

**NASA JOHNSON SPACE CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
EDITED ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT**

JAY F. HONEYCUTT
INTERVIEWED BY JENNIFER ROSS-NAZZAL
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ROSS-NAZZAL: Today is September 18, 2014. This telephone interview with Jay Honeycutt is being conducted in Houston, Texas. The interviewer is Jennifer Ross-Nazzal, assisted by Rebecca Wright. Thanks again for taking some time to talk with me. I really appreciate it. I wanted to ask you about becoming the recorder for the '78 selection: what role did you play in the selection of the astronauts for that class?

HONEYCUTT: I was working for Mr. [George W.S.] Abbey at the time, who was the head of Flight Operations and was determined that we were going to select a group of what would be known as the Shuttle astronauts. George was to be the selection board chairman, so he just assigned me to help him work everything: the logistics, all the functions that went on. We brought Duane [L.] Ross in to help us with the personnel-related issues and some of the detail work. I helped George pretty much do everything but make up his mind. If you've talked to Mr. Abbey, you'll relate to that. He assigned me fundamentally to set up the facility, to set up the processes that we use. As the applications came in, there was a little bit over 7,000 of them, he and I read every single one of them, and then talked with the other board members about who we wanted to include in the group of people that we brought down for interviews. The number was around 200, I think, a little bit over 200 that we actually brought in for interviews. I participated in the interview process and then participated in the discussions relative to the narrowing down of that group into the group that was selected.

ROSS-NAZZAL: One question that I had, that I thought was interesting about the selection was that there was really that emphasis on getting minorities and women to apply. I was wondering if you had a sense of how the congressional hearings in '74 about NASA's equal employment programs, or the firing of Ruth Bates Harris had on the selection process. Did that have any bearing?

HONEYCUTT: That question is a little bit like, were we successful in Apollo because we wanted to beat the Russians? There was a whole world of stuff going on in Washington that, at least down at my level and the other members of the board level, I'm not saying what Mr. Abbey knew, but other members of the board level, that sort of thought was not ever a consideration. Same way with Apollo. We were going to go to [the Moon] because the president had asked us to do that, and we were doing whatever we could to make that successful. The discussion of beating the Russians never came up in the Control Center or anywhere on site. Same way with this.

In the middle third of the seventies, there was an emphasis in NASA to increase the number of minorities and women in the technical workforce. Flight Operations and Mr. Abbey were among those whose charter it was to go increase, through the hiring process, the number of females and minorities in the technical workforce. I was a part of that. We had significant success in doing that. For example, the Control Center, where in those days, there were no female flight directors; now, for Space Station, there are about—I haven't been out there in a while—they border on being half and half, male and female. We were successful in our activities, at least in Flight Operations, we were successful in our endeavors to increase our

diversity of our workforce. It just turned out that the astronaut selection process of '78, we started in '77, sort of just dovetailed into that. It wasn't a major step for George or for me or for Duane to have that as an added objective in the process, if that makes sense.

ROSS-NAZZAL: It does. Did the women's rights movement or the civil rights movement have any influence on that?

HONEYCUTT: Not at my level.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Were you working at all with Harriet [G.] Jenkins at [NASA] Headquarters [Washington, DC]?

HONEYCUTT: Not significantly. I worked quite a bit with Lieutenant Uhura when she came down, the *Star Trek* lady, [Nichelle] Nichols, but I didn't spend too much time with Headquarters. That was either done by Center management or by George, and I don't think he did very much of it. [Christopher C.] Kraft was the Center Director at the time, and he perhaps, in his dealings with Headquarters, dealt with that, but down at our level, we didn't get directly involved. We knew that there was an emphasis at Headquarters, and we knew that it was our responsibility to ensure that we were successful in that process. To my knowledge, we didn't have to do any direct reporting to anybody other than Kraft.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You mentioned Nichelle Nichols—can you talk about the work that you did with her?

HONEYCUTT: She had a lot of good ideas. She came up with some candidates—and I'm a little fuzzy on this—that were good people, but they weren't technical. They were wonderfully qualified in some of their other endeavors, but they weren't really technical in nature as I recall. I don't know; Duane might have had some different remembrance of that. I don't think she came up with the names of any of the six that we picked.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Not a very fruitful impact.

HONEYCUTT: It had to be done, and it was a good idea because of the publicity that it attached to the process. Perhaps through all that, and the newspaper accounts that were involved, some people elected to apply who might not otherwise have done so, and if that's the case, then the work was very valuable. She didn't review applications or anything like that, but she did get some positive publicity. That could well have led to some people applying.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I wanted to ask about the selection board, if I could. Deke [Donald K.] Slayton, was he actively involved on the selection panel?

HONEYCUTT: Deke was involved early on, but he was off the board before we began the interviews.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I was curious about that. He's listed as being on the selection board, but other people have told me he wasn't on the board, so I wanted to get some clarification on that.

HONEYCUTT: We were doing this pretty much in conjunction with the Approach and Landing Test program that was done out at [NASA] Dryden [Flight Research Center, Edwards, California, now the Neil A. Armstrong Flight Research Center], and Deke was the program manager for that activity. His value to the agency was more in making sure that test program was successful, and there were a lot of people doing what we were doing; there weren't very many who could have done what he did. He ended up in the right spot. He did start out early on, when we're doing requirement development and that sort of stuff for what the qualifications of the applicants should be, but when we got into reducing them down to qualified versus nonqualified and then on to the selection program, Deke was off doing the approach and landing tests.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What type of candidates were you looking for?

HONEYCUTT: Same thing they're looking for next week, if they did a selection. Obviously bright people, people that had demonstrated ability to work as a part of a team. We specifically were not looking for what you might call individualists that spent their careers sitting in the corner of their lab, doing fantastic research but not being able to work together to a common goal. The demonstrated ability to be a team player was very significant, because we knew the Shuttle crews were going to be big, several crewmembers, with a diverse set of responsibilities within each crew. So we knew they had to be comfortable and capable of working as a member of a team.

We looked for people that had demonstrated the ability and the desire, again, to sort of play outside their box. If you're an engineer or a scientist or a doctor or whatever, what else do you do? Do you climb mountains, do you deep sea dive, do you fly an airplane, do you jump out of an airplane? Are you willing to put yourself in a high risk environment than just driving to work and back every day?

We looked for people with obviously good academics, but we weren't looking for only people with 4.0 averages or even any people with 4.0 averages. A good academic record, a good set of references, both personal and professional. You expect that the personal references are all going to be positive or they wouldn't have put the name down, but we talked with those people. Part of the application process, they had to say who their supervisor was in each one of the blocks on the application form, and we checked with some or all of those people. Is this person really what they say they are? Those were sort of the criteria we used to get the list narrowed down to who we were going to interview. When the interview was conducted, part of its goal was to determine their personality, and do we think they'll fit in well as a member of a team environment.

In each of the interviews, we'd ask some sort of off-the-wall question or some non-NASA related question. For example, today we might say to you, "What do you think we ought to do in the Middle East?" Or, "What do you think about Scotland pulling away from the U.K. [United Kingdom]?" Some question that you know they wouldn't have been prepared for, and see how they reacted. It wasn't a significant factor, but it was a factor in just seeing how they reacted to unexpected activities.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I wanted to ask about that first group of women that you brought in. You had two groups of pilots that you interviewed first, and then you brought in, I think it was life sciences people. There were eight women in that group, three of whom ended up being picked, [M.] Rhea Seddon, Shannon [W.] Lucid, and Anna [L.] Fisher. What are your memories of the women coming in? Does that stand out at all? Was that a unique time?

HONEYCUTT: I've read through your questions, and it really didn't. What we were trying to determine was who would best fit into that set of criteria that I just went through, and based on that, how they handle themselves in the interview process. You're going to be first, so you're going to be exposed to the press. Do we think you're going to be able to present a good image for NASA, for yourself, handle whatever kinds of questions the press might come up with, and do it with a smile on your face? Those are the kinds of things that we were concerned about, but we were concerned about that for all of them.

With the exception of Shannon, none of them had any real flying experience, so how do we think they're going to perform in that sort of an environment? Again, we had that same question for some of the mission specialist males; a lot of them didn't have any of that sort of experience either. I read through these questions a couple of times. Duane or George might have a slightly different view of it, but I never feel like we went into, "Well, we got to pick some women, and we got to pick a certain number, and we're going to judge you against the rest of them as opposed to judging you against everybody that comes in." I believe that we judged them against everybody that came in, and out of the final group, they were just as deserving of being there, based on their merit and their personal capabilities as anybody else that was on the list.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's good to know.

HONEYCUTT: What's kind of interesting about Rhea, Rhea was the first female that we interviewed. The first male that we interviewed, two [groups] earlier, was John [O.] Creighton. The first male and the first female that we interviewed were picked, which I thought was pretty cool.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you find, when you were talking with the scientists who came in, that they provided any different or surprising answers than the pilots that you had been talking with?

HONEYCUTT: One of the favorite questions for them, and basically for all the non-military people, was, "When you come in the office, some of the missions are going to fly military payloads. Do you have any reservations about being involved in national security missions?" Obviously, everybody said no, but I think that was probably a little more difficult for some of them to answer than for people that were on active duty. That was a specific question that we asked at least every one of the non-military people, but we didn't get anybody that said, "No, I don't want the job if I have to do that."

ROSS-NAZZAL: I can imagine they wouldn't. When we talked to Rhea several years ago, she remembered that you had come up to her on Sunday night and said that the press would be interested in talking with the women and asked if she would be interested in talking to them and being featured in some articles. I'm curious why you picked her out of the other women.

HONEYCUTT: She was probably standing around the closest. There was no specific reason that she was picked because certainly, she did a great job, but the other two would have as well. As I recall, there wasn't any particular reason to select her over either of the other ones.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I was curious about that. She also told us that during her interview, someone had asked her an interesting question, "Suppose on your flight home, you meet a man who doesn't want you to do this kind of work. What would you do?" Do you remember that question?

HONEYCUTT: No, I don't remember. I don't recall that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I thought that was an interesting one.

HONEYCUTT: I'm not saying it didn't happen, but I don't recall that. I think I would have.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Was that ever something that you guys asked about? Did you ever ask about relationships or anything?

HONEYCUTT: No. No, we did not. Not in the formal process. Are you going to talk to Carolyn [L. Huntoon]?

ROSS-NAZZAL: I am, yes, next month.

HONEYCUTT: Carolyn had an incredibly responsible job, particularly with the women, perhaps there was some discussion offline of the board, but not that I recall within the board. I know you're going to get to her a little later, but this part of the program would not have been successful, in my judgment, without Carolyn Huntoon.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Why do you think that is?

HONEYCUTT: She just took them under her wing, looked out for them, gave them advice, was there when they had questions they maybe didn't want to go ask John [W.] Young or Mr. Abbey. I don't know any specifics; I just know that Carolyn was always there for these women.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Tell me about the role that she did play on the selection board. She was the only woman there.

HONEYCUTT: Yes, and she was a member. She asked her questions that she was interested in. I think she asked the questions that she wanted them to answer so the other people in the board could be comfortable with what the answers were. She didn't restrict her participation to just dealing with the women candidates. She was a very active and valuable part of the board, and a significant contributor to its success, as a board member, not just a specific part of the board.

ROSS-NAZZAL: During the week, did you get to spend much time with the candidates? Were there other activities planned?

HONEYCUTT: Yes, the interviews would start on Monday morning. We would have them come in on Sunday. Then on Sunday evening, we'd get a group over in one of the local hotels and introduce everybody, introduce the board members, talk to them a little bit about what the week was going to be like, the physicals and the interviews and all that sort of stuff. Trying to make them as comfortable as we could before they actually had to sit down and face the inquisition squad in the interviews. That was a fairly extensive afternoon activity. Then, we had at least one sort of formal go eat some barbecue and drink some beer thing, so we could socialize with not only the applicants, but to give them a chance to talk to some other people from the office who would come out. We'd have maybe the 20 that were in to be interviewed in a group of maybe 50 people. Everybody was talking to everybody, and part of that, again, was to see how they got along in a group and their comfort level in being around some of the NASA high-rollers. Kraft would often come to the thing, George was always there, other members of the senior staff would periodically come. Senior members of the Astronaut Office would be there, so that was, again, an opportunity for us to judge their ability to fit in with the group and with the business was done in NASA at that time.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What are your recollections of Shannon, Anna, and Rhea, from that week?

HONEYCUTT: Obviously, they were bright. We felt they had the personalities to fit in well in the group, and the capabilities to handle what they were going to be potentially subjected to as things went on. I can't remember, for example, how many women we interviewed. I know how many we picked, but I can't remember how many we interviewed, primarily because—I know it strains credulity, as they say—we really did interview them as potential astronauts, not as women.

Therefore, I don't have anything that really sticks in my mind as to why one versus the other—I don't remember.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That would be the case also for Judy [Judith A.] Resnik, Sally [K.] Ride, and Kathy [Kathryn D.] Sullivan?

HONEYCUTT: Right, right. They each had their similarities, and they each had their smart and their personalities. Obviously, everybody's a little different and each of them is a little different, and that's good. We didn't want six of the same person. I think we did a good job of getting a balanced group of people who were highly capable and served themselves and NASA well in their careers.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You just mentioned something that I was curious about: the group of women was pretty diverse. You had some married women, you had some single women, you had folks who had some experience working, like Shannon Lucid, then you had some very young graduate students still working on their Ph.D.s. Did that factor in at all, or you were impressed by their qualifications?

HONEYCUTT: The latter. Shannon was a little more senior and had a little more experience. Judy had a great engineering education and a background, as did Sally. Anna was already a doctor, and Kathy was just finishing up her Ph.D. work up in Canada. Rhea was already working as a doctor. They were all different, but doing different things, but had a lot of similarities.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Can you talk a bit about how you whittled that list down? You invited over 200 candidates, and you ended up selecting 35.

HONEYCUTT: As a typical government thing, we had a formula per square to fill. Did they meet the basic requirements, and then we gave our judgment of—and I don't remember the scale now, but say they were 1 to 10—the quality of their education; our judgment, 1-10, of the quality of their work experience, whatever it might be; a judgment of what their references said about them, and that included their previous supervisors, where they had them. Then, the fourth major thing was when you get to the interview, how'd the interview go? To get them down, we looked at A, they meet the qualifications, B, they got not only a good education, but the appropriate education, and here's what we thought its value was. Work experience, same thing, and what did their references say about them. We used those things to whittle the group down.

It's one of those incredibly difficult things to do, or you could view it as they're all so qualified, it would be hard to mess it up. It sort of runs from that range. Based on the performance of them after they got on board, I believe that we picked the right people and we picked them at the right time—in my judgment, after watching them perform over the years.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Was there ever any discussion about maybe someone was too young, too inexperienced, or—although you said earlier no one had any problems with national security—was there any fear that some might be anti-military or too feminist for NASA?

HONEYCUTT: No, that wasn't near as popular, the latter thing there' in those days, it wasn't quite as popular as it might be in later years. For example, the youngest person that we picked was Steve [Steven A.] Hawley. He was like 26, and he was an astronomer on a mountaintop in Chile. The only time we could get him to Houston as a mission specialist was a week in which a whole bunch of fighter pilots were coming in. So there was Steve and 19 pilots in his group, and everybody was pretty much interested in how's he going to fit with this crowd. Is he going to be intimidated? Is he going to divert to looking in a telescope mode or not mixing with the people? He was absolutely perfect. He came in, acted like he'd been around these guys all his life and fit right in with the group. That was the only thing I recall that we were worried about, too young or too anything wasn't [important to] the things necessary to do the job we were trying to hire them to do.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Divorce was never an issue for the committee?

HONEYCUTT: Never, never. It wasn't discussed in my presence, anyway.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Some of the women were pretty athletic. Do you think that helped in their selection at all? Like Sally?

HONEYCUTT: Sally was a great athlete and certainly, that was a factor in the other categories, just like Shannon doing 2,500 [hours] of first pilot time in light aircraft was a factor in hers. Sally's background, her athletic accomplishments were clearly noted and clearly of value to her in the process.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What impressed you about each of the six that were selected? Can you give a little synopsis?

HONEYCUTT: They all, obviously, were all smart and they were all personable. Some, a little more reserved than others. All eager. Anna was probably the most bubbly, personality-wise, of them. Judy was really technically savvy. Shannon loved to fly. Rhea, she had a great personality, we felt, for what we were going to ask her to do, as did all of them. Kathy gave us a younger person, to see how—part of this whole process was what are the best characteristics for picking people for this job because we hadn't picked them for a long time. Not just women, but I mean picking people in general. Are the young ones, are they just a likely to be successful? Up until this selection, the cut-off to apply was 35. Now, all of a sudden, there wasn't a cut-off.

Obviously, if you're 45, you're going to have a better résumé than if you're 10 years younger than that. We were just trying to sort out, for future selections, what are the kinds of things that are going to be of value. It was important, I think, although not specifically addressed, that we have sort of an age spectrum that we're looking at here to ensure that no particular age group has any noticeable factor that would cause you to want to pick them versus somebody else. To my knowledge, we never found that to be the case, although it's interesting that as the years have gone on, the average age of the people in the groups picked has seemed to rise. That might be another topic for your research. I don't think there was anybody younger than 40 in the last group.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I think it's getting tougher to be an astronaut. You have to be so competitive now.

HONEYCUTT: Of course, you need something to fly.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's true. After the selection, a lot of the applicants have told us that they felt that they were waiting a long time. Did any of the women reach out to you and talk to you before the announcement?

HONEYCUTT: Not that I remember. What was interesting was when we finally got down to the morning in which we were going to make the announcement. George called all the winners, and he made me call all the non-selected ones, which I got to do—I think I served on two boards, and I got to do that on each board. By the time of the second board, everybody knew if you got the call from George, it was going to be good news. If you got it from me, it was going to be not good news. Some pretty disappointed people to talk to.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I'm sure that wasn't a fun task.

HONEYCUTT: No.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you expect the media attention that the women ended up receiving in '78?

HONEYCUTT: Certainly, but it was everybody. That's the first group that we had picked since shortly after Apollo. The exciting new program was coming up, we had some new and some young people coming into the office, so we expected that the press was going to be highly motivated. We knew that the women and the minority selectees would get a lot of attention, and they did. In my opinion, they did a great job of handling the press. Whether they enjoyed it or not, I don't have an answer to that, but I can't imagine it was the most fun thing they did while they were there.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Shannon had young kids at the time; I think her son was around two. Did she ever call NASA and say this was overwhelming for her?

HONEYCUTT: Probably a question for Carolyn, but I'm not aware of that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you play any role in handling any PR [Public Relations] for the candidates?

HONEYCUTT: No, I stayed away from that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: The class did come—I think it was about two weeks after the announcement was made—down to Houston to be introduced to the media and to the Center. What are your recollections of those couple of days?

HONEYCUTT: It was a lot of work. A lot of making sure they were in the right place at the right time, a lot of introducing them to some of the people. A lot of the stuff that went on over in the

Astronaut Office that I wasn't necessarily privy to. I can't remember how long they stayed now, but I think they were pretty busy the whole time they were here.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I've found that Judy actually reported early. I think she came maybe a couple of months before the rest of her classmates did. Do you recall what she did while she was here?

HONEYCUTT: I don't remember her getting here, but I'm sure she went into the office, probably got some introduction to flying out at Ellington [Field, Houston] in the T-38s, probably got some introduction to some of the training stuff that she would go through, but I don't remember any specifics of that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Al [Alan L.] Bean, who handled the TFNG [Thirty-Five New Guys] training, told the media—and he told us in an interview—that he thought that the women astronauts were trying to do a man's job, initially. He changed his mind. There were some other nay-sayers that I've heard didn't like the idea of adding women astronauts, so I'm curious if you have a sense of what some of the senior astronauts thought of the women.

HONEYCUTT: I worked for George and the Astronaut office was under George, but I didn't go around. I didn't spend any time over there doing everything. He and John kind of worked that thing, and I wasn't privy to very much of the details of what went on in the third floor of Building 5.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I wondered if you could talk about people's opinions about women in the NASA workplace in the seventies, what their attitudes were like about professional women, secretaries, what have you?

HONEYCUTT: As I mentioned earlier, that was a timeframe when NASA was emphasizing increased minority and female hiring, and I worked for NASA for almost 40 years. One of the characteristics that I always found in the NASA workforce was, "Tell me what you want me to go do, and I'll do it." I may like it, I may not like it, I may think it's the right thing to do, I may not think it's the right thing to do, and after I tell you I don't think it's the right thing to do, I'll go do it anyway because that's what we're supposed to do. Particularly within the Flight Operations business at the Center, everybody was mission and goal-oriented. My experience was we didn't much care what your gender or race or anything else was. Can you do this work? If so, are you doing it? If so, then you're on our team and we're going to accept you and treat you like one of us. We don't have time to get involved in social justice or any of those other things that are out here floating around. They told us to go increase the number of women and minorities in the workforce, and we did. We recruited for them, we found them, we interviewed them, we assigned them to responsible positions.

We monitored their work, just like we did everybody else, and I never heard anybody complain, "Well, she can't do that, or he can't do that because," if the "because" had to do with anything other than their technical ability and their motivation to do the job that they'd been assigned. That's kind of a rambling answer.

I was intimately involved, within Flight Operations, in that process of increasing those proportions of our workforce. I never had any division chiefs complain, I never had any workers

complain, and they all knew what I was doing. I don't think it was there. It may have been there, may have been sort of subtly there, but certainly, I didn't see it. What goes on inside a cubicle is sometimes not the same as what goes on, on the eighth floor of the Headquarters building, but best I could tell, that was not an issue. The issue was, can you do this work or not?

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's interesting. Can you talk about how integrating women into the Corps, and then Flight Control and other positions, impacted NASA culture?

HONEYCUTT: I don't know that I could say any more than the previous answer. I think the value of the NASA culture, at least in my experience with it, was its ability to basically move forward on this subject without it having a significant or even an insignificant impact on the work and the products that we were trying to get accomplished. Obviously, that didn't apply to Apollo because down here, for example, I think there was one woman on the KSC [Kennedy Space Center, Florida] launch team in Apollo, but the last Shuttle launch, nearly half of them were. I think the cultural attitude is one of, okay, so what? We got the work done [with] the people that we had; now they all did great work. Now, what's next? I don't know if that answers your question or not, but that's the way I viewed it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: It does. To me, it's fascinating how NASA was able to do this pretty successfully, and the military just hasn't been able to make that change. There's still a lot of struggles that you hear about and read about on a regular basis, so to me, it's very unique.

HONEYCUTT: The mission is a little different, and punching a button to send a command to the spacecraft and getting shot at are obviously different things. I agree with your point. I was just reading an email somebody sent on the Israeli Army and the women they're in that, and what their capability is, and responsibilities and things are. It's pretty fascinating.

ROSS-NAZZAL: It's taken so long to say women can be in combat roles, so I just find that kind of fascinating that NASA seemed to be way ahead.

HONEYCUTT: The joy of NASA, at least, certainly in those days, was I don't think you could have found a more mission-oriented organization or culture, if you want to call it that. It started back in Apollo, where everything that wasn't directly applicable to getting a lunar mission done was just cast aside and moved out because "I don't have time to mess with that because we're going to the Moon," kind of attitude, which has prevailed since then because it established what NASA, in my opinion, is, and is why it's been so successful over these years.

It's why I'm so frustrated with what's going on today, because that mission isn't clear. There's arguments about what we're going to do, there's arguments about what we're going to do it with, there's arguments about how much money it's going to take, and so the workforce is not focused on a significant event like they've been. That's the potential for attacking the culture, that you asked about, in my judgment.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you follow the women as they completed AsCan [Astronaut Candidate] training, or were you starting then to work on the '80 selection?

HONEYCUTT: I followed all of them. Not just the women, but I followed all of them and tried to keep up with how they were doing. Al did the specific training as it related to the office functions. It was my job to establish the overall program to teach them what NASA was and what the other organizations do, and in some cases, for example, if they didn't have appropriate background in something like astronomy, to set up some classes to teach that kind of stuff. I did most of that, so I kept reasonably close tabs on how they were all doing.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You mentioned some had deficits in some of their training, and some of the women didn't have much experience working with the military or aviation or engineering.

HONEYCUTT: Right, most of them didn't.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you notice, did any of them struggle that first year, and did that concern you?

HONEYCUTT: I didn't notice it. Again, that might have been something that Al noticed, over within the office, but as far as I could tell, they were doing what they need to go do. Suiting up, who'd bitch about being able to fly in the backseat of a T-38?

ROSS-NAZZAL: Speaking of which, I came across a document that I thought was interesting, and I wanted to ask about it. Shannon Lucid, as you pointed out, had a great deal of piloting experience when she came on board. Was there any discussion about possibly selecting her as a pilot astronaut instead of a mission specialist?

HONEYCUTT: No. There was no discussion for that, because although she had, I think it was 2,500 hours of first pilot time, it was in a single-engine prop [plane]. At that time, the requirements for the pilots were that you be a graduate of a military test pilot school, so she didn't have that basic element of the selection criteria, nor did any other female that we could find, quite honestly. That was before women were assigned to fly jets, and then later, people like Eileen [M. Collins] went to test pilot school and came out as bona fide test pilots, which was a requirement at that time, anyway, for the office.

Shannon didn't have that, but when she got to Houston, she said, "Look, I want to fly in the front. I want to fly in the front seat of the T-38s," because when they had picked science-astronauts, Joe [Joseph P.] Allen, Bill [William B.] Lenoir, and Ed [Edward G.] Gibson, those guys that were part of the "scientist-astronaut group" that came in right around the end of Apollo program, they all were sent to the Air Force to learn how to fly jets. After that, it wasn't done anymore, and Shannon asked that she be allowed to become T-38-qualified. For whatever reasons, they didn't let her do that. I don't know the details of it—George and John Young pretty well sorted that out. She never was considered by the board for a pilot astronaut selection, because she didn't meet the requirements.

ROSS-NAZZAL: It's my perception that when the women came on board, they tried really hard to blend in and not make waves, be part of that NASA can-do spirit. I'm wondering how you perceived them as they came in to NASA.

HONEYCUTT: I thought they did exactly that, and they did it incredibly well. I don't remember basically any bumps in the road. Again, they may have had one for John or they may have had one for Carolyn, but I was never party to any issue where they felt like they were being improperly used or allowed to do any things that they should be allowed to do. I'm not aware of any of those situations. Again there was things I knew about, and there was things I didn't.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Once you ended up leaving Flight Crew Operations, how closely did you follow the class of '78, or were you too busy?

HONEYCUTT: I went to the program office, and after STS-4 I became the manager of the program office, Flight Operations Office. It was a job that Deke had had before he retired from NASA. I was authorized a deputy, and I cut an agreement with George Abbey. "Hey, let me have one of your guys to be my deputy," just on a temporary basis, like a year assignment or whatever. He'll be part of the program office, but he'll be the Astronaut Office eyes and ears of what's going on over in the program office because he won't be excluded from any of the discussions. We did that, and Dick [Francis R.] Scobee, was the first one. Don [Donald E.] Williams was the second. Ron [Ronald J.] Grabe was third and Don [Donald R.] McMonagle was fourth, I think. Then, I transferred down here to Kennedy, and I think that program or that relationship between the Astronaut Office and the program office sort of went away. Scobee and Williams were in the first group and Grabe was in the second group, and I think Don McMonagle was maybe in the third. Through them, I had then a source of what's the office really thinking about or what they're worried about, and could kind of follow along as we were flying out to missions.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I wanted to ask, I didn't include this on the question list, but Duane Ross told me that you were Mr. Abbey's Bubba.

HONEYCUTT: Yes, right.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Can you tell me, is that just basically the deputy, or what does that term mean?

HONEYCUTT: When Kraft was the Center Director, George was his technical assistant. George was like the number three person in center management. Kraft was director and [Sigurd A.] Sjoberg was the deputy, and then George. They were all on the top, the ninth floor of Building 1. Right before Apollo-Soyuz, Kraft decided it would be a good idea to bring somebody up basically from the ranks to come up and serve in his office, essentially with George, but reporting directly to Kraft, to see how it works up there and to learn how upper management does their things. I can't remember the first guy. The second guy up there was Dick [Richard H.] Truly, who later became NASA Administrator. I was up there, and Carolyn also held down that position. I became the director down here. and she became the director out there. It was felt by me and by Chris and by George to be a valuable thing.

When George went downstairs, I went with him. There was a guy named Pete [Henry E.] Clements who took his job up on the third floor. Pete was a full-time comedian moonlighting as a NASA official. We're in there one time, and George and I and Pete are having this discussion. Pete says, "Well, you got Bubba here," who's doing whatever we were doing that Pete didn't like, "and we need to get that stopped." The damn term took.

I guess the best way to [describe] that would be sort of like an aide to him, a military aide, where you do things for the boss. I went down there with George, and that's how I ended up doing the selection stuff and lots of other duties as assigned. When I came down here, I came down here as the director of Shuttle Operations, and I started that program at the first level reporting office. I would pick guys out of Engineering Operations and Shuttle and bring them up and let them serve time with me. First one I had was Doug [Douglass E.] Lyons, and he turned out to be the launch director. Dave [David A.] King turned out to be the director up at Marshall [Space Flight Center, Huntsville, Alabama]. Bill [William W.] Parsons ended up being the Shuttle program manager and then the director down here. Joanie [Joan E.] Higginbotham ended up in the Astronaut Office. They were really quality people that you give the opportunity to see how things really work and how the further up the organization you go, the more external factors drive your decision processes. Most of the time, nobody below you knows what those factors are. A little bit like the question about Harriett Jenkins, yes, she was probably leaning on Kraft, but we didn't know it and Kraft wasn't telling us. He would take her words and put it in his words and say, "Here's what we need to go do," without pointing the finger or giving her credit for doing it.

When I went up to the fourth floor as the director down here, I continued that program, and it's still in place today. It's actually been quite successful, but I was the first one to be called that, years ago. It'd have been in the late seventies when that started. After I left the job in George's office, we got to flying, so pretty much that job became one that he put somebody from the Astronaut Office in. I had one member of the office over in the program office, and George had one up at his level from the office, so that the both of us had a better, closer relationship with the office and the things that were of importance to them.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I just thought the term was interesting.

HONEYCUTT: Yes, Henry Pete, I don't even know where he came up with that, but the amazing thing is it stuck. People have accused it of being an acronym or something and no, it's not that. Just a southern term, I guess.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Yes, that's true, it is very southern. I never really heard it till I moved down here. I just have one more question, I was curious what your thoughts were about the legacy of the first six women that you helped to select.

HONEYCUTT: Obviously, first is important and always important. My view is I think the best thing about them is they didn't make a big deal of it. There were some that followed later who did, but that first group wanted to be considered astronauts, and the fact that they happened to be women astronauts was not the pointy end of their sword, if you will. I think that was significant to their success, as well as the success of the program, because the worst thing we could have done was had a lot of internal discord because of that issue. We didn't have that. I think it's to their credit that they took that attitude and said, "Hey, this is not about me; this is about this program, and I'm fortunate to be part of it. I'm going to ensure I do my part to make it a success," rather than, "Hey, look at me."

ROSS-NAZZAL: Is there anything that we haven't talked about that you thought, "Boy, you might want to think about?"

HONEYCUTT: I don't know if that was of value or not.

ROSS-NAZZAL: No, it's actually great information, and it's got me thinking about ways to approach this. I've been talking with different people, everyone's been weighing in on why it was so successful. You've got some great, great suggestions.

HONEYCUTT: Have you talked to George or is he on your list?

ROSS-NAZZAL: I talked to George—last week he came in. We had a maybe an hour-long conversation. We'd like to talk with Duane Ross, and like I said, Carolyn's coming in next month, so I'm going to be talking with her. Trying to get a wide variety of people to talk to about the women and their time in the office.

HONEYCUTT: You already got most all of them?

ROSS-NAZZAL: I have, yes. Shannon agreed to do an interview with me, so I'm going to be talking with her, but I've sat in or done interviews with all the other women—except for Judy. Obviously, we couldn't talk with her.

HONEYCUTT: Great lady.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Yes, I'm sorry that we didn't get a chance to talk with her, because everyone just talks about how wonderful she was. Everyone I talk to says she was their best friend. It's kind of funny how many people thought that.

HONEYCUTT: She was really funny. She really had a tremendous sense of humor. We missed her. After you get it done, you send it so I can look at it?

ROSS-NAZZAL: Absolutely, yes. We'll send you a copy of a transcript.

[End of interview]