

A close-up photograph of Frank Borman, an elderly man with white hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and patterned tie. He is speaking and gesturing with his right hand. The background is dark and out of focus.

Frank Borman

Apollo 8 Commander



1
00:00:16,470 --> 00:00:14,870
bill anders will always mention that he

2
00:00:18,310 --> 00:00:16,480
was the first one to get to the moon

3
00:00:21,109 --> 00:00:18,320
because he was in a position whereby he

4
00:00:24,390 --> 00:00:21,119
was a few centimeters ahead of us as he

5
00:00:28,390 --> 00:00:26,230
mark spitz you know i mean first is

6
00:00:30,310 --> 00:00:28,400
first you know

7
00:00:33,350 --> 00:00:30,320
the reason is we were flying backwards

8
00:00:35,510 --> 00:00:33,360
and he had a bigger butt that's like

9
00:00:37,590 --> 00:00:35,520
whatever it takes

10
00:00:40,630 --> 00:00:37,600
but when we finally came

11
00:00:43,750 --> 00:00:40,640
into the er or sunshine actually we came

12
00:00:45,029 --> 00:00:43,760
out i think we were best expressed as uh

13
00:00:47,029 --> 00:00:45,039

you know three school kids looking

14

00:00:48,790 --> 00:00:47,039

through a candy store window you know

15

00:00:50,950 --> 00:00:48,800

the flight plan was forgotten for a few

16

00:00:52,950 --> 00:00:50,960

moments our noses were pressed to the

17

00:00:54,869 --> 00:00:52,960

glass and we're all looking at those

18

00:00:56,549 --> 00:00:54,879

ancient old craters on the far side of

19

00:00:59,110 --> 00:00:56,559

the moon which of course as you all know

20

00:01:01,430 --> 00:00:59,120

we don't see from the earth and uh and

21

00:01:04,950 --> 00:01:01,440

to see what what they were and how they

22

00:01:07,030 --> 00:01:04,960

were we were just 60 miles above the uh

23

00:01:08,870 --> 00:01:07,040

the moon at that time and uh i think

24

00:01:11,670 --> 00:01:08,880

that's one of the uh great impressions

25

00:01:14,310 --> 00:01:11,680

i've had in the the first instances of

26

00:01:17,109 --> 00:01:14,320

actually becoming a satellite of of the

27

00:01:18,950 --> 00:01:17,119

moon jim was busy photographing along

28

00:01:21,990 --> 00:01:18,960

the flight path through the navigation

29

00:01:22,870 --> 00:01:22,000

system and i was shooting right left and

30

00:01:26,390 --> 00:01:22,880

uh

31

00:01:28,230 --> 00:01:26,400

we one thing that you i don't think we

32

00:01:29,590 --> 00:01:28,240

had a light meter the nasa had

33

00:01:32,550 --> 00:01:29,600

calculated

34

00:01:35,190 --> 00:01:32,560

what the uh the reflected light would be

35

00:01:37,510 --> 00:01:35,200

depending on our longitude which depend

36

00:01:40,390 --> 00:01:37,520

on our time and so i just checked the

37

00:01:42,710 --> 00:01:40,400

clock and i'd turn it f this or f that

38

00:01:44,789 --> 00:01:42,720

and uh and so we got a lot of good

39

00:01:47,270 --> 00:01:44,799

pictures of uh

40

00:01:48,789 --> 00:01:47,280

the lunar surface as bill said he was

41

00:01:51,109 --> 00:01:48,799

doing all this with photography and i

42

00:01:53,670 --> 00:01:51,119

wanted him to be studying the systems

43

00:01:55,350 --> 00:01:53,680

doing this so i said anders forget about

44

00:01:57,109 --> 00:01:55,360

those pictures don't worry about it but

45

00:02:00,149 --> 00:01:57,119

we'll we'll be able and he was doing all

46

00:02:02,069 --> 00:02:00,159

this on the sly in the sauna

47

00:02:03,910 --> 00:02:02,079

without anybody knowing about it but

48

00:02:05,270 --> 00:02:03,920

actually i think that was made probably

49

00:02:07,830 --> 00:02:05,280

the most important evidence that we

50

00:02:10,150 --> 00:02:07,840

brought back was it was the photography

51
00:02:12,150 --> 00:02:10,160
and jim and level jim and uh build it at

52
00:02:14,150 --> 00:02:12,160
all we were coming around on this third

53
00:02:16,309 --> 00:02:14,160
revolution and i was taking pictures

54
00:02:18,229 --> 00:02:16,319
over here and jim was asleep i'm not

55
00:02:21,110 --> 00:02:18,239
even sure what he was doing

56
00:02:22,949 --> 00:02:21,120
and i think frank yelled out look or

57
00:02:24,869 --> 00:02:22,959
something and uh

58
00:02:27,270 --> 00:02:24,879
here was this gorgeous

59
00:02:29,589 --> 00:02:27,280
thing coming up over the

60
00:02:31,670 --> 00:02:29,599
lunar horizon the back side of the moon

61
00:02:33,910 --> 00:02:31,680
much rougher than the front side of the

62
00:02:35,270 --> 00:02:33,920
moon and so boy there was a mad scramble

63
00:02:38,150 --> 00:02:35,280

for cameras

64

00:02:39,270 --> 00:02:38,160

uh each guy had one started firing off i

65

00:02:41,350 --> 00:02:39,280

was lucky

66

00:02:42,869 --> 00:02:41,360

because i had one with a long lens and

67

00:02:44,070 --> 00:02:42,879

color film

68

00:02:47,670 --> 00:02:44,080

and

69

00:02:50,309 --> 00:02:47,680

f-stop

70

00:02:52,470 --> 00:02:50,319

and each other each of the guys took the

71

00:02:54,550 --> 00:02:52,480

same view but different size lenses and

72

00:02:57,350 --> 00:02:54,560

it just so happened that nasa

73

00:02:59,670 --> 00:02:57,360

picked the one i took as the iconic

74

00:03:02,309 --> 00:02:59,680

earthrise picture but frankly even

75

00:03:04,470 --> 00:03:02,319

though they both claimed they took it

76
00:03:05,589 --> 00:03:04,480
they know who did but i consider it kind

77
00:03:07,270 --> 00:03:05,599
of a crew

78
00:03:08,869 --> 00:03:07,280
picture

79
00:03:10,790 --> 00:03:08,879
we've talked about being in orbit now

80
00:03:12,470 --> 00:03:10,800
and one of the more exciting parts of

81
00:03:14,630 --> 00:03:12,480
the of the mission from my standpoint

82
00:03:16,630 --> 00:03:14,640
was lighting the rocket to get us home

83
00:03:18,630 --> 00:03:16,640
otherwise we'd still be there

84
00:03:21,190 --> 00:03:18,640
on the 10th revolution on behind the

85
00:03:23,030 --> 00:03:21,200
moon we lit the the rocket plot for

86
00:03:25,509 --> 00:03:23,040
about four or five minutes

87
00:03:27,910 --> 00:03:25,519
it worked perfectly and we started home

88
00:03:29,990 --> 00:03:27,920

and go ahead james well i have to get

89

00:03:31,750 --> 00:03:30,000

into detail here because of the we're in

90

00:03:33,830 --> 00:03:31,760

the far side of the moon and we have to

91

00:03:36,070 --> 00:03:33,840

light this engine otherwise we'll be

92

00:03:38,869 --> 00:03:36,080

captured permanently as the satellite of

93

00:03:41,110 --> 00:03:38,879

the moon and so my job was to actually

94

00:03:42,789 --> 00:03:41,120

do the work through the computer and we

95

00:03:44,949 --> 00:03:42,799

had a a

96

00:03:46,789 --> 00:03:44,959

a signal or

97

00:03:48,390 --> 00:03:46,799

actually numbers on the computer that

98

00:03:49,830 --> 00:03:48,400

got down to five seconds before it

99

00:03:51,910 --> 00:03:49,840

should be lit and

100

00:03:54,390 --> 00:03:51,920

it said something like do you really

101
00:03:55,910 --> 00:03:54,400
want to make this maneuver

102
00:03:57,589 --> 00:03:55,920
this gave you a little bit of a chance

103
00:03:59,509 --> 00:03:57,599
to say hey i don't want to do this you

104
00:04:02,070 --> 00:03:59,519
know to think about it and so i

105
00:04:06,710 --> 00:04:02,080
hesitated with my finger and bourbon

106
00:04:12,309 --> 00:04:09,270
anyway my recollection is we're coming

107
00:04:14,309 --> 00:04:12,319
back 35 000 feet a second

108
00:04:15,670 --> 00:04:14,319
way over any world speed record that had

109
00:04:18,310 --> 00:04:15,680
been set before

110
00:04:21,270 --> 00:04:18,320
uh seven miles a second basically

111
00:04:23,990 --> 00:04:21,280
and um i i remarked

112
00:04:25,830 --> 00:04:24,000
to uh to frank or jim and said gee it

113
00:04:28,150 --> 00:04:25,840

looks like uh you know where are we

114

00:04:29,430 --> 00:04:28,160

getting sunrise or no they were getting

115

00:04:30,710 --> 00:04:29,440

entry and they said oh no this is

116

00:04:34,150 --> 00:04:30,720

sunrise

117

00:04:35,909 --> 00:04:34,160

going right into the sun and this it

118

00:04:36,870 --> 00:04:35,919

just got brighter and brighter and

119

00:04:39,270 --> 00:04:36,880

brighter

120

00:04:41,189 --> 00:04:39,280

and pretty soon i felt like like a bug

121

00:04:42,870 --> 00:04:41,199

that was somehow gotten inside a

122

00:04:45,749 --> 00:04:42,880

blowtorch flame

123

00:04:46,790 --> 00:04:45,759

watching this torch go and as the g's

124

00:04:49,350 --> 00:04:46,800

build up

125

00:04:52,310 --> 00:04:49,360

every noun that looked like a big chunk

126

00:04:55,189 --> 00:04:52,320

would come flying off the heat shield

127

00:04:57,350 --> 00:04:55,199

well when you see the meteors coming in

128

00:04:59,110 --> 00:04:57,360

you know they light up very bright but

129

00:05:01,590 --> 00:04:59,120

really they're just tiny little pebbles

130

00:05:03,270 --> 00:05:01,600

and they ionize and make a big flash i

131

00:05:05,189 --> 00:05:03,280

didn't think about that at the time and

132

00:05:06,550 --> 00:05:05,199

i could just feel the heat

133

00:05:08,230 --> 00:05:06,560

coming through

134

00:05:10,710 --> 00:05:08,240

the spacecraft

135

00:05:13,110 --> 00:05:10,720

and then we got down lower uh we came in

136

00:05:16,390 --> 00:05:13,120

at night first night re-entry

137

00:05:18,950 --> 00:05:16,400

uh then the it got dark and at what at

138

00:05:21,830 --> 00:05:18,960

fifty thousand feet or so the uh

139

00:05:24,390 --> 00:05:21,840

the drogues fired uh and we could feel a

140

00:05:27,189 --> 00:05:24,400

jerk that was very reassuring and then

141

00:05:28,710 --> 00:05:27,199

at what 18 000 or something the main

142

00:05:30,790 --> 00:05:28,720

shoots came out

143

00:05:32,469 --> 00:05:30,800

12 000 and uh

144

00:05:34,950 --> 00:05:32,479

but we couldn't see them and and i think

145

00:05:37,430 --> 00:05:34,960

we needed two to make it you know

146

00:05:38,950 --> 00:05:37,440

and so it all seemed like one jerk and

147

00:05:41,430 --> 00:05:38,960

i'm thinking wait a minute three shoots

148

00:05:44,710 --> 00:05:41,440

and one pull that's not too good

149

00:05:46,790 --> 00:05:44,720

but uh our jim and frank checked our

150

00:05:47,670 --> 00:05:46,800

vertical velocities seemed to be in

151
00:05:50,870 --> 00:05:47,680
orbit

152
00:05:53,189 --> 00:05:50,880
but when we hit it was the biggest belly

153
00:05:55,749 --> 00:05:53,199
buster i've ever been on

154
00:05:57,990 --> 00:05:55,759
and one of frank's jobs was to flick a

155
00:05:59,350 --> 00:05:58,000
switch that would blow off the

156
00:06:00,950 --> 00:05:59,360
parachutes

157
00:06:03,350 --> 00:06:00,960
but you know we hit so hard it just

158
00:06:05,510 --> 00:06:03,360
ripped his hand from the switch

159
00:06:07,189 --> 00:06:05,520
and by the time he could recover

160
00:06:08,390 --> 00:06:07,199
the chutes had pulled down wind and this

161
00:06:10,469 --> 00:06:08,400
thing was

162
00:06:11,430 --> 00:06:10,479
floating upside down so i thought here

163
00:06:13,430 --> 00:06:11,440

we were

164

00:06:15,830 --> 00:06:13,440

conquering heroes from the moon hanging

165

00:06:17,670 --> 00:06:15,840

from our straps and all the trash that

166

00:06:19,350 --> 00:06:17,680

was in the spacecraft that had collected

167

00:06:21,590 --> 00:06:19,360

on the floor when we were coming and now

168

00:06:23,670 --> 00:06:21,600

it's raining down on our face

169

00:06:27,029 --> 00:06:23,680

so it was uh that's one of my big

170

00:06:30,309 --> 00:06:27,039

recollections well we came in uh

171

00:06:32,309 --> 00:06:30,319

because we actually why we hit so hard

172

00:06:35,029 --> 00:06:32,319

the spacecraft was hanging from the

173

00:06:37,510 --> 00:06:35,039

parachutes at an angle and the idea was

174

00:06:39,670 --> 00:06:37,520

that the the edge of the spacecraft

175

00:06:41,510 --> 00:06:39,680

would slice into the water and sort of

176

00:06:43,830 --> 00:06:41,520

not make it a little bit easier for the

177

00:06:46,390 --> 00:06:43,840

landing well it so happened that we were

178

00:06:48,629 --> 00:06:46,400

swinging on the shrouds of the

179

00:06:50,790 --> 00:06:48,639

of the parachutes and also the wave

180

00:06:53,189 --> 00:06:50,800

action was such that they both matched

181

00:06:55,189 --> 00:06:53,199

so that we hit both things flat

182

00:06:58,309 --> 00:06:55,199

and that's what caused the uh

183

00:07:00,870 --> 00:06:58,319

uh that caused the the the sudden uh you

184

00:07:02,629 --> 00:07:00,880

know hitting the water and of course the

185

00:07:04,550 --> 00:07:02,639

the parachutes then pull us over to what

186

00:07:07,029 --> 00:07:04,560

is known as a stable two which meant

187

00:07:09,830 --> 00:07:07,039

that we are hanging upside down just on

188

00:07:11,749 --> 00:07:09,840

our straps which is sort of an unusual

189

00:07:12,710 --> 00:07:11,759

way and so frank had to throw another

190

00:07:13,990 --> 00:07:12,720

switch

191

00:07:16,309 --> 00:07:14,000

uh that

192

00:07:17,830 --> 00:07:16,319

inflated about three balloons that

193

00:07:20,150 --> 00:07:17,840

slowly made us

194

00:07:21,350 --> 00:07:20,160

rotate up and all this motion of course

195

00:07:23,830 --> 00:07:21,360

with frank was another little

196

00:07:25,510 --> 00:07:23,840

disconcerting thing and he couldn't wait

197

00:07:27,909 --> 00:07:25,520

to get out of that spacecraft to get

198

00:07:30,070 --> 00:07:27,919

back on that ship i think that that the

199

00:07:33,029 --> 00:07:30,080

three of us were very very fortunate

200

00:07:34,469 --> 00:07:33,039

americans four hundred thousand people

201
00:07:35,909 --> 00:07:34,479
put that thing together four hundred

202
00:07:37,029 --> 00:07:35,919
thousand americans

203
00:07:46,309 --> 00:07:37,039
uh

204
00:07:47,749 --> 00:07:46,319
very blessed to be with jim and bill

205
00:07:48,710 --> 00:07:47,759
because there was there was a wonder

206
00:07:50,790 --> 00:07:48,720
wonderful

207
00:07:52,790 --> 00:07:50,800
camaraderie there it's hard to tell yeah

208
00:07:54,790 --> 00:07:52,800
i know

209
00:07:57,189 --> 00:07:54,800
i'm still i'm still mad about you doing

210
00:07:58,710 --> 00:07:57,199
that in the sauna but nevertheless

211
00:08:04,230 --> 00:07:58,720
it was a

212
00:08:06,710 --> 00:08:04,240
feeling and i i can remember

213
00:08:08,150 --> 00:08:06,720

as i we stepped out on the carrier

214

00:08:11,510 --> 00:08:08,160

with that fresh

215

00:08:14,390 --> 00:08:11,520

ocean breeze and the flag flying there

216

00:08:17,830 --> 00:08:14,400

and the sailors all standing around

217

00:08:19,830 --> 00:08:17,840

it was a feeling to me of overwhelming

218

00:08:22,550 --> 00:08:19,840

sense of gratitude

219

00:08:23,990 --> 00:08:22,560

for what we had been part of as soon as

220

00:08:25,589 --> 00:08:24,000

we got down

221

00:08:28,150 --> 00:08:25,599

at least in my

222

00:08:30,790 --> 00:08:28,160

feelings uh i didn't realize exactly

223

00:08:32,550 --> 00:08:30,800

what we had accomplished i knew that we

224

00:08:33,750 --> 00:08:32,560

accomplished a successful first flight

225

00:08:36,630 --> 00:08:33,760

to the moon

226

00:08:37,589 --> 00:08:36,640

but i didn't know the significance of it

227

00:08:39,509 --> 00:08:37,599

uh

228

00:08:42,389 --> 00:08:39,519

for the united states and for the world

229

00:08:44,550 --> 00:08:42,399

of what what had happened it takes time

230

00:08:47,110 --> 00:08:44,560

for these things to sink in it takes a

231

00:08:49,670 --> 00:08:47,120

little bit of history and aging to say

232

00:08:50,630 --> 00:08:49,680

hey really what happened how does this

233

00:08:51,590 --> 00:08:50,640

affect

234

00:08:55,110 --> 00:08:51,600

you know

235

00:08:58,389 --> 00:08:55,120

our view uh of the country especially as

236

00:09:00,790 --> 00:08:58,399

martin had mentioned 1968 was a very

237

00:09:01,910 --> 00:09:00,800

poor year in this country and then we

238

00:09:05,269 --> 00:09:01,920

suddenly

239

00:09:06,230 --> 00:09:05,279

ended that year on a positive note doing

240

00:09:07,990 --> 00:09:06,240

something

241

00:09:10,070 --> 00:09:08,000

you know positive for the country that

242

00:09:12,550 --> 00:09:10,080

everybody could take pride in

243

00:09:14,310 --> 00:09:12,560

and in a sense uh

244

00:09:17,030 --> 00:09:14,320

great feelings about the accomplishment

245

00:09:19,750 --> 00:09:17,040

but i frankly felt a little guilty

246

00:09:21,750 --> 00:09:19,760

because all of us had uh comrades and

247

00:09:24,389 --> 00:09:21,760

colleagues doing uh things that i

248

00:09:27,990 --> 00:09:24,399

thought were a lot more dangerous

249

00:09:31,110 --> 00:09:28,000

fighting in vietnam a lot of colleagues

250

00:09:33,509 --> 00:09:31,120

shot down put in prison el dorado canyon

251
00:09:35,509 --> 00:09:33,519
raid on libya

252
00:09:36,949 --> 00:09:35,519
frankly i think apollo 8 was probably a

253
00:09:39,190 --> 00:09:36,959
lot safer

254
00:09:41,030 --> 00:09:39,200
and uh we were lucky to be part of it as

255
00:09:42,630 --> 00:09:41,040
frank said

256
00:09:43,590 --> 00:09:42,640
i agree with you you stopped thinking

257
00:09:44,790 --> 00:09:43,600
look at

258
00:09:47,030 --> 00:09:44,800
john glenn

259
00:09:49,590 --> 00:09:47,040
what 69 missions in world war ii and

260
00:09:51,430 --> 00:09:49,600
there's so many missions in in korea and

261
00:09:53,190 --> 00:09:51,440
uh you know if i hadn't been in if i

262
00:09:54,949 --> 00:09:53,200
hadn't been in apollo i'd

263
00:09:56,230 --> 00:09:54,959

wanted been in vietnam

264

00:09:58,389 --> 00:09:56,240

but we weren't

265

00:10:00,870 --> 00:09:58,399

and and we sort of got

266

00:10:03,350 --> 00:10:00,880

all the adulation and all the success

267

00:10:04,790 --> 00:10:03,360

and all the planets and there were so

268

00:10:06,310 --> 00:10:04,800

many people that were trying to serve

269

00:10:08,630 --> 00:10:06,320

this country under much more difficult