



1
00:00:00,800 --> 00:00:18,790

\h Music

2
00:00:18,790 --> 00:00:21,380

\h SLATE: Do you feel like you have a place in history as commander

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00:00:21,380 --> 00:00:23,300

\h of the last shuttle mission?

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00:00:23,300 --> 00:00:27,440

\h FERGUSON: I'm still pinching myself over that one. You know, it's good to be last,

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00:00:27,440 --> 00:00:32,930

\h it would have been wonderful to be first and if I had to hold up a few people

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00:00:32,930 --> 00:00:37,880

\h or a few missions that really stick out in my mind for the space shuttle, gosh,

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00:00:37,880 --> 00:00:42,340

\h STS-1 was just incredible. To, you know, here's this vehicle we've never really test

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00:00:42,340 --> 00:00:46,290

\h flown in the vertical position before with its rocket engines and we're not going to do it,

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00:00:46,290 --> 00:00:49,830

\h we're going to put two people on it and we're going to send it into space.

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00:00:49,830 --> 00:00:53,600

\h It's historically significant in that it's the end of the program.

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00:00:53,600 --> 00:00:58,080

\h We've learned a lot of lessons through the 30 years that we've flown it

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00:00:58,080 --> 00:01:01,340

\h and the space shuttle's a much safer vehicle now and we don't take those dramatic

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00:01:01,340 --> 00:01:06,740

\h risks like we did with STS-1. So, like I said, historically significant because it's the last,

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00:01:06,740 --> 00:01:10,920

\h but I don't consider it to be the dramatic moment from a personal achievement

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00:01:10,920 --> 00:01:15,520

\h standpoint that or any technical achievement like STS-1 really was.

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00:01:15,520 --> 00:01:19,530

\h SLATE: What made you want to become an astronaut?

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00:01:19,530 --> 00:01:22,120

\h FERGUSON: Well, I don't think there was really a moment,

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00:01:22,120 --> 00:01:27,700

\h I mean, I like a lot of people my age, I watched the men walk on the moon when I was

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00:01:27,700 --> 00:01:33,630

\h just a youngster, you know, 8, 9, 10 years old. I remember being enthralled by it,

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00:01:33,630 --> 00:01:39,300

\h I'd draw little pictures of the rocket and it was amazing to me.

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00:01:39,300 --> 00:01:46,380

\h Now I don't think my interest stayed at that level. But as I reached high school I realized

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00:01:46,380 --> 00:01:52,010

\h that I'd like to fly and the Navy always intrigued me so I went into the Navy,

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00:01:52,010 --> 00:01:55,560

\h learned to fly, became a carrier pilot and then learned that a lot of the early astronauts

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00:01:55,560 --> 00:02:00,390

\h were Navy and Air Force test pilots. Tried to go to test pilot school and things just

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00:02:00,390 --> 00:02:05,810

\h started to flow in a direction that the next natural step was to apply to be an astronaut.

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00:02:05,810 --> 00:02:07,420

\h SLATE: Describe building the International Space Station such as during

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00:02:07,420 --> 00:02:08,250

\h your STS-126 mission.

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00:02:08,250 --> 00:02:14,290

\h FERGUSON: There was a theme to the 126 mission. In the MPLM we had living

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00:02:14,290 --> 00:02:20,420

\h stations, sleep stations, we had a kitchen, we had a bedroom, we had a kitchen,

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00:02:20,420 --> 00:02:25,170

\h we had a bathroom, we had a gym. I mean, it was really amazing if you looked at it,

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00:02:25,170 --> 00:02:27,650

\h we had the space-based version of the American dream.

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00:02:27,650 --> 00:02:31,330

\h It was great to be a part of that. It was great to turn the space station from,

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00:02:31,330 --> 00:02:36,180

\h you know, this modular tube-like structure into a home that people can live in for,

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00:02:36,180 --> 00:02:41,470

\h you know, it'll be 15 years by the time the space station program runs out in 2020.

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00:02:41,470 --> 00:02:46,400

\h It was good to be a part of that, plus we did a lot of what we think was great work

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00:02:46,400 --> 00:02:54,010

\h restoring the solar alpha joint over on the right side had kind of ground to a halt.

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00:02:54,010 --> 00:02:57,200

\h We got that thing up and running so it was very rewarding after that flight.

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00:02:57,200 --> 00:02:59,280

\h SLATE: Do you remember the first time you flew a shuttle simulated landing

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00:02:59,280 --> 00:03:01,270

\h the Shuttle Training Aircraft?

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00:03:01,270 --> 00:03:03,600

\h FERGUSON: It was kind of one of those gee-whiz moments in spaceflight

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00:03:03,600 --> 00:03:06,880

\h I kind of call them now but, you know, of course, I hadn't been in space at the time

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00:03:06,880 --> 00:03:11,940

\h and I thought to myself, wow, I'm really here flying the shuttle simulator,

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00:03:11,940 --> 00:03:15,720

\h I mean it was a, it was just a wild moment for me as a pilot.

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00:03:15,720 --> 00:03:18,540

\h You know, pilots always aspire to fly the newest, greatest thing out there.

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00:03:18,540 --> 00:03:22,700

\h This is my first chance to fly a real shuttle approach, I was just in heaven, it was,

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00:03:22,700 --> 00:03:24,890

\h it was spectacular, yeah, so I remember it well.

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00:03:24,890 --> 00:03:27,550

\h SLATE: What stands out about that first Shuttle Training Aircraft flight?

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00:03:27,550 --> 00:03:32,710

\h FERGUSON: Boy, I'll tell you, what I do remember, a moment from that was,

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00:03:32,710 --> 00:03:36,890

\h you know you fly to a position that's abeam the runway, it's 28,000 feet and I looked

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00:03:36,890 --> 00:03:40,650

\h down and I thought, 'There is absolutely no way we can possibly land on that runway

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00:03:40,650 --> 00:03:44,490

\h right there. And, you know, of course it got proved to me about a thousand times since

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00:03:44,490 --> 00:03:49,150

\h that it's entirely possible, but it is a largely unnatural act that we've just gotten

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00:03:49,150 --> 00:03:53,940

\h used to over time.

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00:03:53,940 --> 00:03:56,350

\h SLATE: What do you tell people who want to become astronauts?

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00:03:56,350 --> 00:03:58,520

\h FERGUSON: For me it was always something that was impossible, you know?

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00:03:58,520 --> 00:04:02,720

\h You just didn't even ask to do something like that because guys like you don't do things

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00:04:02,720 --> 00:04:07,360

\h like this. That's a message I try to take out there, especially to the youngsters,

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00:04:07,360 --> 00:04:13,370

\h who, you know, maybe aspire to do great things but perhaps are unwilling or unable to

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00:04:13,370 --> 00:04:18,030

\h take that initial step. You know, don't sell yourself short, get out there and,