



George Hoggard
Battalion Chief (Retired)

BATTALION CHIEF

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00:00:17,430 --> 00:00:27,340

SLATE: George Hoggard served on the Flight Crew Rescue unit for the fire department at

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00:00:27,340 --> 00:00:33,050

SLATE: How did you become a firefighter?

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00:00:33,050 --> 00:00:36,990

HOGGARD: My father was a cop, my brother was a cop and I got out of the military and my

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00:00:36,990 --> 00:00:41,560

dad wanted me to be cop and so I went into the police force.

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00:00:41,560 --> 00:00:46,090

I did that job for one year, and during the course of that year I got stabbed and shot at and all kind of

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00:00:46,090 --> 00:00:49,720

things happened and at the end of the year I told my dad, "Hey,

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00:00:49,720 --> 00:00:55,120

I know you wanted me to be a cop, but I got to go find a safer job, I don't like being a cop.

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00:00:55,120 --> 00:01:00,750

"And luckily for me he was friends with a fire chief and got me a job on a really good department and he said,"

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00:01:00,750 --> 00:01:04,730

This is the safest job I can get you" and I've been a fireman ever since.

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00:01:04,730 --> 00:01:10,360

SLATE: What memories stand out for you?

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00:01:10,360 --> 00:01:14,830

HOGGARD: I was really new out here and got to go out to the fire training area and they said three

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00:01:14,830 --> 00:01:18,840

astronauts were going to show up and I didn't know who they were.

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00:01:18,840 --> 00:01:22,450

And I was going to assist in their training because they used to use live fire training for

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00:01:22,450 --> 00:01:25,500

the astronauts so I was supposed to be out there.

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00:01:25,500 --> 00:01:30,470

My fire clothing was their backup, or protection, if you will.

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00:01:30,470 --> 00:01:35,630

And I went to the fire training area and three guys showed up. They were in civilian clothes and they got out.

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00:01:35,630 --> 00:01:40,320

They did everything we asked them to do with extinguishers and the hose and the masks

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00:01:40,320 --> 00:01:46,500

and stuff, part of the training. And they left and I had no idea who they were and six months later they stepped

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00:01:46,500 --> 00:01:49,620

on the moon, it was the Apollo 11 crew.

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00:01:49,620 --> 00:01:54,580

SLATE: What do you do to teach the astronauts how to drive the M113?

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00:01:54,580 --> 00:02:02,230

HOGGARD: It's not hard. Let's face it, the United States military teaches 17-year-old high school dropouts to d

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00:02:02,230 --> 00:02:08,240

M113, can't be all that hard, and that's what I tell the astronauts and that gives them a little more incentive to

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00:02:08,240 --> 00:02:17,110

do it right, right? And I tell them, the shuttle cockpit's got over 2,000 switches, this one's only got two, on

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00:02:17,110 --> 00:02:24,660

and off, and it's easy as it can be. If you can drive a tractor and plow a field, you can drive an M113.

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00:02:24,660 --> 00:02:29,990

SLATE: What is the M113 used for?

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00:02:29,990 --> 00:02:34,600

HOGGARD: The astronauts, when they come here for TCDT, the dress rehearsal,

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00:02:34,600 --> 00:02:37,700

it's maybe two or three weeks before their launch.

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00:02:37,700 --> 00:02:43,430

Some of them have spent two or three years getting ready for that launch and so they're very close.

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00:02:43,430 --> 00:02:51,070

This is the last part of their training. The reason it is last is because it's so important, their lives could depend

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00:02:51,070 --> 00:02:56,280

on it, this little bit of training they do here on launch day, it has to be fresh in their minds.

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00:02:56,280 --> 00:03:01,860

But when they get here, they're pretty sure they're going up and they've always had a lot of fun doing it.

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00:03:01,860 --> 00:03:07,100

SLATE: How do you grade the astronauts?

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00:03:07,100 --> 00:03:11,730

HOGGARD: They said is there a pass/fail to this driving test and I said,

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00:03:11,730 --> 00:03:18,790

"Yeah, if you hurt the old guy, you're going to fail the test, that's the bottom line, don't hurt the old guy."

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00:03:18,790 --> 00:03:24,010

SLATE: Did you think the shuttle would be retiring at the same time you are?

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00:03:24,010 --> 00:03:26,000

HOGGARD: The shuttle program, it was supposed to be 20-year

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00:03:26,000 --> 00:03:29,220

program at most I think is what they had said then.

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00:03:29,220 --> 00:03:35,900

The very idea of it lasting 30 years never dawned on me and I never did have any retirement plans because