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00:00:00,370 --> 00:00:20,310

\h Music.

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00:00:20,310 --> 00:00:25,180

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

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00:00:25,180 --> 00:00:28,580

\h Well, I've always kind of been interested in space since I was a little kid, reading books about space.

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00:00:28,580 --> 00:00:31,340

\h And it was one of those things that you hope to do some day,

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00:00:31,340 --> 00:00:32,850

\h but you don't really ever think it's a possibility.

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00:00:32,850 --> 00:00:39,020

\h But, I kept thinking about it and in college I thought it would be a great thing to do.

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00:00:39,020 --> 00:00:46,800

\h And after I got out of college and got more experience as an engineer and worked at NASA for awhile and started flying with the Air Force as a flight test engineer, I thought,

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00:00:46,800 --> 00:00:48,540

\h 'Well, this is kind of a realistic goal now.'

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00:00:48,540 --> 00:00:55,110

\h And so I decided to apply and didn't get in the first time, but I tried again a second time and got in on the

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00:00:55,110 --> 00:01:00,680

\h SLATE: What memory of spaceflight stands out?

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00:01:00,680 --> 00:01:05,370

\h Probably biggest memory I have from flying in space is the very first liftoff

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00:01:05,370 --> 00:01:08,820

\h because you've wanted to do this for your whole life and you never really think,

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00:01:08,820 --> 00:01:10,060

\h 'Is this really going to happen?'

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00:01:10,060 --> 00:01:19,600

\h And you get accepted to be an astronaut but it was about five and a half years before I actually flew. And so, it was a long time and you start thinking 'Is this going to really happen?'

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00:01:19,600 --> 00:01:22,880

\h You train, you learn how to do it, and then you get assigned to a mission about a year in advance.

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00:01:22,880 --> 00:01:25,530

\h And you're thinking, 'Wow, this might actually come true.'

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00:01:25,530 --> 00:01:28,200

\h But still, you come down here and you see the vehicle and you think,

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00:01:28,200 --> 00:01:32,360

\h it's just hard to get your mind around that you're actually going to fly on that thing.

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00:01:32,360 --> 00:01:37,410

\h Then you get closer and you're being really careful not to get sick or get hurt.

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00:01:37,410 --> 00:01:45,120

\h And you think 'Oh no, something's going to happen. I'll break my leg and not get to go or something.' And then, you're sitting on the pad and you don't know if the weather is going to stop

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00:01:45,120 --> 00:01:48,470

\h you from flying or a mechanical problem will stop you from flying.

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00:01:48,470 --> 00:01:51,370

\h And then, at T-0, you feel that jolt.

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00:01:51,370 --> 00:01:54,740

\h And you feel the sensations of the vibrations that you feel in the simulator,

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00:01:54,740 --> 00:01:57,750

\h but a lot more pressure, and you think to yourself, 'Wow, this is it.'

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00:01:57,750 --> 00:02:00,940

\h I get to do this. They're stuck with me. I get to do this job, you know,

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00:02:00,940 --> 00:02:05,850

\h they can't change their mind now.' And it was just such a thrill to realize that, 'Hey, I'm flying in space to

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00:02:05,850 --> 00:02:10,870

\h SLATE: What was your biggest challenge in space?

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00:02:10,870 --> 00:02:14,790

\h I think the biggest challenge is mastering the various systems on the space shuttle.

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00:02:14,790 --> 00:02:22,540

\h There's just so many systems and it's such a complex vehicle. It's an amazing thing, a vehicle that can be a rocket and an airplane and a space laboratory basically.

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00:02:22,540 --> 00:02:26,290

\h Mastering all those different systems have been a big challenge.

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00:02:26,290 --> 00:02:29,670

\h Another big challenge is spacewalks. That's kind of my area of expertise

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00:02:29,670 --> 00:02:33,240

\h and some of the spacewalks are very challenging, getting all the details down,

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00:02:33,240 --> 00:02:36,070

\h making sure it is all orchestrated correctly and then going and executing it.

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00:02:36,070 --> 00:02:40,250

\h And it's a lot of fun to see it firsthand and actually get to do the job.

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00:02:40,250 --> 00:02:45,480

\h SLATE: What was your biggest surprise in space?

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00:02:45,480 --> 00:02:47,970

\h The biggest surprise, I guess, is just how overwhelming it is.

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00:02:47,970 --> 00:02:52,540

\h You go through a flight and you're constantly bombarded by these overwhelming views,

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00:02:52,540 --> 00:02:55,910

\h sensations, everything. And you think, 'Well, I'll remember all of this.'

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00:02:55,910 --> 00:03:00,220

\h And you try as best you can and it's amazing that you're just so overwhelmed

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00:03:00,220 --> 00:03:02,520

\h that you can't remember everything that happened during the flight.

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00:03:02,520 --> 00:03:06,520

\h But every once and awhile you say to yourself, 'OK, I'm going to burn the memory of this event.'