

The oral histories placed on this CD are from a few of the many people who worked together to meet the challenges of the Shuttle-Mir Program. The words that you will read are the transcripts from the audio-recorded, personal interviews conducted with each of these individuals.

In order to preserve the integrity of their audio record, these histories are presented with limited revisions and reflect the candid conversational style of the oral history format. Brackets or an ellipsis mark will indicate if the text has been annotated or edited to provide the reader a better understanding of the content.

Enjoy “hearing” these factual accountings from these people who were among those who were involved in the day-to-day activities of this historic partnership between the United States and Russia.

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BRENT JETT

June 17, 1998

Interviewers: Mark Davison, Paul Rollins, Rebecca Wright

Davison: Good afternoon. Today's interview is with Brent Jett, from the astronaut office, and today is June 17 [1998]. Conducting the interview is Mark Davison and assisting is Paul Rollins and Rebecca Wright. Good afternoon.

Jett: Good afternoon.

Davison: I just wanted to talk a little bit and see if you could share your experiences on your Shuttle-Mir flight with STS-81 and what that transfer and visit to Mir was like for you.

Jett: Well, Mark, I think I probably look back on STS-81 as really kind of the start of my sort of involvement with working with the Russians, both in Phase 1 and Phase 2. For me, obviously, getting selected to fly a Shuttle-Mir flight was a real exciting thing. We had a very experienced crew. We had all flown before, and the mission itself really exceeded, I think, all my expectations. Seeing another such a large spacecraft, another spacecraft on orbit that you knew was occupied by other human beings, and getting to see John Blaha after such a long time and drop off a classmate of mine. Jerry Leninger and I started here at the same time. I mean, the mission itself was terrific. I got to go to Russia for my first time on a training trip, for STS-81 and meet the cosmonauts. So that was kind of, for me, the start of my whole experience dealing with the Russians.

I think it was, in some ways, a fateful assignment for me, because the logical thing for me to do after that flight was to go over to Russia and be the director of operations for seven months. So it really was a very significant event, not only just the flight, but, for me, kind of funneling my career towards involvement in Phase 1 and now in Phase 2.

Davison: Can you talk a little bit about your first trip to Russia and what you experienced? I know you have a military background. It must have been a little different. You probably never thought you'd be there.

Jett: That's true. I probably never thought I would get a chance to go over to Russia, at least back in the days when I was actively flying in the military. Our first trip was in May of--this was our 81 crew trip, so that would have been May of '95, I guess. Is that correct, May of '95? No, May of '96, I guess. Because we flew in January of '97.

We went over in May of '96 for about ten or twelve days, and it just so happened our trip occurred

during the time of the Russian celebration of Victory Day. I don't know how much you know about their celebration of Victory Day, but it's kind of an equivalent of our Fourth of July. It celebrates their victory over the Nazis in World War II, so it has a lot of the same meaning for them as the Fourth of July has for us, because they were so close to losing their freedom. I think it's a lot more intense, still, for the Russians, because they have people who fought in the war and lost family members. So it's a very big holiday, but it's a very emotional holiday for them also.

Probably the most vivid memory or the one most special memory I have of that trip was not all the training in Star City and all that, but we were actually in Moscow on Victory Day itself, and we were just outside the Kremlin standing on a bridge that goes over the Moscow River, and it was about 10:30 at night, because it doesn't get dark there until very late, with thousands of Russians. The streets were closed down. People were standing in the streets and watching fireworks all over the city, and there were probably seven or eight different locations where fireworks were going off, and they were going off over the Kremlin and just all around. The Kremlin was all lit up, and we were looking right at it. It was absolutely beautiful, but, you know, to be a part of that celebration was the memory that I thought was most special for that trip.

Davison: Were you able to visit Star City when you were doing this twelve-day training period?

Jett: Yes. In fact, we spent just a couple of days in Moscow to visit Khrunichev [Space Center], Energia, the facilities that are located more in Moscow, and then we did go down to Star City to train with the Mir crew. It was the Mir 22 crew, who was originally--the commander was Gennady Manikoff, and Pavel Venogradov was the flight engineer, and they were later replaced at the last minute by their back-up crew. But we were training with both the prime crew and the backup crew. So we spent about, I guess, an entire working week in Star City, training with the crew, and we lived in the Propy, which is like the dormitory. It was good for me because I got a chance to see what it was like there, and I kind of had an inkling at the time that maybe down the road in my future I was going to be over there as the DOR [Director of Operations]. Wendy Lawrence was the DOR at the time when we were over there training, and she's a classmate of mine from the academy, and we started here at NASA at the same time. So she's a real good friend of mine.

Davison: So did you go by and check out the offices and--

Jett: Oh, yes. In fact, I talked to Wendy a lot when I was over there about what the job was like and what the living conditions were like, just so I had a feel for what stuff I needed, if I came back over there for six or seven months, what kind of stuff I would want to bring with me and what I could buy over there. I

guess, in a way, it was almost like a little bit of a scouting trip for me, too, knowing that I probably was going to end up back there.

Davison: Let's talk a little bit about the flight itself, when you docked with Mir and when you did the crew exchange. How was that, to see the Mir for the first time and actually go on it?

Jett: You know, it was really weird. You're so busy during rendezvous, during the period that comes up to rendezvous towards the docking, it was very hard for me to get a chance to spend much time looking at the Mir. As the pilot on the flight, I was probably working more--Mike [Baker] was sitting in the back, or floating in the back, and his job was to take over when we came into the manual phase and fly the approach and docking. So we had a very good view of the Mir as we approached it. I was sitting in the commander's seat, and John Grunsfield was sitting in the pilot's seat, and we were pretty much running the checklists, doing all the interface with the Shuttle computers. All the burns prior to the manual phase that needed to be done we were doing from the front. Then, once Mike took over, we were continually doing things, procedures, making sure that the Shuttle was ready for docking. So there was just a couple of times when I was able to actually kind of float back there and stick my head out the window before docking.

But then once we got docked and we were getting ready to open the hatch, that, to me, was almost as big a moment as docking, because we knew we were going to see John [Blaha]. We could see John waiting on the other side. I know there was a lot of anticipation for Jerry, really kind of wondering what it was going to be like once we opened the hatch and went through. So it was, I guess, just like any experience that you've kind of wondered about and now you're right on the edge of getting to see what it's like on the Mir. So it was a lot of fun, a lot of excitement when we first got across to see the cosmonauts and see John. It was fun.

Davison: When we talked to Mike Foale, he talked about it almost being a maze of tunnels going through, going to different areas. I guess your first time on there, you feel like you're getting lost sometimes or disoriented where you were?

Jett: Well, initially we kind of all gathered in the docking module, which is a fairly big area and didn't really have that much extra equipment in it. But then once we decided we were leaving the docking module and we were heading to the base block to set up for the official sort of press conference, welcome ceremony, I remember Pavel grabbing me and--no, I'm sorry, it was Sasha Koleri, the back-up flying engineer. He kind of grabbed me and said, "Okay. Just kind of follow this." There was a line that went through the Krystall module, and you could kind of use it as a translation aid, but it was also very helpful

because there was so much equipment, and at times the passageway got very narrow.

The Krystall is kind of like their attic, I guess, in some respects. You know, they put a lot of extra equipment there. So probably as a first impression as you go through Krystall, you going, "Wow, I wonder if the whole space station is this cluttered, has this much extra equipment in it." But then once you get through Krystall and you get into the node and then into the base block, it's a lot more like what you would expect for a station.

Davison: Did you transfer quite a bit of equipment between the two vehicles?

Jett: Like all the flights, you know, we had a double hab module that was loaded, just loaded with stuff for the Mir, and we brought back a few--one, actually, very large piece of equipment. It was a furnace, a French furnace called Alice, and we had to put special rails into the Spacehab to mount it on to bring it home. The transfers were not as hard, I don't think, as we expected, just because the Mir crew and John were so well prepared on the other side for us to bring things over. So we got to work fairly quick, and the cosmonauts were pretty much ready to take anything we had to give them. They didn't need it in a special order. So we pretty much emptied out the hab pretty quickly.

Davison: So did you have much time to socialize with the crew, other than the formalities?

Jett: You know, we had heard stories on--I think it kind of depended on how each flight was going. We didn't have a lot of extra time during the day to really do anything. In the evenings we tried to get together for dinner, either in the Shuttle or in the Mir, but it seemed like during the day the cosmonauts were busy and we were busy.

The evenings were very nice, getting together. We had them over, of course, for dinner in the Shuttle, and one of the few times actually we--on that mission, while we were docked, those are the few meals we had with the cosmonauts that actually all the Shuttle crew members ate at the same time also. So I think we kind of made an effort to have a little bit of time together and eat. That was very nice.

Davison: What about the gift exchange? Did you come up with any unique gifts?

Jett: Marsha was our person in charge. She had the best ideas about gifts, and she had a very nice stained glass Space Station built, and there was a stained glass Shuttle that attached to it. It was very pretty. We took that up and actually brought it back for them, because they didn't have any way to get it back. And then all the other gifts we took were very practical-oriented gifts. We took them, of course, fresh fruit, grapefruits and onions and things like that. We also took them things like flashlights. I don't know if

you've ever seen those little black maglights. We had heard that they were a little bit short on flashlights, and with some of the power outages they'd been having, we thought those would be very useful.

Most of their food comes in tin containers or aluminum containers, that you have to open with a can opener-type thing, and they have a very tiny can opener, and it was kind of difficult for them to use. So we brought them a couple of very nice, big, sturdy can openers. Just any type of little practical things we thought would be helpful and then, of course, the stained glass Mir was very nice.

Davison: What were your emotions like when you had to close the hatch and knew you were heading home? You were bringing John back. I'm sure he was glad to be coming back, but what about yourself?

Jett: Well, I think for me, I was probably thinking a lot about the flying around which we were going to do after undocking, since, for the pilot on those flights, that's the portion of the flight where you get to actually control the Shuttle in close proximity to the Mir and fly around. We flew around twice, at twice orbital rate, tail forward, and so I was probably thinking a lot about that event that was coming up.

Other than that, Jerry, by the time we left, he seemed real comfortable over in the Mir. I knew he was going to do a really, really great job, and he's a very disciplined person, and I knew he would have a great mission. I was kind of sad to be leaving him. I guess probably that was the other. I knew I would see him again and I knew I'd see the cosmonauts again, but, you know, kind of seeing Jerry on the other side of the hatch when we closed it, I was thinking that he is now part of a Russian crew, and he won't be, except for video links and audio links, won't be really able to talk to his friends. I knew he was facing something like we face in the military when we go on deployment, but at least we have probably a lot closer friends than he was being left with. And, of course, I had no idea that he would go through a very critical situation like he had with the fire.

Davison: You said you were classmates and already had a bond and a friendship that you built up.

Jett: Yes, we started out classmates, not at the academy, but here. We were both in the class of '92.

Davison: Let's shift gears a little bit and talk about your job as the director of Russian operations, or DOR, as we've come to know it as. What was your experience like over there during that time frame?

Jett: I guess probably I was the eighth DOR, I guess, to go. You'd probably consider my tour as the last of the Phase 1 DORs. I was at that point where Phase 1 was finishing, starting in June of '97, and at that time we still had Dave Wolf, Wendy Lawrence, and Andy Thomas in training for Phase 1. Jim Voss had just left, and he would come back later as a back-up Phase 1 crew member.

But we were also getting ready for the ISS Two, Three, and Four crews were getting ready to show up for Phase 2 training. Shep [William Shepherd] had been there for a while as ISS One commander, but a lot of what Shep did was very similar in his initial training in Russia to what the Phase 1 crew members did just because of the uniqueness of his mission, spending a lot of time with--where only there was FGB and service module in the node and under control of the TsUP until 5A.

So, when the ISS Two, Three, and Four crews came over, there was kind of a big transition at Star City from, I think, really the emphasis going from Phase 1, a little bit more to Phase 2, because we had more Phase 2 crew members at that time in training, and they showed up. There was a little bit of a transition, and then I saw the end of Phase 1 in terms of training at Star City when Andy and Jim left. I think it was about the 6th of December was their going-home day.

And when they left--I mean, Phase 1 continued on as a program, obviously, in terms of a flight, but in terms of Star City, it was really done in terms of training. I guess that was probably the most unique thing about my tour compared to everyone else's. I don't think it made it any more difficult. It probably made it a little bit more interesting at times for me, because the time really seemed to go quick.

Davison: Was there a change in the training syllabus? I guess the modules are going to change. I mean, the Mir is similar and the Soyuz is similar, but might the training overall be a little bit different in Phase 2?

Jett: Well, it's different. The thing that's really different in Phase 2 is that the astronauts and cosmonauts have to spend a lot of time here training also. In Phase 1, our astronauts went over, they lived over there, they moved over there for a period of a year, a year and a half, before their flight. Phase 2, they're going back and forth. They never really, I don't think, settle into a permanent type of residency in Star City. So it's a little bit more difficult for both sides, because the Russians and the folks at GCTC [Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center] are used to having them having there--whoever trains to fly on the Mir has always in the past come and stayed in Star City for a fairly extended period of time, and this is something new where you're going back and forth from one side to the other.

So there were some growing pains, and I think each side had to get used to adjusting to this new way of training for the International Space Station. I think we're getting better at it and we're getting more efficient at it, and in some ways it's forcing us to be more efficient, which is a good thing.

Davison: Would the stress on the crew member be similar to detachments and work-ups before deployment? Are there any similarities there?

Jett: Yes, there are probably a lot of similarities to that. The crews go from anywhere from four to six

weeks now for their trips to Russia. You know, there's kind of a trade-off there. You know if you go for four-week trips you're going to have to go more often. Six-week trips it's a little longer but maybe fewer trips. Probably some crew members would rather go more trips, shorter period of time. But talking with like Dan Bursch and some of the other ISS crew members, they are experiencing the same kind of things they experienced when they were doing work-ups. You know, they get back, and their kids--they have to kind of get reacquainted with their children and to kind of get back in the routine here takes a little bit of time, and then there's that shift when you leave, too. So I think we're asking a lot of those crew members, and they're sacrificing a lot in terms of their family lives to be ISS crew members, and hopefully we'll keep that in mind and do everything we can to make it better for them.

Davison: Were these crew members allowed to bring their families over for these short visits?

Jett: We have a family support plan in the astronaut office, and I think they're now allowed two trips a year where they can take their families over. Having the charter aircraft really is helping in that regard, because it facilitates NASA's being able to offer that kind of support because there is charter airplane. So that's working out really well.

Davison: How was life in Star City for you? We've heard different horror stories about not being able to get certain foods or certain commodities. Was it better by the time you were there?

Jett: By the time I was there, I think, it had improved dramatically. There were quite a few stores in Star City itself, and they were privately owned, and the food--I mean, it wasn't like going into a supermarket here, but you could pretty much get whatever you needed to get by, and then if we needed to go into Moscow, we could go on the weekends. Moscow's like any other big city. You can buy anything in Moscow. It's a little expensive. It's probably like shopping in New York City, those kind of prices, but Moscow's great. You can get anything you need.

Davison: Were you able to bring any of your family members over?

Jett: My wife came over to visit. We made a decision that we would treat it more like an employment, and I would go over, and she would come and visit me when she could, and I actually got to come back for Christmas and the holidays. I think, in retrospect, it was difficult, but it was, for me, probably the right thing to do. You tend to work some pretty long hours over there, and it was easier for me to separate the two so I could work whatever hours were required and not really have to worry about the family side of life. Also it was kind of comforting knowing that she was back here taking care of everything. We didn't

have to worry about getting someone to rent our house while we were gone, what are we going to do with the house, who's going to take care of it or watch it for us. So she was kind of handling things back here, and that was a nice kind of burden I didn't have to think about.

Davison: Let's talk a little bit about the Russian language and how that affected your job over there.

Jett: The Russian language.

Davison: Was that hard to overcome?

Jett: It was hard. I'm not one of these people who just picks up languages real quick. Charlie Precourt and Mike L.A. [Lopez-Alegria] grew up bilingual, and I think that's a big advantage. I think there's something that just makes it easier for them to learn languages. I kind of probably approached it more like an engineer than anything else. I had a little bit of Russian, obviously, in my training during the flight, but you get so busy during training that it's hard to fit language in, and that's the first thing to go when you run out of training time.

So I got about three months of Russian before I went over after my flight, and then, of course, I kept at it which I was over there. As a DOR, it was important that you be able to--you would occasionally get in situations, and usually they were social type of situations where you would not have an interpreter with you and it wouldn't have been appropriate for you to have one. So you needed to be able to follow a conversation, at least get the gist of what people are saying. As the NASA representative, in many cases you'd be the only NASA person there, and you would be called on or asked to say a few words, you know, a toast or something like that. So it's important that you be able to be at least that proficient in Russian, and I kind of was told that. Mike Baker, having been my commander on 81, having been a DOR previously, he gave me a lot of good advice about where to concentrate my Russian language studies. So that's what I did.

I concentrated on learning how to speak in social settings and also how to make a toast and either talk about myself or talk about the Russians in our program and the Space Station and the Mir Program. So I just kind of focused on that kind of vocabulary and that kind of construction, and that worked out okay. I'll probably never be as fluent as some of these other folks are.

Davison: So they didn't hear the same toast every time?

Jett: No. Actually, I got to the point where I could--you know, speaking off the cuff is hard enough. So, speaking off the cuff in another language is tough. If I had about five or ten minutes to think about what I

wanted to say, then I could think about what I wanted to say and I could think about how to say it in Russian, and I'd be okay. I just needed about five or ten minutes to sit down and--and by the end, you know, I could just say I want to say this and then think about how to say it in Russian, but I just couldn't just stand up and do it all real time. That was pretty hard.

Davison: These social gatherings, would there be like an order, you knew you were going to be second or third or--

Jett: No, it was more social. It just depended on where you were standing and how things were going. They were a lot of fun. You get put in that position, actually, quite a bit. I know Jim Halsell is over there now, and he's going through the same thing.

Davison: One of the stories we heard was that the Russians like to sing at some of these parties, and you're expected to know a song in English and sing it. Have you ever run across a time when you had to--

Jett: We had a big Halloween party when I was there. The Two, Three, and Four crews were there. Susan and Carl are both members of MAXQ, the band. I don't know if you've ever heard of it.

Davison: I've heard of it.

Jett: Susan and Carl bought a piano. They were over there for training. They were there for six or eight weeks. Their first training session was a little longer. It was eight weeks. Susan and Carl decided they wanted to buy a piano. So the girls in our office were helping them out. The girls in our office that worked there are Russians who work for TTI, and they're interpreters, and they're just great, great women. We couldn't really function over there without them. And so Elena, one of the girls, was calling around, because they know everybody in Star City. Everybody knows everybody. And they were calling around trying to find a piano. They found one, and Susan and Dan went over to this Russian lady's apartment and checked out the piano and decided they were going to buy it, and I think it was about \$450. So they buy the piano.

You know, they were going to class every day, and they were going, "Gee, we'd like to have this piano for our Halloween party. Brent, can you figure out how to get it out of this apartment and get it over to where we live? I'm like, "Okay." So I think we traded a couple bottles of vodka to borrow a truck from the Army guys and then we got a couple of our drivers and myself and Rick Davis, who's the deputy DOR, and John McBrine, who's over there as the Phase 1 life sciences guy. So here we go. We borrow this truck and drive it over to the apartment. The elevators are very tiny, and I think it was on the eighth floor. It

was cold that day, and we moved the piano. It was just one of those kind of stories you kind of laugh about later.

So we moved it into Susan's cottage, or the half of the cottage where she was living, and they had this great Halloween party. A lot of the Russian cosmonauts came and some of the management folks, and Susan and Dan came out, and they were printing out lyrics to songs off their computer and passing them out. Susan was playing the piano, and everybody was singing. Talbot Musabayev was there, and he loved singing Beatle songs. He knows them all. He knows all the words in English. He's got a great voice. He's an excellent singer. But, I mean, we were singing Russian songs, American songs. It was probably the most fun party we had at Star City. I mean, that piano really turned out to be a--it's just kind of a real nice social thing, and when you have people as skilled as Susan and Carl to kind of focus the party and provide the music, it was really great.

Davison: Did Carl do any of his Elvis?

Jett: Oh, yes. He did his Elvis thing, and, of course, all the women thought that was terrific. That was a really good party. I think they had another one like that since I left. I think it was when Ken Cockrell was over for a visit, I think they had another of that kind of party. But it was great. Everybody said it was the best party they had been to in Star City.

Davison: We got to talk with General [Yuri] Glaskov when we were down in Florida. He seemed to share some really good stories about the experience of having the Americans over there. Were you able to work with him at all while you were over there?

Jett: Oh, yes. I know General Glaskov very well. I never felt bad about just stopping by his office unannounced and just walking in and saying hi or if I had a problem. If we had a problem that we couldn't resolve, then we had to take it to him. He was always willing to listen to our side of it and what our position was. He's a really terrific guy. I hope he can stay in that position forever. It probably won't happen, but he's a good guy to have over there, a good friend of ours.

Davison: He seemed to really enjoy the Phase 1 Program and was looking forward to the Phase 2 Program. It sounds like in Star City it's really going well.

Jett: I think it is.

Davison: What would you say was the most memorable experience that you have through the Phase 1

program, whether it was your flight or the DOR job?

Jett: That's tough. I think probably the most memorable parts of it for me are when I get a chance to see somebody after they've been on Mir, either John on orbit when he came off and came over into the Shuttle, or the other day I saw Andy for the first time. Andy and I were over in Star City together, and as he had issues that came up in his training that he wanted resolved, you know, he would come to me or somebody in the DOR organization to try to get those things resolved. I think it's when you see these crew members after they come back, you know, seeing Dave after he came back, and Mike, I think that's probably, to me, the part that I'll probably remember the most about Phase 1.

Davison: What does the future hold for you as far as follow along jobs that are related, or have you been assigned another flight yet?

Jett: I haven't been assigned to another flight. I'm still continuing to work on a lot of the same type of issues that I worked on when I was the DOR. That's why I said, that flight, the one on STS-81, kind of started me down sort of a road of being involved in Phase 1 and Phase 2, and I'm continuing to work a lot of Phase 2 issues, station issues, especially those that deal with RSA and the Russians. You know, you make the contacts, you make the personal relationships over there. So it makes sense to try to continue to use those things when a DOR comes back. So I've actually maintained a lot of the same contacts with the Russians that I had when I was over there and actually made a few more, and eventually I hope to get assigned to one of the assembly flights here soon.

Davison: Do you focus on the training portion of it?

Jett: I'm involved in the training portion. I'm also involved in a little bit of the technical issues, assembly sequence, crew rotation issues. We have sort of an ISS technical support team here that when the crews have a technical issue they need resolved, they turn it over to us, and we kind of run around and see if we can help them out. The name of the game in our office, when you're not flying, is to support the people who are training to fly or are in space. So that's what we do.

Davison: You mentioned crew rotation. One of the things that we've heard, lessons learned from the Phase 1 Program, was the ability to have back-up crews, something that we hadn't done in the past. Is that carried over to Space Station, the rotation of the crew?

Jett: We are going to have back-up crews for all the Space Station crews. Right now we're doing it in a

fashion very similar to the way it was done in Phase 1, where the next crew does a back-up. Like, for instance, the second crew doesn't back up the first crew; the third crew backs up the first crew. And that's the same way they did it in Mir. We may actually, because of some of the complexity during the assembly phase, have to actually stretch that out even further. Maybe we'll go to a point where the fifth crew is backing up the first crew, but right now we're trying to keep it at just two crews down as the back-up crew.

There's a lot riding on the assembly of the station and we need to have a crew to fly, and if somebody had an accident playing sports and broke their leg or something like that a couple weeks before flight, you know, we can't just stop the entire program. So it makes a lot of sense to have people that are ready to fill in.

Davison: As a pilot, I guess you won't probably be in line for one of the station crews, but you'll certainly be in line for one of the assembly flights, I would think.

Jett: Hopefully. Hopefully, I should be a commander on my next mission, Shuttle mission. You know, there aren't many missions out there other than assembly flights. So there's probably a pretty good chance I'll be on one of those. There's a few other ones, but it's pretty much station for a while.

Davison: Thanks for all your stories. Let me ask Paul and Rebecca if they have any questions.

Rollins: When did you first know you wanted to be an astronaut? Did you wake up one morning--

Jett: No. For me it was probably a little different. I watched all the astronauts grow up. I mean, growing up, I watched all the things on TV, the moon landings, but for me it was probably not until I was a test pilot in the Navy, and we came down here with a group of people, and we were hosted by the astronaut office, and they sort of showed us what goes on and what it's like to be an astronaut, what you do when you're not flying in space and those types of things. That was the first time in my life I actually sat down and thought, "This is something I want to do." I guess I never really thought--when I was in college and when I went to the academy, I was just thinking about being a pilot. You know, that's what I wanted to do. And once I was a fighter pilot, then I just wanted to be a test pilot. So I never really--I just kind of walked down that road without sort of having a goal, really, at the end of it until I got there and I realized, hey, this is something I could do, and I have the qualifications that they're asking for. That's when I decided.

Wright: My question is back to the DOR. I'm sure nothing was typical while you were in Russia, but can you walk us through a typical day of what you did as a DOR officer?

Jett: Yes, I guess. Let's see. Generally our office opened at nine. I would generally get to the office about 8:30, but that was pretty easy for me because the office was on the same floor of the building that my room was. I lived in like a dormitory-type place in a room, and I'd just get up, walk down the hall to the office. To me it was pretty easy, and I didn't have to deal with any types of weather issues, either, and that was kind of nice.

If we had crews in training, generally the first part of the morning you get up, you check your e-mail, see what Houston had generated during the night after you had gone to bed, take care of any of those issues. It was always good, Rick and I, my deputy DOR, we'd always try to get over to the headquarters building over at GCTC, and if we didn't have any specific meetings set up with the Russians in the morning--between about 9:30 and 11:30 was a really good time to meet with them. If we didn't have anything specific set up, we'd just walk over there anyway, and we'd walk around and say hi to General Glaskov. We had a little route of a bunch of different people we wanted to just kind of stop in and visit with and see if there was any issues going on. We'd usually swing by a training session on the way back. I'd get back to the office, and then I would try to fit in a couple hours of Soyuz training or Russian language training during the day.

The original DORs did a lot of training over there, but the job kind of built up and built up and became more and more of an organization over there that you really have less and less time to do astronaut or cosmonaut-type training. So I'd try to get either language training or some Soyuz training in and then maybe get in a quick work-out. And then right around four or five o'clock, as the crews were kind of getting done with their training, they would come by the office to kind of talk to you about what happened during the day, and Houston would be waking up.

Every day you had videocoms or telecoms starting around four or five, with somebody back here, and then the crews would usually--as I said, the crews would stop by, talk to you about things that they had, issues with their schedule for the next day or later in the week, things they wanted changed, and then after the video and telecoms, you'd pretty much work in the office doing e-mail with people in Houston, talking on the phone until around ten, eleven in the evening, sometimes later, but usually at least until ten or eleven. And everybody that lived in the Proply and was working there would be generally working until ten or eleven.

But it was kind of nice because the people that worked there were also the people that you socialized with. So even though you were working late, it wasn't kind of like being at work all the time. There was a much more social environment. We'd fire up the margarita machine usually around eleven, ten or eleven, have a few margaritas before we went to bed.

Wright: Did it seem that your DOR office became a gathering place for all kinds of people?

Jett: Generally it was.

Wright: A home away from home?

Jett: Well, that's where we had the video conferencing, all the video conferencing equipment, and we set it up so the crew members on the weekends could use it to videoconference with their families. Their families could come into [Johnson Space Center, Building] Four South up on the sixth floor in the flight planning room and on the weekends do a videoconference with their spouse in Russia. So that was real nice. I know Dan and Ken Bowersox used it quite a bit when they were over there, and I used to videoconference with my wife occasionally, just to get to see her face, which was nice.

Wright: Since you were the eighth DOR, I guess some of the issues of the earlier DORs were already settled.

Jett: The early guys, I don't know if you're familiar with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, you know? The first guy's worrying about a roof, you know, and a place to sleep and food. When I got there, the communications were in. I mean, it was a functioning office when I rolled in there, and I could pick up the phone and call the States through the Huntsville [Marshall Space Flight Center] lines, computers. That was a big part of our job when we were getting ready for the second, third, and fourth groups to come over. We wanted them to be able to walk into where they were living, sit down at their computer and log on, and have it all be transparent, connected to e-mail, all that stuff set up for them when they arrive. We don't want them to have to deal with moving back and forth and dealing with all those headaches.

So that was a big--there's a lot of effort that goes into it, and a lot of people worked really hard to make that happen. Yes, we were not really worried about a lot of the logistical type of problems that the early DORs had to face. Natasha, who runs the office, she's like office manager, she handled all the van scheduling. If she had a question or a conflict that she was having a hard time resolving, she could come to me or Rick, but we were able to focus a lot more on the training issues, the ops issues, and deal with those things that the DORs are really over there to do.

Davison: Thank you for your time.

Jett: Okay.

Davison: Enjoyed it.

Jett: Sure, Mark. I enjoyed it. I hope that's what you wanted.

Davison: That's great.

[End of interview]