARRATOR: Reporters got their first taste of the Space Shuttle Program when

29

00:01:44,630 --> 00:01:47,470

Columbia launched in 1981.

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00:01:47,470 --> 00:01:52,640

HUGH HARRIS: For the first launch there was more than 2,000 reporters and probably

31

00:01:52,640 --> 00:02:03,180

95 percent of them had never seen a rocket, so we had a real learning experience to try

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00:02:03,180 --> 00:02:04,770

and put them through.

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00:02:04,770 --> 00:02:07,660

NARRATOR: Thousands of people lined the beaches and riverfronts around

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00:02:07,660 --> 00:02:11,530

Kennedy Space Center to witness that first launch in person.

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00:02:11,530 --> 00:02:16,570

It was the first time a spacecraft with wings launched, and it came more than six years

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00:02:16,570 --> 00:02:19,300

after the last time astronauts flew into space.

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00:02:19,300 --> 00:02:22,580

CRAIG COUVALT: We were also very worried at the time because it was an extremely

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00:02:22,580 --> 00:02:27,420

dangerous flight test mission.

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00:02:27,420 --> 00:02:30,220

JAY BARBREE: There was a lot of questions, because, first of all,

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00:02:30,220 --> 00:02:33,700

it was really advanced.

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00:02:33,700 --> 00:02:37,840

HUGH HARRIS: Until it's in orbit, really, you don't breathe a lot.

42

00:02:37,840 --> 00:02:45,410

I mean, you're listening very intently to the information that's coming in and making sure

43

00:02:45,410 --> 00:02:49,090

everything is going well and of course everything went very, very well.

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00:02:49,090 --> 00:02:53,330

NARRATOR: Two days later, on the West Coast of America, thousands more came out

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00:02:53,330 --> 00:02:57,530

to Edwards Air Force Base in California to see Columbia return on wings

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00:02:57,530 --> 00:02:59,480

instead of parachutes.

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00:02:59,480 --> 00:03:03,270

BOB CRIPPEN: I remember when John Young and I were coming in for a landing

48

00:03:03,270 --> 00:03:07,510

at Edwards Air Force and he was banking left and we looked down out on the lake bed

49

00:03:07,510 --> 00:03:11,220

there and there were thousands of people that we could see.

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00:03:11,220 --> 00:03:14,740

We were about 35 . . . 40,000 feet at that particular point,

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00:03:14,740 --> 00:03:17,990

but I said, 'Look at all those folks out there! They came out to see us land!'

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00:03:17,990 --> 00:03:21,050

NARRATOR: During the next three decades, the news media would transfer

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00:03:21,050 --> 00:03:24,740

the excitement, drama and tragedy of NASA's space exploration to

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00:03:24,740 --> 00:03:26,990

throng of viewers and readers.

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00:03:26,990 --> 00:03:30,780

BILL HARWOOD: I think the most challenging aspect of the job is the complexity

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00:03:30,780 --> 00:03:35,650

of the hardware and understanding how space missions are carried out.

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00:03:35,650 --> 00:03:40,380

TODD HALVORSON: I think a large part of our job is translating NASA into English.

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00:03:40,380 --> 00:03:47,730

There's a lot of jargon, there are a lot of acronyms, and we have to figure out a way to

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00:03:47,730 --> 00:03:55,040

explain highly technical material in a way that your average newspaper reader

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00:03:55,040 --> 00:03:57,500

is going to understand.

61

00:03:58,580 --> 00:03:59,200

COUNTDOWN COMMENTATOR: Four

62

00:03:59,200 --> 00:04:00,110

Three

63

00:04:00,110 --> 00:04:00,810

Two

64

00:04:00,810 --> 00:04:01,790

One

65

00:04:01,790 --> 00:04:03,380

And liftoff!

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00:04:03,380 --> 00:04:09,760

Liftoff of the 25th space shuttle mission and it has cleared the tower .

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00:04:09,760 --> 00:04:13,620

BILL HARWOOD: Before Challenger, you realized this was a dangerous business,

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00:04:13,620 --> 00:04:15,780

but you didn't really believe it.

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00:04:15,780 --> 00:04:19,860

NARRATOR: Reporters have also witnessed two space shuttle accidents firsthand

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00:04:19,860 --> 00:04:25,370

and relayed it to their audience. Challenger's launch in January 1986.

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00:04:25,370 --> 00:04:28,980

CAPCOM: Columbia, Houston, comm check.

72

00:04:28,980 --> 00:04:31,790

Columbia, Houston, UHF comm check.

73

00:04:31,790 --> 00:04:35,800

NARRATOR: and Columbia's breakup during re-entry in February 2003.

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00:04:35,800 --> 00:04:39,480

TODD HALVORSON: I'll always remember I saw this little girl in the parking lot

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00:04:39,480 --> 00:04:45,650

of the Cocoa Beach Holiday Inn and she just pointed up at that conflagration in the sky

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00:04:45,650 --> 00:04:52,500

and said, "The teacher's up there. The teacher's up there." And that sticks with you.

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00:04:52,500 --> 00:04:55,880

BILL HARWOOD: As someone watching the shuttle take off and land,

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00:04:55,880 --> 00:04:58,450

and gets to know these people, they were both gut-wrenching.

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00:04:58,450 --> 00:05:03,900

The first time, Challenger, you know you're looking at that fireball in the sky,

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00:05:03,900 --> 00:05:08,410

you know you're watching seven people give their lives for something they believe in.

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00:05:08,410 --> 00:05:11,290

That's gut-wrenching. And the same with Columbia.

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00:05:11,290 --> 00:05:16,050

The loss of life of course is the number one thing that sticks with you.

83

00:05:16,050 --> 00:05:19,910

And you can't, never get over that and you'll always put yourself in the family's shoes

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00:05:19,910 --> 00:05:25,520

and friends and you feel the same sympathy anybody in the public would feel.

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00:05:25,520 --> 00:05:28,530

TODD HALVORSON: Some crews you get to know very well.

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00:05:28,530 --> 00:05:34,330

When you see the shuttle launch and you have friends on board and people that you've

87

00:05:34,330 --> 00:05:40,640

interacted with for a period of time in the lead-up to launch, it really makes a difference

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00:05:40,640 --> 00:05:45,750

because you know there are men and women flying on board that have families,

89

00:05:45,750 --> 00:05:52,000

that have children, and it makes it all that much more real.

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00:05:55,080 --> 00:05:59,260

NARRATOR: The news media would see its own numbers grow and adjust to new forms

91

00:05:59,260 --> 00:06:03,480

of communication including the advent of news channels and the revolution

92

00:06:03,480 --> 00:06:06,850

of the Internet with its own specialized brand of reporting.

93

00:06:06,850 --> 00:06:09,120

BILL HARWOOD: When I first came down for my college newspaper

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00:06:09,120 --> 00:06:13,790

I had a manual typewriter and you'd read the story to an editor and you were writing for

95

00:06:13,790 --> 00:06:17,870

the next day's newspaper and there was this huge delay between when you did a story

96

00:06:17,870 --> 00:06:20,150

and when it actually showed up in print.

97

00:06:20,150 --> 00:06:24,430

And as the shuttle program evolved, cable news networks began and all the sudden

98

00:06:24,430 --> 00:06:27,080

you evolved into this 24-hour news cycle.

99

00:06:27,080 --> 00:06:31,540

TODD HALVORSON: The days of going out and covering a launch and writing a story

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00:06:31,540 --> 00:06:37,340

for the next day's newspaper are gone. We're finding ourselves being kind of,

101

00:06:37,340 --> 00:06:40,030

I play a TV reporter on the internet.

102

00:06:40,030 --> 00:06:43,480

BILL HARWOOD: For the space enthusiast, for someone who is already interested

103

00:06:43,480 --> 00:06:48,410

in this and would follow it anyway, even if it was by magazine or whatever,

104

00:06:48,410 --> 00:06:52,450

it's a great thing for them because with all the blogs that are out there

105

00:06:52,450 --> 00:06:58,620

and the Web presence of magazines, newspapers, television, you can get an

106

00:06:58,620 --> 00:07:02,930

enormous amount of information that would have been much more difficult to get before.

107

00:07:02,930 --> 00:07:05,900

JAY BARBREE: Because they can ask questions, they can participate,

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00:07:05,900 --> 00:07:07,490

they can get into it.

109

00:07:07,490 --> 00:07:11,190

NARRATOR: NASA also began broadcasting on its own network during the

110

00:07:11,190 --> 00:07:16,650

shuttle program, originally called NASA Select, now called NASA TV.

111

00:07:16,650 --> 00:07:20,700

JAY BARBREE: Believe me when I started back in the business, radio was the big thing, not TV.

112

00:07:20,700 --> 00:07:25,000

TV was trying to catch up with what radio was so I've seen it all change

113

00:07:25,000 --> 00:07:29,190

LISA MALONE: People are very curious about what's going on and that's a good thing

114

00:07:29,190 --> 00:07:32,330

from a public outreach standpoint, it's really good to have that kind of interest

115

00:07:32,330 --> 00:07:33,780

in our launches here.

116

00:07:33,780 --> 00:07:37,630

NARRATOR: Although they found increasingly advanced ways to cover the shuttle,

117

00:07:37,630 --> 00:07:41,120

the shuttle itself remained the center of attention, and a touchstone

118

00:07:41,120 --> 00:07:43,640

for many societal changes, too.

119

00:07:43,640 --> 00:07:47,790

CRAIG COVAULT: The same shuttle orbiters were used to assemble the

120

00:07:47,790 --> 00:07:51,900

International Space Station that is made up totally of international partners

121

00:07:51,900 --> 00:07:55,020

who in the last 60 years were at war with each other.

122

00:07:55,020 --> 00:08:00,640

Bitter enemies of the United States when our parents grew up, now getting together on

123

00:08:00,640 --> 00:08:04,990

the space shuttle and building almost a million-pound facility in orbit.

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00:08:04,990 --> 00:08:09,060

NARRATOR: Space exploration is expected to remain a focal point for news media

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00:08:09,060 --> 00:08:11,590

just as it has in the past.

126

00:08:11,590 --> 00:08:16,370

JAY BARBREE: I think all coverage will get more personal to the audience.

127

00:08:16,370 --> 00:08:20,480

I think people will demand that they get the freshest and the latest