

NASA JOHNSON SPACE CENTER ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

EDITED ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT 4

SHANNON W. LUCID
INTERVIEWED BY JENNIFER ROSS-NAZZAL
HOUSTON, TEXAS – APRIL 15, 2021

ROSS-NAZZAL: Today is April 15th, 2021. This interview with Shannon Lucid is being conducted in Houston, Texas, for the JSC Oral History Project. The interviewer is Jennifer Ross-Nazzal. Thanks for coming over today, Shannon. I appreciate it.

LUCID: You're very welcome.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Last time we talked about you seeing the announcement in *Science* magazine and going home and telling Mike. How did you get the application? Talk about that.

LUCID: Oh, I had applications because I'd been applying to government jobs for a couple years, ever since I got out of college. I had plenty of government applications lying around the house. It was just the regular government application that you filled out.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What is that, the SF [standard form]-171?

LUCID: Yes, whatever. It wasn't anything special or different; it was just the typical government application.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you highlight your pilot skills and hours and training in aircraft since they were looking for folks with those skills?

LUCID: I don't know. I don't remember what all was asked. Now, I did write a letter to Dr. [Christopher C.] Kraft before I sent in the other, and I told him that I worked in a lab and I flew airplanes. But he never answered.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I'm sure he was a little busy.

LUCID: Yes, I agree.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Tell me about the phone call to come down here and who was part of the group that you came with.

LUCID: You mean when they called?

ROSS-NAZZAL: When they called to schedule your interview. Were you early on in the group or towards the end?

LUCID: My impression was I wasn't real early on. They'd had several different groups before. My impression was that they were grouping likes together, from education. They didn't have any military pilots in our group. It was more like people that were interviewing for mission specialist positions. I think they grouped them with similarities.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Do you remember when you came down here? You were staying at what, the King's Arms Hotel?

LUCID: Yes, we stayed over there. I'd have to look back. I don't remember the exact month when we came down, but it was extremely exciting. NASA paid the way, and I flew down. Mike and the kids took me to Will Rogers Airport [Oklahoma City, Oklahoma]. I got on the plane and came down. I had a real good time that week.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Can you tell me more about that week? Some of the folks have memories. Kathy [Kathryn D. Sullivan] talks about playing handball with Fred [Frederick D.] Gregory, and I think Rhea [Seddon] talked about being the first woman to be on the treadmill. Do you have similar memories?

LUCID: Oh, not really. I just remember talking to the different people and trying to figure out where they were coming from, just like you would if you were interviewing for a job and you were meeting everybody. You sort of see, "Okay, now how do I rate? How does this come into play?" I do remember Carolyn [L.] Huntoon took the females out to eat. She drove us. I remember being in the car when she was driving some of us somewhere, but I can't remember exactly why.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Do you remember during the interview if anybody asked you odd questions about being a mom or your work? Anything that caught you off guard?

LUCID: No. I was primed and ready, because I'd had a lot of experience with people being very negative about the fact that I was a female, that I was married, that I had kids, and so I was primed. I was ready. But you have to give NASA credit, no one asked anything along that line at all. The only question that came up, they said, "The job has a lot of travel. Does the idea of travel bother you?"

I said, "Oh, I just love to travel. After all, my grandfather," so I brought him in and said that I most probably inherited his genes. I said, "And there's absolutely no problem. I travel now. When I'm gone Mike takes care of the kids, and when Mike is gone, because he travels, I take care of the kids. It's absolutely no problem." That was the only question that came up at all about that. That was a very legitimate question.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Yes. That's interesting.

LUCID: Yes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You mentioned, before we started recording, that Anna [L. Fisher] and Rhea were in your same group. Were there other women in that group that you remember?

LUCID: Of the six?

ROSS-NAZZAL: Just any other women. Were there other women there? You don't have to provide names.

LUCID: There were. There were.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I don't know how to phrase this. Were you sizing up the other women? Trying to get a sense of where you stood?

LUCID: Of course. You like to think you're objective, and you like to see how you think that you would fit in. I guess my impression was that the rest of the women were young and although they talked about discrimination, in my humble estimation they had not faced much at all, I mean in the grand scheme of what had gone 10 years before.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's interesting. When you left and came back to Oklahoma what did you think your odds were of getting selected?

LUCID: You just absolutely couldn't tell. There just was no way. You just had to wait and see.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Would you tell me about that phone call you received from George [W.S.] Abbey?

LUCID: I was working in the lab, and somebody came in and said that I was to call this number. I went down into the basement of the medical school because they had a phone booth. I called back, and George Abbey asked if I was still interested, and I said of course. He said, "Okay, then someone will call you back later."

ROSS-NAZZAL: That was it? Very short?

LUCID: Yes. Then I called up Mike and said, “You’re not supposed to tell anybody.”

ROSS-NAZZAL: How did he react?

LUCID: He said, “I guess I’ll be looking for a job.”

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you tell the kids that night?

LUCID: It was already released by the time I got to my mother’s after work to pick them up. The kids were with my mother. Because she told them, they each drew a picture of a rocket, which I still have hanging on the wall.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That was what I was just going to ask you.

LUCID: Yes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You have to show it to me. I don’t remember seeing that. Were they excited about moving to Houston?

LUCID: No. They were very sad because they didn’t want to leave their grandmother.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's understandable.

LUCID: Still, to this day, they say, "You ruined our childhood by taking us away from our grandparents." I said, "Well, you weren't taken away that much; we got you back there all the time."

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's funny. I know I've covered this in an article that I wrote. But I thought since we haven't put it on the record from your experience I would ask. Would you talk about that media interest? I've heard that you did a piece with Walter Cronkite and *People* magazine. We have photos of *People* coming to your house and taking photos of the kids. Would you talk about all of that and how that transpired?

LUCID: Yes. As you can imagine, there was a huge media interest. Someone called up and said that they were from NASA and that they had to come out and do interviews. Whether it was true or not I don't know, because I don't think I ever saw much from that. They came out to the house, and it was fairly stressful because the kids were there, and if people are going to come in and take a movie then you feel like you have to clean up a little. There was a lot of media interest. After a time or two I said, "I'm getting the job; the family is not."

I think it was *Good Housekeeping*. I'm not badmouthing the magazine, but they called up where I was working and wanted to do an interview, and I said no, because I just didn't see myself as that type of person. I thought it was a professional job. You know what I mean? We weren't talking about making dinner or something. That sort of aggravated the people where I was working because they'd have liked the publicity.

There was a fair amount of interest. You pretty much had to know how to say no. The worst time was when we first came here, when we first started work. Al [Alan L.] Bean told me, he was sort of in charge of us, he said somebody in Houston was going to come out and do an interview, because they wanted to interview the family. This was a very great lapse in judgment on my part, but I thought well, I don't want anybody to be cross with me, so I agreed. They showed up, and oh my goodness, they wanted to video the kids cooking supper.

I got them out of the house. They had a little clip, you can still find it, I think. Right then and there I told Mike, "Never never again is anybody talking to anybody. It's my job. The kids and you are out of it." That was not a good thing to subject your children to.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Yes, it sounds kind of stressful.

LUCID: It just wasn't a good thing.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What did you think of talking with Walter Cronkite? That's kind of cool that you would get to talk to such a major reporter on the nightly news.

LUCID: Did I really?

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's what I found, yes, that you did an interview with him.

LUCID: Obviously it didn't make a huge impression.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Didn't make much of an impression?

LUCID: You're doing so many interviews, with thousands of people. You have your little rote answers, but what I always tried to do was to get whoever was doing the interview to talk a little bit about themselves, because then you didn't have to answer so many questions. That worked out pretty well.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Yes, that's a good idea. I'll have to try that next time. I think that's a George Abbey trick too.

LUCID: I do remember one time. Oh, and I always volunteered to do the ones with the Japanese because they always gave you cool little gifts. It made me feel bad because I didn't have anything to give them in return. They always had nice little tokens that they would give you, and the kids always liked to see them.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What did Mike think of all this? They were very interested in pursuing him as well, because it was so unique that you were selected as an astronaut, and he was going to have to give up his job and move down here. That was sort of the big story between you and Anna Fisher. Look, these two successful career women are moving, and their husbands now have to move with them.

LUCID: I don't remember much play on that. Mike got a job; he was very fortunate. And that was the big stress because it wouldn't have worked very well if Mike hadn't been able to get a

job. It's hard for two people to get a job in the same place; it really is. I was very, very thankful that he got a job. He got a job before we moved down here. He had come down to interview, but I don't remember him being hounded by the press at all. I don't think that the press ever contacted him. If they did, they just didn't get very far.

ROSS-NAZZAL: When did you come down to look at houses? Was that before or after the announcement in January when you came down to Houston for the whole class to be introduced?

LUCID: Mike came down because his job offered him a trip to look, and he couldn't find anything. I want to say it was in the summer. It was pretty close to when we moved, because it was hot. Of course here in Houston that doesn't necessarily mean the summer. I just remember it being so hot. A real estate agent had contacted us. That was fine. She took us around and showed us all these houses. We were looking for someplace where it was easy to get on the freeway for Mike because he was going to be working downtown. I made the mistake before we came of telling the kids they could have their own bedrooms to make them excited about moving.

It seemed to us that every house that we were shown had a swimming pool, and there was absolutely no way that I wanted a swimming pool in the backyard. Michael was only two, and there was no way I could have been at work and him at home and being worried about him drowning in the pool. I remember this one house. The person said, "Well, you know, they have covers you can put on top of the pool."

I said, "No. No pool." So we really hadn't found anything. We were sort of discouraged because we had been looking so long. Then the real estate agent said, "Well, you know, this one

house just came up on the market, and I think it has lots of bedrooms. It's a little strange, but it has lots of bedrooms."

We went, and it would work perfectly because it was within walking distance of grade school, middle school, high school. It was within walking distance of the library. Back then there was a little movie theater that was really close that the kids could have walked to. It was close to the rec center so they could walk there. So it just was perfect. It was a strange house, but everybody could have their own bedroom.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Doesn't seem like a strange house.

LUCID: It's a little strange, the layout. The only thing negative was that the stairs had this industrial red carpet on it. It was very obviously not something you'd want to live with for long. Mike said, "Okay, if we get this house now you have to realize we're not changing anything until we sell the house in Oklahoma City."

ROSS-NAZZAL: So you had to live with that red carpet for a while.

LUCID: Yes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Sounds like a nice house though.

LUCID: It worked out.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Tell me about coming down in January. That's when your group was introduced to the Center.

LUCID: We came down and went through whatever. I guess the memory I have the most is looking out the motel room and the window. It was the typical January weather in Houston: foggy, rainy, chilly. I saw these school buses going down NASA Road 1, and I thought, "What am I bringing my kids into?" It was so cold. It wasn't like cold cold, but just unpleasant, with all the rain and drappiness and humidity. It was different than Oklahoma.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I bet, but you finally got your dream job.

LUCID: That's very true.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you know anybody in the group initially from the 35? Obviously, you had met Anna before and Rhea. Is there anyone else that you had met?

LUCID: No.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did they have any activities for you during those three days when you were down in Houston? Did you get to meet anybody or tour the Center? Or was that covered during your interview process?

LUCID: We did things, and I remember talking to the different people. I think we got fitted for our flight suits, but there's nothing that really stands out. I just enjoyed talking to everybody and seeing the Center.

The one thing that struck me was all these guys had voluntarily joined up in the military; there was a military slant. Up until that point in my life I'd never met anybody that voluntarily joined the military. Everybody that I knew that had been in the military had been drafted. Now I don't know that for a fact, but no one that I ever knew ever thought of the military as a career. So that was a different culture.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Tell me about that first Monday morning meeting that you had in the Astronaut Office. How were you welcomed by these old guys from Apollo and the folks in your class and the rest of the folks at JSC?

LUCID: I don't have anything particular that sticks out; it just seemed like you were starting a new job, and everybody was very welcoming. Everybody was very positive. I had the feeling that some of the old guys, this wasn't exactly what they would have chosen. But they didn't say anything, and they were very welcoming. They most probably knew where their flight assignments were coming from. But that's just okay. You got a job, and you got something to do.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I've heard you say before that you found it interesting—when you were in Oklahoma you were defined as this traditional conservative woman, but then you came down to Houston and all of a sudden you're this liberal. Would you talk about that?

LUCID: Yes, it was really interesting. When I was in graduate school and I was a postdoc, then I was perceived as this ultraconservative person. I mean people would have defined me that way, compared to the rest of the people that were around. Then I came down here, and like I already mentioned, it's a very heavy military culture. All of a sudden, I was the most liberal person that was on the face of the Earth.

We would have discussions with people who we shared an office with, and they would talk about whether women should be in the military or not. Of course I thought, obviously, if they're going to draft people, they need to draft both males and females. I didn't think the draft was right, but if you're going to do wrong things, they need to be equally distributed. We had different views on what it was appropriate to use the military for. It was just very interesting, and I thoroughly enjoyed talking to everybody and hearing their viewpoints. I'm not really sure they enjoyed hearing my viewpoints, but they were very nice about it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You were one of the older folks in your class.

LUCID: I was the oldest woman. I'd have to look at it, but my impression was I was pretty much in the middle of the age of the males.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you offer any advice to the younger gals that were coming in? They were fairly young when they arrived. Two of them at least were just finishing their doctorates.

LUCID: Yes, I don't think anybody in the class was too interested in advice. Everybody figured they knew how to do their job. And what did I have to advise? I had never been an astronaut before either.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Right. You participated in a year of training. I wonder if you would talk about the training that you participated in and how that differed from what you were used to at OMRF [Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation] and other places. It was very different than working in a laboratory. Would you talk about some of the different things that your class did?

LUCID: It was very different. One thing that struck me was they talked about the Shuttle, and we went to all these lectures. We were talking about computers a lot, and I really didn't have any background in computers whatsoever. We weren't using computers in the lab, so that was a new thing. We did so many fun things. We went to water survival school and then we did parachute training at Vance [Air Force Base, Oklahoma]. I really, really enjoyed the trips that we made, like the geological trips. It was just a fun time.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Can you talk about the camaraderie amongst your class? Because as I understand it, you really became close-knit.

LUCID: Yes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I know you don't like to talk about people, but I'm not asking you to talk about people.

LUCID: No, it was just a lot of fun on the trips to talk to different people and see the different viewpoints. It was just so interesting to watch how people were interacting with each other. It was just a lot of fun.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Were you trying to keep up with your field at all, the field of chemistry? Or did you decide at that point you didn't have time?

LUCID: There was no way you could really do that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Yes, I was curious about that.

LUCID: I still read *Science* magazine, but no there was no way that I could have done that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You had mentioned Al Bean, and I did an interview with him many years ago. He talked about how he didn't really like the idea of women becoming astronauts, at least initially, because he said that most of the things you do as an astronaut are not all that genteel and he didn't think that women could necessarily do the job. Did you get that sense from him when you were on some of these trips, that he was hesitant about a few folks?

LUCID: The important thing was you were allowed to do it. So it didn't make any difference what people thought. The people supported you and let you do it, so it didn't make any

difference what they might have been thinking. I just didn't really pay much attention to that. I was there. We had the full backing of the government.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Can you talk about your memories of the water survival training? Because that is something that Al Bean had mentioned. He remembered it being difficult, and how impressed he was that there were two women, he didn't say who, but he said there were two women who did it correctly. They didn't have to redo it. Then that started him thinking that well, maybe women can be astronauts, maybe women should be astronauts, and guys shouldn't be astronauts.

LUCID: I don't know. Water survival was just super super fun from the beginning to the end. It was just so much fun. We got to be in the water and be picked up by helicopters. Who could ask for more? You didn't have to pay for any of it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's very true.

LUCID: I just loved every minute of it. I thought, "When are we going to really work?"

ROSS-NAZZAL: I did want to ask you about the parasail training in Oklahoma, and the main reason is because at the time you were there—I thought it was interesting—Eileen [M.] Collins was there and she was doing flight training and there were four other women I think in her class. Did you get a chance to meet those women on that side?

LUCID: No, we didn't at all. That was the training that distressed my mother. It made the TV in Oklahoma City because the channels were out there.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I was wondering about that too.

LUCID: For some reason I got drug for a little bit, and one of the males that was there was laughing and that really distressed my mother. She thought maybe I was hurt. I wasn't, but she didn't think that that was an appropriate response.

ROSS-NAZZAL: It does look kind of bad on TV. Your training program was supposed to be two years, but it was only one year. Did they have any sort of ceremony at the end of that to mark the decision?

LUCID: I don't remember that. I remember in subsequent classes they did, but it was all pretty laid-back.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I wasn't sure about that.

LUCID: No, I don't remember. Everybody was just focused on wanting to get assigned to a flight.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Right. That's what you were there for. I read that you spent time working with Owen [K.] Garriott, who was a scientist-astronaut. You were working with him for a few months. What sort of things were you working with him on?

LUCID: He was assigned to Spacelab, so I basically followed him around. We went down to the Cape [Canaveral, Florida] and did testing on the Spacelab when they did it there. I got to go to Germany with him as they were talking about the payloads and as he was doing payload training and what have you. That was very interesting.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That sounds like fun.

LUCID: It was.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You mentioned travel and Mike. Did you have to get any help since you were probably spending, I assume, more time away from home than you did in Oklahoma.

LUCID: When we were thinking about moving down here my sister had just come back from Switzerland, so she was looking for something to do. She said, "How about if I came down and take care of the kids?"

I said, "Well, that would work, but you're not coming down and just taking care of the kids. You can come down, and I'll pay." Obviously, I paid her. "But you have to go to graduate school and get a graduate degree, so it's not just babysitting." So she did. She came down, and she went to U of H [University of Houston] and got her master's degree. She lived with us while

she was getting her master's degree, so that worked out very well both for her and for us. We paid Social Security for her all the time. That worked out really well because later as her health deteriorated, she was able to pick up on medical benefits.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's great. I know many instances where you've enabled folks to pursue something, or do something that would be beneficial for them, because of your confidence.

LUCID: No, but it just didn't set right with me that somebody would just come and—it was a way. She was a little reluctant to go to graduate school; we had different personalities. That gave her the opportunity to do that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I was curious about that because I know Michael was younger at the time. That could have been an added complication.

LUCID: Yes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I learned from Gratia [Lousma] that there was a Bible study that was established in the Astronaut Office. I wondered if that was something that you had helped to establish.

LUCID: I wouldn't say I helped to establish. Yes, we had a Bible study group. We would meet once a week, I think. Was it that often? I don't know but fairly often. We rotated around to different people's houses. It was a very good time.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I was just curious about that because it's not often something that you hear about the astronauts. To me it was just interesting that you would all gather together and talk about the Bible, just something different.

LUCID: We did; it was a very good support group.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Speaking of support group. Initially when the astronauts came in, I've been told it's not the Astronaut Wives Club, but the wives would often gather and spend time together once a month at a luncheon. Was Mike extended that same courtesy? Did he ever become part of the spouse group?

LUCID: No, he didn't do anything. As far as I remember, Mike didn't do anything with spouses, except when we launched obviously. But I will say this, that when I was in Russia training for Mir, [STS]-76 and [STS]-79, those crews included Mike in every crew activity. I wasn't there. I was in Russia. Mike would say that he went over to someone's house. I said, "Really?" They were so good about including him.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Oh, that's nice.

LUCID: Yes, it was very nice.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I think Clay Morgan, Barbara [R.] Morgan's husband, talked a little bit about that with us, not on a recording but just mentioned that he was part of that group. I think they were doing the chili cook-off together and things.

LUCID: Yes. Mike, as far as I know, didn't do anything with spouses. He did meet some of the spouses in the Bible study when they came over, but Mike was very busy. He was working and commuting.

ROSS-NAZZAL: The traffic is horrible in Houston.

LUCID: It wasn't as bad in the beginning, but it got worse.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I don't envy him. I had also read that you were assigned to—this was all it was labeled—crew training. What is crew training? Do you recall what that involved? That is so nonspecific to me.

LUCID: That was one of the jobs that I had?

ROSS-NAZZAL: That was one of the jobs you had. It was interesting because I have a document from the '78 class and some of the astronauts had two assignments, and you had seven assignments. I thought it was very interesting.

LUCID: I don't even know. I'm surprised you found a document that had that listed our assignments. Because the thing that surprised me—there was never any paper trail about anything. Never. Never. What always sort of surprised me was every time we got somebody new, either acting or as the head of the office, then they'd always want to know, "Well, what have you done before?" I'd write out a list. Pretty soon I just kept the list and added to it, because obviously no one else was keeping a list. I would have expected an organization to keep track of what people were doing. Now it could have been a misperception on my part.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Why do you think that was the case? Or would you rather not speculate?

LUCID: Oh, there was no paper trail on anything, ever. Now after I got back from Mir and was back in the office, they started doing things—what I would consider the normal workplace situation where you have evaluations and do things like that. But no, there was never ever, and no one ever said, "Oh, you're really doing a good job," or, "You're doing a terrible job." They didn't give any rhyme or reason as to why you were assigned this or that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I wonder why that was the case. I also read that you worked in SAIL and FSL [Flight Systems Lab] out at Downey. I wondered if you would talk about what you were doing in both of those situations and how that operated.

LUCID: I worked in SAIL a lot. SAIL was the Shuttle Avionics Integration Laboratory, and they were testing all the software there. They had all the computers, and they had a cockpit that was a mock-up of the Shuttle of the cockpit.

You would run these flight tests, so you would be there. They would have the procedures and the tests, and you had to go through the procedure and get it all to work. That I do remember. There was some controversy with that, because Rockwell was running it and they had hired guys to be the pilots to run the tests. They'd hired real pilots to be the pilots and do the test flights.

Then our class came in. At the time there were two reasons, I think. They needed to find stuff for everybody to do, and it was sold as a way of being able to get some training in. But it was very inefficient training due to the fact that you had to sit there for hours in shifts without doing anything, just waiting for them to get the rig all configured so you could do it. There was training value there, but like I said it was inefficient from that standpoint.

They didn't want any females assigned to do that, number one, because they weren't pilots. Well, we weren't pilots but MSs [mission specialists]. I do remember Carolyn Huntoon asked me how it was going. I said it was going great. She had heard that there was a little controversy about not wanting any females to do that job. Mainly it wasn't because they were females, I didn't think. It was because they weren't pilots, they were MSs. It was more of an MS thing.

It did make me feel bad because when I was working over there, I met some of the guys that had been hired as the pilots, and now they were just engineers that were doing things on the rig. It certainly wasn't the job they had been hired to do. They talked about it, and they didn't hold a grudge, I didn't think, against any of us coming over and doing it. They were always very helpful, but I did feel sort of bad. They weren't doing the job that they had been hired to do.

But SAIL was a good place to work. I learned a lot. It was very good to work with all the engineers that were doing all the software work, and it gave you a real sense of teamwork

because everybody had to do their job to get it working right. Yes, it was a very good job. The only bad thing was shift work. I remember one time we were driving somewhere and my daughter, she wanted me to do something, and I said, “Well, I can’t, I’m working that night.” She said, “Why can’t you just work in the daytime like normal mothers do?”

ROSS-NAZZAL: That’s funny. But that brings up another question. What were your hours like when you started working at JSC? We all have this idea of what an astronaut’s life is like. A lot of people think you’re working 60-, 80-hour workweeks. Were you working hours like that or were you working mainly 8:00 to 5:00, or in your case maybe like 10:00 to 6:00, if you were working in SAIL?

LUCID: You worked whatever needed to be done. You had to get so many hours flying in the back seat of the T-38, so you had to do that. You didn’t have any control over that. You had to be available whenever there was a back seat that was open. The thing that people sometimes don’t realize is—one of the blessings of the job was you had a certain amount of flexibility, because everybody knew that you were working, and you might be out of town on a PR [public relations tour], you might be flying, you might be here, you might be there. So you didn’t show up at eight o’clock and leave at 5:00. You got your job done. A lot of times when I was doing PRs a lot of women would say, “Well, how can you possibly do this?” The advantage that I had, that they didn’t have, because a lot of them were sort of in entry level jobs just because they didn’t let women into upper-level jobs. They had to show up at 8:00 and they couldn’t leave till 5:00. There was no flexibility, no personal time, nothing, so they were stuck. Whereas I had jobs to do, and I got the jobs done.

If I knew in advance that something was coming up at school the kids wanted me to go to or if something was going to happen in advance, I could plan. I could plan to be there if there was going to be a band concert on some particular night. Somebody'd say, "Well, do you want to go flying tonight?"

You'd say, "Can't, I'm just so busy." Because I had to go to the band concert. If you thought ahead and you planned, and that's why I always told the kids, "Look, you've got to let me know what's coming up. What are we doing?" Things worked out. That was a real advantage that I had by being able to manipulate your schedule in certain ways, in the flexibility of it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You mentioned the T-38s. That must have been exciting for you, having been a pilot, but now getting the opportunity to fly in this jet. Did you ever get a chance to fly it? Who would you fly with on a regular basis?

LUCID: Being able to fly in the T-38 was one of the best perks that you could possibly think of. I remember when being interviewed for the job somebody said, "Well, what would you think about flying in the back seat?"

I said, "Well, I wouldn't plan on flying in the back seat. I plan on being a pilot just like the science-astronauts [the last group of astronauts hired for Apollo who had been sent to flight training despite being hired on as scientists] that came in. I couldn't think of anything better than being able to be a pilot and fly the T-38." In retrospect it most probably wasn't the best thing to say.

When I was offered the job, when someone else called me up, I was saying, “Oh, I’m so excited, I can’t wait to fly the T-38s! When will we be able to go out and get trained to be pilots in the T-38s?”

This person said, “Well, we’re working that. Maybe it’ll happen.”

I thought, “Hmm, maybe it’ll happen. Does that mean it’s not going to happen?” I was really under the impression that just like the previous group with Story Musgrave and Ed [Edward G.] Gibson and all those guys, they were sent to flight training, and they were front seat pilots in the T-38. It was just natural to assume that that’s what you would get.

It was very apparent early on that that wasn’t going to happen. But I loved going flying. Early on, it was hard, because you were just a mission specialist, and you couldn’t say, “Oh, I want to go flying.” You had no control. You had to find somebody that was going to go fly, or you had to call Flight Ops and try to find an empty back seat. It was hard to get all your flying time in.

But the guys I flew with were really good. Most of them would split time. If someone didn’t split time, then I didn’t see much point in flying with them. But most of the guys were so good. A lot of times they’d just say, “Okay, Shannon, I’ve got to get some work done. Just fly us home.” I loved flying. But it was a big disappointment not to be the pilot.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I bet. They look like fun to fly. I don’t even have a flying license.

LUCID: I loved flying in the T-38.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That brought up another question. There's this photo of you that I love, I think it's great, you just look so happy. It's a photo of you in the KC-135. You're experiencing no Gs. I wonder if you would talk about that. That was obviously some training that you all participated in.

LUCID: Yes, there wasn't very much. We just made several flights in the KC-135. It was just a lot of fun. But then I guess I say that a lot.

ROSS-NAZZAL: This was your dream job.

LUCID: It was, but it really didn't feel like you were working. I guess I sort of equated the word working with drudgery, and there was no drudgery involved. It was just doing all sorts of things that were loads of fun that you'd never be able to afford if you had to pay for it yourself. You'd never be able to afford to do it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's true. Did you come home and tell Mike every night about these really cool things that you got to do? Or were you a little hesitant because here you were getting to do all this fun stuff, and he didn't get a chance?

LUCID: Oh yes, but of course we talked about what we were doing. He obviously was telling me what he was doing. But you know how it is when you have three kids. A lot of times your time together is working on taking care of the kids and seeing what their needs are.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Yes, that does complicate things. They are energy vampires someone told me recently.

LUCID: Yes, that's true.

ROSS-NAZZAL: We didn't talk about FSL.

LUCID: That was the setup out at Downey [California, Rockwell]. It was sort of like SAIL, but it was just specific for landing, and you just fly out there and do some of the runs. I don't know, I'd have to look back. I might have supported one flight by being assigned out there.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I also had you listed to work on the Hubble Space Telescope. Did you do any work with that?

LUCID: Yes. I worked with Bruce McCandless a lot. They were doing a lot of EVA [extravehicular activity] work at Marshall [Space Flight Center, Huntsville, Alabama] because they have a tank there, so I went and did a lot of EVA runs there with Bruce McCandless. What was so funny, if you know the magazine *Weekly Reader* they gave out free in schools to kids.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I think I remember that.

LUCID: They had taken a picture of me in the tank, and because of the refraction I looked like I had a very small pinhead in the tank, and the caption said, "Shannon Lucid." My third-grader's

class was reading it, and somebody said, “Look, it’s the same last name as yours.” Are you related?

Shani said, “There’s lots of people with that last name.” She told me later, “It was so embarrassing. I couldn’t believe I had to see a picture of my mother with that teeny weeny head.”

ROSS-NAZZAL: I guess children are the same all across the board, whether you’re an astronaut child or not.

LUCID: That’s for sure.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Tell me more about those EVA runs. Were you wearing the Shuttle EMU [extravehicular mobility unit] or were you still using Apollo suits at that point?

LUCID: The Shuttle. We went down, and we just did a lot of early on runs with that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Were you working on contingency plans for deployment or doing potential repairs on the telescope?

LUCID: I don’t remember. It was before they would have been developing that. We did a lot of tank runs there at Marshall.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Was that something that you were interested in, doing an EVA, after doing that?

LUCID: Oh, sure. Who wouldn't be?

ROSS-NAZZAL: It'd be a fun assignment. The other two assignments that I had you listed as, and I know that they flew on STS-7, so I wondered if they were in some way related. The SPAS [Shuttle Pallet Satellite] and rendezvous and prox ops. Was that in relation to that first mission for an American woman?

LUCID: Norm [Norman E.] Thagard and I were the first people assigned in the office to do rendezvous prox ops. So we were over there in the facility. We did a lot of rendezvous prox ops runs together. We thought everybody should be learning this, not just us, so we wrote a procedure and a manual of how you could do rendezvous and prox ops and how to do it in a rig. Norm and I worked a lot on that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's exciting. What about the SPAS? Were you working on that?

LUCID: I don't remember that.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I was curious about that.

LUCID: Sometimes they just put things down.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's why I always ask, because when I look at those lists, I wonder how accurate they are.

LUCID: I don't even know where they got the list from.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That was the intention but maybe they didn't carry through on the list. Anna Fisher was working on the extra small HUT [Hard Upper Torso] and extra small EMU. Was that something that all the female astronauts were getting briefed on? Do you recall anything about that?

LUCID: No. Any time that there was an EVA run that I participated in, I did. But I fit good in the suit, so I wasn't doing anything with changing it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: You had also mentioned Carolyn Huntoon. My understanding is that she was, for lack of a better word, your mother hen, and she would call you six together frequently in those early years. What are your memories of those meetings and what the topics were?

LUCID: I only remember one meeting. She invited us over to her house. She said the STS-7 crew with the first American woman is going to be named soon, and everybody needs to get along. The way I interpreted the meeting was they wanted to make sure no one was going to raise a fuss.

ROSS-NAZZAL: When the name was announced?

LUCID: Yes.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you have a feeling at that point that it was going to be Sally [K. Ride]?

LUCID: Oh yes, I knew. There wasn't any doubt.

ROSS-NAZZAL: So, you didn't think that you were in the running?

LUCID: No.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Why do you think that was?

LUCID: I just didn't know the right people.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Do you think it was because you were a mom with three kids at that point? Do you think that had any bearing on their decision?

LUCID: I would hope not. I never talked about my kids at work or with anybody, because you didn't want that to impact your job, unless someone was talking about their kids and then we could compare notes. You know what I mean?

ROSS-NAZZAL: Oh, sure.

LUCID: I never ever said, “Oh, I can’t do this, I’ve got to go home and take care of my kids.” Ever. I remember one day, this was very early on, and we were out in the hall there in Building 4, and there was one person that was an MS in the group that was there, a male. This was in the days when they had secretaries. He was standing there, and he was talking. He said, “Oh, and I’ve got to leave an hour early, I’m going to go home and babysit for a couple hours.” It was like he was doing this righteous act.

I thought, “Oh my goodness, there’s no way on the face of this Earth that I would ever say anything like that.” You just quietly worked things out. But oh, my goodness, you would never go around and say, “Oh, I can’t do this because.”

ROSS-NAZZAL: Things have changed because people do that all the time now.

LUCID: Yes. And that’s good.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you have a chance to do things like join the softball team that Mr. Abbey had? Or I know that a lot of your class, the TFNGs [Thirty-Five New Guys], went out and they would go out to bars or other hangouts. Did you do anything like that with the class?

LUCID: No. As a matter of fact the very first week that we were here, we’d just moved in, everything was new, and Judy [Judith A. Resnik], which was very nice of her, she called me up. She said, “Shannon, everybody’s gathering someplace because,” and right then I realized.

I said, “I’m sorry, Judy.”

She said, “Wanted to make sure you knew about it.” I thanked her very much and appreciated that. I had no problem working, doing the job, but there was no way that I could hang out every weekend forever going out. Right then, that week, I realized, “Okay, this is obviously very detrimental.” It had nothing to do with being able to do the job. Besides that, there were going to be 50 Shuttle flights every year. You know what I mean?

ROSS-NAZZAL: Right. You were going to get to fly soon.

LUCID: Oh yes, there were going to be more. So just because you couldn’t get in the very first flights because you didn’t go out and drink and you didn’t play softball, there were going to be plenty of flights. The plenty never happened.

ROSS-NAZZAL: No. Not that many.

LUCID: But it was the right decision that I made.

ROSS-NAZZAL: What was your role for STS-1? It’s my understanding that everyone in your class had some sort of assignment related to that first mission.

LUCID: You’re right, everybody had an assignment. Steve [Steven R.] Nagel and I were the chase flight assigned to White Sands [Northrup Strip, New Mexico]. We did chase flight training for a while before that, and then we were out at El Paso. If the Shuttle had had an emergency and had to land at White Sands, then we would have flown chase with it.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Did you watch the launch out in El Paso?

LUCID: Oh yes. We were ready. We were ready to be deployed.

ROSS-NAZZAL: That's exciting. Can you talk about that? Did you have any feelings about that moment when you finally saw *Columbia* get off the pad for that first time?

LUCID: It was pretty amazing. I guess it really struck me because I was at Ellington [Field, Texas] when the crew came back. You'd have to check this, but I think I remember that John Denver's plane flew them back.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I have to check that.

LUCID: I remember John Denver's airplane coming in. I don't know if the crew was onboard coming into Ellington—it just seemed so amazing to me that here we had brought people up and back and we're going to use the vehicle again. It was just sort of a paradigm change that it actually worked.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I have just one more question. I thought this might be a good breaking point. What are your memories of that meeting where the announcement was made that you had classmates who were finally going to be assigned to their missions, STS-7, 8, and 9? Mike

[Richard M.] Mullane talks about it in his book [*Riding Rockets: The Outrageous Tales of a Space Shuttle Astronaut*].

LUCID: I don't remember what Mike wrote.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Do you have any memories?

LUCID: I should have read Mike's book again before I talked with you today.

ROSS-NAZZAL: No, you shouldn't have.

LUCID: I mean to see what he said. Yes. We were all called to a meeting that we were required to go to. There was a feeling as to what it was going to be, so we sat there, and they announced the crew, and then we left.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Were there people who were upset about the decision over the first woman, first African American to be selected? Were people disappointed?

LUCID: I think it was sort of felt that that's the way it was going to work out. It was not this earthshaking surprise. You always have a little bit, "Well, maybe my feelings are wrong."

ROSS-NAZZAL: Secretly hope for the best, right?

LUCID: It wasn't an earthshaking surprise.

ROSS-NAZZAL: I think that's all the questions I had for today. I thought next time if you're okay with it we can talk about your first mission, [STS]-51G.

LUCID: Okay. Sure.

ROSS-NAZZAL: Yes, okay.

[End of interview]