



1
00:00:00,680 --> 00:00:21,370

Music

2
00:00:21,370 --> 00:00:25,420

Obviously we get that question a fair amount. For me, it was kind of a logical progression.

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00:00:25,420 --> 00:00:28,950

I think at a very early age I loved airplanes.

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00:00:28,950 --> 00:00:34,150

And kind of went after that goal to some degree.

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00:00:34,150 --> 00:00:36,760

And it just seemed to be a natural progression.

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00:00:36,760 --> 00:00:43,080

As you fly airplanes you want to fly the next biggest experimental, you know, high-flying,

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00:00:43,080 --> 00:00:50,150

fastest vehicle and the shuttle is that and it's probably going to be for a long time as

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00:00:50,150 --> 00:00:55,980

far as anything comparatively speaking.

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00:00:55,980 --> 00:00:59,840

So, it was just a great opportunity and I worked hard obviously,

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00:00:59,840 --> 00:01:07,550

but had a little luck involved too and it's just a great privilege to be able to go fly it.

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00:01:07,550 --> 00:01:11,000

There are a number of them and some of them are fairly emotional.

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00:01:11,000 --> 00:01:16,160

You know, all the time and effort to get to that point when you first get into space.

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00:01:16,160 --> 00:01:20,030

Just all the things that led you there.

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00:01:20,030 --> 00:01:24,840

So those first few moments when you first experience microgravity that was definitely

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00:01:24,840 --> 00:01:32,510

one very strong memory. And, you know, I think just that first time that you get

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00:01:32,510 --> 00:01:35,640

to gaze out a window either on the space station or on the space shuttle,

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00:01:35,640 --> 00:01:44,670

just to look back at Earth, it's just unbelievable the view that you have.

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00:01:44,670 --> 00:01:53,060

The biggest challenge. For me, I think getting through the Columbia accident I think was

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00:01:53,060 --> 00:02:00,360

probably the biggest for me. One because I was the lead astronaut that strapped

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00:02:00,360 --> 00:02:05,390

in the crew. So I worked with them quite a bit before the mission and then,

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00:02:05,390 --> 00:02:08,210

you know, just dealing with the aftermath.

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00:02:08,210 --> 00:02:11,590

That for me personally was probably the biggest challenge.

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00:02:11,590 --> 00:02:15,890

It was obviously hard on the entire country and on the Astronaut Corps,

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00:02:15,890 --> 00:02:19,500

but to lose seven people, you know, that you're close to.

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00:02:19,500 --> 00:02:26,660

And it kind of makes you dig deep and look down inside yourself and ask

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00:02:26,660 --> 00:02:31,730

if this is really what you want to do and if it's worth it and if it's the right thing.

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00:02:31,730 --> 00:02:34,610

And, you know, I was convinced it was.

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00:02:34,610 --> 00:02:43,220

I think the biggest surprise for me is the adjustment that you have to make from living on

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00:02:43,220 --> 00:02:47,990

Earth to living on space and being there for a number of days and then coming back.

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00:02:47,990 --> 00:02:51,700

You know, you're laying on your back on the pad thinking you're probably not going to go

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00:02:51,700 --> 00:02:56,000

because there's going to be a weather issue and you come out of the 9-minute

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00:02:56,000 --> 00:02:58,620

hold and 17 minutes later you're in space.

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00:02:58,620 --> 00:03:06,660

And just adjusting your psyche to that is just a lot harder than you think.

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00:03:06,660 --> 00:03:11,650

And then you come back from a mission, you land and two days later you're mowing your lawn.

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00:03:11,650 --> 00:03:17,410

And it's just almost, I hate using the word, but it is, it's surreal.

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00:03:17,410 --> 00:03:22,350

And when you think back on a mission it's almost like it was a dream and it's,

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00:03:22,350 --> 00:03:26,470

you kind of have to ask yourself, 'Was that really me?' 'Did I really do that?'

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00:03:26,470 --> 00:03:31,600

'Was I really there?' Because it is so much different than the rest of, you know,

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00:03:31,600 --> 00:03:39,760

your life and so much removed from it. It's just so rewarding and exciting and tiring.

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00:03:39,760 --> 00:03:47,060

It's a lot of hard work. But just a tremendous experience that you're just never going to forget.

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00:03:47,060 --> 00:03:52,150

And I'm thankful that they take a lot of pictures and a lot of video so you can look back at it