



Joan Higginbotham
NASA Astronaut

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00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:18,150

\h Music.

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00:00:18,150 --> 00:00:23,730

\h JOAN HIGGINBOTHAM: I'm NASA astronaut Joan Higginbotham.

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00:00:23,730 --> 00:00:29,830

\h As a student, did you focus on science?

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00:00:29,830 --> 00:00:35,580

\h I always loved math and science, and I love kind of electronics.

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00:00:35,580 --> 00:00:38,670

\h I used to always putz around with the different things at home,

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00:00:38,670 --> 00:00:41,380

\h much to my parents' chagrin. So I guess without knowing it,

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00:00:41,380 --> 00:00:45,330

\h I really was kind of drawn to both of those subjects.

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00:00:45,330 --> 00:00:50,780

\h What were your ambitions growing up?

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00:00:50,780 --> 00:00:55,250

\h My thing was just, I wanted to become an electrical engineer and be just really good at my job,

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00:00:55,250 --> 00:00:57,680

\h and for people to think I'm very competent.

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00:00:57,680 --> 00:01:03,290

\h What brought you to NASA?

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00:01:03,290 --> 00:01:09,730

\h It was a fluke. I actually was going to work for IBM after college. I worked for them for several summers

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00:01:09,730 --> 00:01:13,030

\h unfortunately, they were not hiring engineers at the time. And long story short,

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00:01:13,030 --> 00:01:18,930

\h I got a call in my dorm room one night from a division chief here who had seen my

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00:01:18,930 --> 00:01:25,000

\h resume and thought I would be a good match, and offered me a choice of two positions in his division.

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00:01:25,000 --> 00:01:30,710

\h Who inspired you?

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00:01:30,710 --> 00:01:37,100

\h My biggest inspiration is from my family members. I have an incredible mom and dad and siblings who a

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00:01:37,100 --> 00:01:42,300

\h and they were always an inspiration to me because they always encouraged me to do my best.

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00:01:42,300 --> 00:01:48,690

\h What's your most vivid spaceflight memory?

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00:01:48,690 --> 00:01:54,170

\h Probably my first sunrise. I was up in the commander's seat, matter of fact,

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00:01:54,170 --> 00:01:57,830

\h he had ordered me to come to the flight deck because my head had been in

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00:01:57,830 --> 00:02:05,000

\h Spacehab for a day and a half, and told me to sit down and look out the window and it was just the begi

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00:02:05,000 --> 00:02:11,040

\h And you just see the curvature of the Earth, and then you could see the sun just bursting forth and it wa

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00:02:11,040 --> 00:02:15,070

\h I was just enamored for a very long time.

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00:02:15,070 --> 00:02:20,120

\h Describe working with the robotic arms in space.

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00:02:20,120 --> 00:02:23,370

\h It was probably one of my tensest moments when I was up there,

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00:02:23,370 --> 00:02:26,690

\h because you have this huge piece of equipment on this

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00:02:26,690 --> 00:02:29,820

\h 70-foot-long arm and it's worth billions of dollars.

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00:02:29,820 --> 00:02:33,630

\h And the only thing you're thinking in your mind is, don't let me hit anything.

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00:02:33,630 --> 00:02:37,850

\h And when we didn't have a payload on the end of it, we actually had one of the crew members,

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00:02:37,850 --> 00:02:40,540

\h and again, you have a precious life on the end of the arm,

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00:02:40,540 --> 00:02:46,060

\h so you're just tense the entire time and just very, very focused about what you're doing.

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00:02:46,060 --> 00:02:52,070

\h What's the best aspect about being an astronaut?

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00:02:52,070 --> 00:02:56,530

\h The best aspect is probably getting to meet a lot of different people and getting to go a lot of different places.

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00:02:56,530 --> 00:03:03,030

\h I've met incredible people, not only in the astronaut corps but just all over the world,

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00:03:03,030 --> 00:03:07,330

\h and that's probably one of the neatest things we get to do.

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00:03:07,330 --> 00:03:12,810

\h What misconceptions do people have about spaceflight?

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00:03:12,810 --> 00:03:17,650

\h I think everybody sees it as this great big, like, Disney World ride for us and it's this wonderful vacation,

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00:03:17,650 --> 00:03:23,070

\h and they really tend to forget that we are actually working really hard.

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00:03:23,070 --> 00:03:26,710

\h I mean, from the time we get up there and unstrap, to the time we come back,

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00:03:26,710 --> 00:03:30,920

\h we are just moving at a pretty good clip.

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00:03:30,920 --> 00:03:36,160

\h What do you like to do in your free time?

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00:03:36,160 --> 00:03:40,010

\h Shop. Shop. Work out, hang out with my girlfriends.

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00:03:40,010 --> 00:03:47,890

\h Try to spend time with my family as much as possible. Just do very human, very normal things.

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00:03:47,890 --> 00:03:53,310

\h If you weren't working for NASA, what job might you be doing?

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00:03:53,310 --> 00:03:57,400

\h I don't know. I've been in this career for 20 years now,