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ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

ROBERT L. CRIPPEN
INTERVIEWED BY JENNIFER ROSS-NAZZAL
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ROSS-NAZZAL: Today is October 16th, 2012. This interview with Robert L. Crippen is being conducted for the Johnson Space Center Oral History Project. The interviewer is Jennifer Ross-Nazzal. Thanks again for taking some time to talk with me this morning. I certainly appreciate it.

CRIPPEN: My pleasure.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I wanted to start out by asking you what your initial thoughts were about the women and their selection in '78.

CRIPPEN: I thought it was a very positive move. We'd moved to a point with the Shuttle where we didn't require everybody to be military pilots, so it was natural that we should include the other half of the population. I was pleased with it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you know anything about the women before they came to Houston in January to be introduced to the press and the Center?

CRIPPEN: Well, I think I had met all of them during the interview process. I wasn't an interviewer, but we had a little social party with each group that came down to be interviewed, so

we had a chance to interact with all of them. So I think I'd met them, and had pretty positive impressions of everybody that was selected, and some that didn't get selected.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I understand it was a pretty competitive group. Out of 8,000 people, I think they invited over 200 to come down.

CRIPPEN: Yeah.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you and your colleagues in the astronaut corps talk about how you would work with women coming into the corps? Or was it really no big deal by that point?

CRIPPEN: I don't recall having any conversations. We just naturally assumed they'd come in and blend in with the rest of the group. In fact that was part of the selection process. I mentioned the social thing. You need people that interact well together when you're talking about training and going into space. So I don't believe we thought that there was going to be any problem, other than modifying waste management system accordingly and giving room for a little privacy on board the Shuttle. That was about the only things we needed to take into account.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you and your wife talk about the fact that you would be flying with women?

CRIPPEN: Not that I recall.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you have a chance to also meet with the women when they came down in January when they were officially introduced to the Center?

CRIPPEN: We had a chance to meet with all the group that came on board, and most of them ended up in assignments to support John [W.] Young and I on the first Shuttle flight. So we had a chance to interact with many of them on an individual basis.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Can you tell me about some of the women? Were some more shy or some outgoing, more gregarious, more laid-back? Can you give me an idea of their personalities or sense of humor?

CRIPPEN: I can't point out any one individual as being much different from the others from a personality standpoint. As I said, we purposely wanted people that could blend in, work well with others. All six of them that came aboard in that 35 group had that capability. They were all very sharp. I think I had a chance to fly with just about every one of them several times with them in the backseat of a T-38.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I was going to ask you about that. How were their piloting skills? You had some MDs and you had some PhDs in the group.

CRIPPEN: We didn't hire them as pilots, but one of the things that we were interested in is how well they could first sit in the small cockpit and handle controls and the radios and those kinds of

things. So every one of them got hands-on time on the stick, and some were a little better than others, but it depended on their previous experience.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you have any working relationship with [M.] Rhea Seddon?

CRIPPEN: I can't recall any direct working relationship with Rhea. We did interact. Like I said, I think we flew together several times, but I don't recall any specific assignment one way or the other working with Rhea.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What about Judy [Judith A. Resnik]? Was she involved in any way?

CRIPPEN: Well, Judy, who was a very sharp individual, was also working on the remote manipulator. I know she and I flew together several times. I think we even made trips up to SPAR [Aerospace], which was the company that was building it up in Canada. Very impressive. I think one of the most impressive things I saw of Judy, the first time she spoke publicly, and she was very confident and carried herself very well.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you have a chance to work with Shannon [W.] Lucid or Anna [L.] Fisher?

CRIPPEN: With Anna quite a bit, with Shannon not so much.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What'd you work with Anna on?

CRIPPEN: Mainly with flying airplanes. She and I flew together several times.

ROSS-NAZZAL: How would you describe her? She and Shannon, not many people have been able to share much with me about the two of them.

CRIPPEN: Well, I would say Shannon was maybe a little bit quieter. She wasn't as outgoing maybe as some of the others, but she was perfectly comfortable dealing with everything that we dealt with. She got the Congressional Space Medal of Honor for that stay. She stayed up so long on the Mir. So she is as very capable person.

Anna was very gregarious. I know flying with her quite a few times, I remember one time we came in with the ceiling very low there at Ellington [Field, Houston, Texas]. She helped me out a lot on making sure we got the airplane safely on the runway.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I'm curious. How in your opinion did the inclusion of women change the astronaut corps? Is there a sense in your mind that they made a real difference or there wasn't really much of a change?

CRIPPEN: The astronaut corps has evolved over the years since it's been in existence. It certainly moved from being a test pilot kind of group to one more all-inclusive. It wasn't just the women. We had a lot of people come on board, males that were not pilot types but had lots of expertise in engineering and those kinds of things as well as medicine. So there was a change, but I wouldn't attribute it so much to just the fact that it was a gender difference, but the different type of people that we were taking into the Astronaut Office.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Okay. So the mission specialists. The more scientists?

CRIPPEN: But pretty much everybody that got aboard had a type A personality. Lots of competition.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Yeah I can understand that. One of the things I wanted to ask about, Rhea Seddon had mentioned to me that she and Hoot [Robert L. Gibson] had made an announcement at the Monday morning meeting that they were having a baby. Do you recall that announcement? What the reaction was?

CRIPPEN: I'm afraid not.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Okay. Joe [Joseph P.] Allen told me he thought he remembered Deke [Donald K.] Slayton holding his nose in his hands like what's the office come to kind of thing.

Then there were two couples that got married in the corps after the '78 class came on board. That was Rhea Seddon and Hoot Gibson and then Steve [Steven A.] Hawley and Sally [K.] Ride. Was that a big deal in the office, or it was just a private moment?

CRIPPEN: Yeah, it's a natural thing to happen when you mix males and females together. Some fell in love and then got married. So nice that it did, but it didn't change much of the flavor of the way we worked.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Any pranks or any jokes on any of the guys? Because I understand some of the guys, like Steve was referred to as Mr. Sally Ride.

CRIPPEN: That's true. When Sally got picked to be the first woman to fly, it was inevitable. But Steve took it all with good humor. Truthfully you're talking about so many years ago I can't remember any specific jokes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Oh sure. I totally understand. That's what I told Mike [Michael L.] Coats and Rick [Frederick H. Hauck], because I know this is a long time ago. Well, I did want to ask you, and you talked a little bit about this at the memorial [for Sally Ride], about the negotiation going on behind the scenes regarding the selection of Sally to become the first American woman in space. Can you give some detail and background on that?

CRIPPEN: Well, I don't care to give a too detailed account. But there was some in upper level management that thought maybe somebody else, several of the other women, should be candidates, and we did discuss them all. But it came down to Sally being the best one, and I think when we did that everybody was on board.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Chris [Christopher C.] Kraft had talked a little bit about this. He said that you had come to him several times suggesting Sally, and he had thought that there was another person that should be the first.

CRIPPEN: That's true.

ROSS-NAZZAL: So I was curious about that. Do you know who that was?

CRIPPEN: Yes I do.

ROSS-NAZZAL: He was kind enough not to say. But I'm curious.

CRIPPEN: But I'm not going to say either.

ROSS-NAZZAL: All right. How much did George [W. S.] Abbey and John Young weigh in on the decision?

CRIPPEN: They were a significant part of it, especially George more so than John I think. John was supportive of the choice. He thought Sally would be a good candidate.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What sort of discussions were you having? Was it primarily about who might handle publicity better? Or who had the skills and training for the position?

CRIPPEN: The latter. The fact that the publicity thing was going to be a factor was there, but it wasn't the most significant thing as far as I was concerned. I wanted somebody that I thought would fit in well with the crew.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Was the [NASA] Administrator or Office of Space Flight involved at [NASA] Headquarters [Washington, DC]? Or was this primarily a JSC-focused discussion?

CRIPPEN: It was primarily JSC-focused. Headquarters was briefed, but truthfully I wasn't a portion of that. I don't remember being a portion of it. So I think they pretty much accepted whatever recommendation came out of JSC.

ROSS-NAZZAL: So I have to ask, why did you think Sally was the right person for this position? What sort of relationship did you have before she became a member of the crew that led you to believe that she was the right person?

CRIPPEN: Well, as I think I said in my remarks, this was going to be the first flight that we were going to actually deploy a satellite with the remote manipulator and then fly away from it and come back in and pick it up. So, I wanted at least the two mission specialists both well qualified with the RMS [Remote Manipulator System]. Sally, she wasn't the only one, but she certainly had had a lot of dealings with the arm up until that time. She also was very knowledgeable in the Shuttle systems and it was part of her getting there. I guess she was studying on her own. So that and the fact that she was the kind of person that just fit in. She wasn't trying to be special in any way, she just wanted to do her job. All that added up to me to be a person that would make a great crew member. John [M.] Fabian was the other RMS expert that we had on board. Initially it was just the four of us, but we later added Dr. Norm [Norman E.] Thagard, but that primarily for medical studies.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Do you recall, was there any surprise in the office when they announced that Sally would be the first American woman? Was there any discussion like well why wasn't Judy selected or Anna Fisher?

CRIPPEN: Well, there probably was, but I wasn't part of those conversations. As I said, we're all type A personalities. This was the first crew that would be flying any of the 35 New Guys. So I'm sure that there was discussions about both Rick and John Fabian and Sally and subsequently probably about Norm.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you have a chance to weigh in on the rest of your crew members? Like selecting Rick Hauck and John?

CRIPPEN: Yes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You mentioned one of the reasons that you liked Sally or chose her for the crew is because she wasn't trying to be special, she was trying to fit in. In that first press conference I think in '82, when you were announced as the crew of STS-7 and they had also announced STS-8, I think you mentioned that Sally just thought of herself as one of the guys.

CRIPPEN: I don't recall those words, but that's what she was.

ROSS-NAZZAL: She just definitely fit in with folks.

CRIPPEN: Right.

ROSS-NAZZAL: One of the other questions that I noticed from that press conference that I found interesting is a lot of the reporters kept asking how things would change in space once you included a woman on the crew. Do you recall any discussions in the office about this topic? Was there any sort of consensus, or again, you knew that this was happening, and you had already gone through this?

CRIPPEN: We knew it was going to happen at some point since we had brought the women on board. Probably the only considerations we knew we had to work was what I mentioned earlier with modifying the waste management system to some degree and also providing some degree of privacy, which we hadn't had probably before STS-7.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I'm curious, were there any things that seemed uncomfortable at first though with training before you left the ground because there was a woman on the crew? You had flown with John Young previously, but now you had a larger crew that included a woman.

CRIPPEN: No, not at all. You don't get a great deal of privacy being locked up in a small spacecraft like that, but there was never anything that I thought was uncomfortable anyway.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Do you think things were different with a woman on board, having this been your second flight? Anything noticeable?

CRIPPEN: No, I was the boss now. See, I had all these people to do work. It was great. I had a chance to look out the window a little bit this flight.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's true. I guess you didn't have as many responsibilities.

CRIPPEN: Well, I was in charge of all of it, but I had a lot of good people there to do the work. The first flight, it was just John and I. There was lots to be done, so we were both very busy on that one. It was a little bit more relaxed with STS-7.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you ever get a sense that Sally approached things in a different way than the rest of the crew did? Or was she pretty much like the rest of the crew, she had the same thoughts?

CRIPPEN: Pretty much like the rest of the crew as far as I was concerned. There wasn't anything special. As you noted on our [mission] patch, we did symbolize with the medical symbols for male as well as the female on board, just to denote that there was something different going on.

ROSS-NAZZAL: How did the crew deal with the media interest in Sally? It seemed like the crew was pretty protective of her based on the conferences that I've seen.

CRIPPEN: Probably one of my bigger challenges I think initially, because there was such a great deal of pressure on her for interviews and everything else. I wanted her to stay focused on

training and the mission, which is what she wanted as well, so I guess I was somewhat protective in that. I wasn't always successful, but I was somewhat protective of her.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you work with public affairs and some of the other people in the Center to ensure that she was protected at least until landing?

CRIPPEN: Yes we did work with public affairs. When they made a request that I didn't think was appropriate or would interfere with something, we sat down and worked it out.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Are there any interesting anecdotes or events that you recall from training in the simulator? Of course she was the flight engineer. Is there anything that stands out in your memory that's amusing?

CRIPPEN: All I know was that she was very competent. I found it extremely helpful to have somebody in this flight engineer position for orbit, ascent and entry training. We were fortunate that we really didn't have any significant problems to deal with during the actual flight, but the fact that she was there looking over our shoulders, had this checklist in hand, and could help us out certainly was a very positive thing from a training standpoint.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What about launch or landing or any part of the mission itself that stands out? I know you mentioned during the memorial of course taking the RMS and creating a seven out of it.

CRIPPEN: I like to use John Young's [line that] the part between takeoff and landing was the best part. It was all very good. It seemed like the flight was extremely smooth from my perspective, as I look back on it. We didn't have any real significant problems. The work we were doing with deploying the satellite and retrieving it was something totally new, but it all worked very well.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Before you guys flew in space, you actually had a visit to the White House, where you met the President. What are your recollections of that?

CRIPPEN: I think there were several times we went to the White House. I mentioned during the talk at the memorial service about the lunch thing where Sally and I got stuck in the elevator. But President [Ronald] Reagan was very gregarious, very outgoing, easy to talk to kind of a person, so every time I interfaced with him, I thought it was very enjoyable. As I said, even though Sally's politics leaned more to the left than Reagan's, she was very gracious in interfacing with him and behaved like the lady that she was.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You mentioned the word lady. That was a big deal in some of the press conferences. I think you even mentioned that as well, that Sally had to remind you that they weren't ladies.

CRIPPEN: Women in fact.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Yeah, they were just women astronauts.

CRIPPEN: Right. But I still think she was a lady.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Mike [R. Michael] Mullane in his book *Riding Rockets* really described Sally as being this very strong feminist. I'm curious, would you agree with that sentiment that he expressed?

CRIPPEN: I guess I would disagree with his saying that she was overboard. She was certainly one that thought women could do just about anything a man could do. She taught me early on it wasn't manned spaceflight anymore, it was human spaceflight. That kind of thing, but she certainly wasn't a strict feminist. I guess I heard the story later, well, in fact I think it was Bear [Ride], her sister, talked about her mother and cheering Gloria Steinem. But I wasn't aware that she was pushing feminism one way or the other.

ROSS-NAZZAL: After you came back from the flight of course there was so much media interest. One of the things that happened is Sally didn't take a bunch of flowers that were offered to her. What are your recollections of that event?

CRIPPEN: I don't recall that specific thing, but that wouldn't surprise me. Nobody would present flowers to the guys, so she wouldn't have thought that they were presenting flowers to her.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Tell me about some of the public relations tours that you guys took after the flight and how you and the rest of the crew really tried to shield Sally from a lot of this interest.

CRIPPEN: Only in that we had lots of requests for Sally as opposed to the rest of the crew. We pretty much insisted that when we made appearances it would be the group as a crew. She ended up doing some solo appearances. I don't specifically recall what they were, but in general most of them we did as a crew. That was just so that she wouldn't get pulled on too hard.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's nice of you guys.

CRIPPEN: Well, I think most crews have done something similar. It's much better. You do the mission as a crew and not individually.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Can you talk about the crew relationship on STS-7? Of course you mentioned that there were originally four of you and then you added Norm Thagard later. Talk about that crew dynamic.

CRIPPEN: I think we were all very close, integrated well, worked hard and played hard together. We had a 25th reunion down at the Cape [Canaveral, Florida] and it was just like yesterday that we had flown with one another. We were planning on having a 30th, which we probably will, but unfortunately Sally won't be with us. They were good friends as well as co-crew-members.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I wanted to ask you about [STS-]41G. You were off working the Solar Max [Satellite] mission for quite a while, so Sally, as I understand from the [Henry S. F.] Cooper book [*Before Lift-off: The Making of a Space Shuttle Crew*], really took over as commander until

you were able to come in and start training with the crew. Did you decide that you wanted her to be on this mission as well?

CRIPPEN: Oh yeah. I think I stated at that memorial, I pretty much insisted that she be on the crew because it was going to be like a tight turnaround for me, like six months. It takes about a year of training for a rookie crew. I wasn't going to be able to be with them for almost six months except intermittently. The fact that she had flown in that flight engineer position with me on 7, I knew that she could certainly work with Jon [A.] McBride, who was the pilot on that, ascent and entry in particular, to make sure that when I got on board with them they were where they should be in the training cycle, and she did that. She was the alternate commander during that six months that I wasn't with them.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you have a chance to weigh in on the rest of the crew just as you did for STS-7?

CRIPPEN: Yes. George and John were always very cooperative in that regard. They had input, but so did the commander.

ROSS-NAZZAL: At this point did they decide that it was time for a woman to do a space walk? Or was this just something that there was a space walk, and it turned out that Kathy [Kathryn D. Sullivan] was available?

CRIPPEN: I think it was a little on the side of hey, we got a spacewalking mission, and we think that we've got a woman that can handle that, so why don't we do it?

ROSS-NAZZAL: Can you talk about the crew relationship for 41G? You've got some rookies that were flying, and then you and Sally of course had flown in space before. You had a couple of payload specialists as well. Can you talk about how that changed the dynamics?

CRIPPEN: Well, Jon McBride is a great pilot. I knew that going in. In fact he had flown chase on STS-1 when John and I came back, so I was very confident in him as the pilot. Dave [David C.] Leestma was one of the smartest guys I've ever met, and he would fit right in, as well as Kathy. That group I thought worked very well together. There was a little bit of friction with one of our payload specialists. He was the kind of individual that could rub people a little bit the wrong way. That didn't turn out to be that significant a factor. There was a little bit of friction, but in all the crew worked very well together. We only brought the payload specialists probably in about the last three months before flight.

ROSS-NAZZAL: How would you characterize Kathy Sullivan compared to Sally?

CRIPPEN: Well, they're different but alike. They're both very smart. Kathy was probably from a background that was a little bit more operationally oriented. She'd done some underwater work and that kind of stuff that was not something that was in Sally's background. She wasn't a small woman. She was not big either, but she could certainly work inside of a space suit, which is not that easy. So I was very confident in her doing the space walk with Dave.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I was curious about it. When you look back over the records for the flight, Dave Leestma was the lead on the EVA [extravehicular activity]and she was playing second chair. Why was the decision made to put Dave as EVA1?

CRIPPEN: Kathy had always had a lot of experience in her kind of studies. We had a big synthetic-aperture radar on board, we had an Earth mapping instrument on board, so I wanted her primarily to focus on those. That left Dave to focus on the experiment we were going to be doing with the EVA, but it certainly gave plenty of opportunity for Kathy. It was a joint operation.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did anyone in the media ever characterize it as sexist, because she was just watching over Dave's shoulder and Dave was doing most of the work?

CRIPPEN: Not to me they didn't. She was doing more than looking over his shoulder.

ROSS-NAZZAL: This was the first crew to include two women on a flight. Was there as much media interest as there was for STS-7, or was there different interest because you had a lot of different things going on?

CRIPPEN: Well, there was certainly a lot of interest in the fact that a woman was going to be doing a space walk. In fact on the first flight the media referred to that crew as Sally Ride and others. On this flight they referred to the crew as Kathy Sullivan with Sally Ride and others.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I hadn't heard that. Any interesting anecdotes or events that occurred in the simulators or launch, landing, anything that stands out in your memory?

CRIPPEN: Well, we had one. Sally was also our in-flight maintenance person, meaning if something broke inside she was the lead on trying to repair it. We had a Ku-band antenna out in the payload bay that deploys to send high data rate and TV to the ground. We couldn't get it retracted normally, and we were going to have to jettison it with Kathy and Dave if we couldn't get it retracted, and the ground sent up a procedure that involved cutting a lot of wires behind the console and rewiring them. We had the two crewmen out EVA, and Sally standing there splicing all these wires together. The commander was a little bit nervous about whether we'd cut a wrong wire. Then finally she got down to the last part of it, and the two wires didn't connect together because the procedure, they had a female-to-female instead of a male-to-female connector. So, I think McBride and I and Sally were hunched down in the cockpit there trying to figure out what the wiring problem was.

Kathy and Dave looked in the windows from outside, looked into the cockpit, and they couldn't see anybody except Paul Scully-Power there, who was one of our payload specialists. They were worried about what was going on. It got their attention a little bit.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I'm sure it did.

CRIPPEN: Sally figured out the problem and got the wires connected properly and the antenna retracted. So that was good.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You had a writer following you around for this flight. What did you think of his take on the mission and his narrative? Do you think it was pretty accurate?

CRIPPEN: It was as I recall pretty good. Of course it's been almost 30 years ago since I read it. But I thought he did a pretty good job of characterizing the training. I need to go back and read that again sometime just to refresh my memory. Well, that was one of the things. We were asked if we would do that. Again it's one of those outside things that can detract from being focused on the mission. What was his name? Henry?

ROSS-NAZZAL: Oh, Henry Cooper.

CRIPPEN: Cooper. Yeah right. I thought he wasn't intrusive. I thought he documented—there it is. I got a copy here on my bookshelf. I will have to go back and read that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I thought it was a pretty good read. I'm just always curious about that. I ask folks about Mike Mullane's book a lot. Is it accurate or is it Mike Mullane's version of what happened?

CRIPPEN: I think it's Mike Mullane's version. Everybody looks at the world through their own knothole, so it's a little bit different.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What lessons did you learn about the PR [public relations] and media that you applied from STS-7 to 41G? You of course had the Canadian astronaut. You had the first American woman who flew in space and the first American woman to do a space walk and then I guess the second time an American woman had flown in space. So you had a number of firsts.

CRIPPEN: I don't really recall anything that much different between the two flights. I gained the experience of being the commander once before, so I had a little bit of that under my belt and knew most of the people in public affairs pretty well. There wasn't really any real problem working with them.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Any interesting postflight PR tours? Did you do the same thing that you did with STS-7? Try and do more crew events rather than specific individual?

CRIPPEN: I don't recall specifically breaking up. Most of them we seemed to do together.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you have any involvement with the [Space Shuttle] *Challenger* [STS-51L] recovery after the accident?

CRIPPEN: Yes. As you're probably aware, I was training to fly the first flight out of Vandenberg [Air Force Base, California] when that accident occurred. That was pretty devastating to everybody involved. George assigned me to go down and be the deputy to J. R. [James R.] Thompson at the Cape. He was leading a group that was put together to do the internal investigations to support the Rogers Presidential Commission that was going on. I was there

along with several other astronauts, and we were focused on things like recovering the crew remains and those things that are pretty hard to deal with.

Afterwards Dick [Richard H.] Truly, who had been brought back from the Navy as the Associate Administrator, asked me to come up and help him implement the recommendations of the Rogers Commission that looked at the accident. So I did that. Then as part of the reorganization I made some recommendations that we needed more operational people in the management of the Shuttle Program. Truly told me if I believed that, I'd hang up my flying boots and come help manage the program. So I worked with Arnie [Arnold D.] Aldrich and Dick [Richard H.] Kohrs in leading the Shuttle oversight for getting back to Return to Flight. One of the toughest things I ever did and perhaps one of the most rewarding when we did it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You moved into Shuttle management after that. Is that correct?

CRIPPEN: That was where I got into management.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you still follow any of the women since there were a few that remained on? Of course Sally went back to Stanford [University, California] and Judy had perished on the *Challenger*, but did you maintain contact with the astronaut corps and the folks that were flying, or were you pretty much just working at the program level?

CRIPPEN: Well, yes, but certainly I maintained contact with the office and the individuals in it because I was interested in their perspective of decisions that we were making and how we were moving forward. Rick Hauck was going to be the commander of the Return to Flight first

mission [STS-26]. Obviously since he and I were friends we still interacted. Then when I got moved to Director of the Kennedy Space Center [Florida], I know there was some concern in the Astronaut Office about me taking Forrest [S.] McCartney's place. Was I going to go in and slash budgets and that sort of thing? So I made a special trip to Houston to sit down with the office in a Monday morning meeting there and talk to them and try to make them more comfortable with what I was going to be doing.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Well, I think I just have one other question. What do you think is the legacy of the first six women astronauts?

CRIPPEN: They probably each have a little bit individual legacy, but as a whole I think they proved that women could fit into the Astronaut Office and do the job and do it well. Consequently they paved the way for the following women that have come into the office as well as portraying to young women out in the country that hey, we can do a lot of different things we didn't know we could do.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Yes. It's a pretty important legacy. Well, I think unless you've got some other thoughts or anecdotes or anything that you think boy, you really should know about this.

CRIPPEN: Well, not really. I think we pretty much covered it all.

[End of interview]