

SKYLAB 1/2 TECHNICAL CREW DEBRIEFING

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PREPARED BY
TRAINING OFFICE
CREW TRAINING AND SIMULATION DIVISION

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National Aeronautics and Space Administration
LYNDON B. JOHNSON SPACE CENTER
Houston, Texas

CONRAD
(CONT'D)

put the jaws on, coming from 90 degrees away, he could put the jaws on where the edges could pick the side of the surface. So, I'm not sure he could have gotten the jaws on that, from the orientation we were in in the command module. Then we went back.

CONRAD

I have to say something for the docking light on the command module, which really illuminates that vehicle. In retrospect, if I had to do it again, I would never have gone back to the night side to try to redock. We were in a little hurry, because we had about 5 to 10 minutes to go. I knew I'd been using a lot of fuel, and I really wasn't sure how much I had to use. I decided I better get back there before it got dark. Once we got back in the dark with the docking light on, it was obvious that I could have continued to stationkeep alongside the vehicle with just the docking light. We could have stayed out on the SAS panel and worked with it for another day pass. Then when we got back, it wouldn't dock. The second docking attempt, or the first docking attempt of that pass, was completely nominal like the first one. I just didn't understand why it didn't engage. I really didn't say anything to the other guys, because they were cleaning up the spacecraft. I just backed off and came in again, this time making sure I had a good seven- or eight-tenths of a foot

CONRAD
(CONT'D)

per second. We spronged in there and I gave her a little shot to hold it. Then I let go of the translation controller, and we spronged right back out again. Then I realized something wasn't really right. So I got Joe, and we checked the switch configuration.

KERWIN

We thought for half an hour that there was something we'd done wrong in setting up for it.

CONRAD

I backed her off one shot. I gave her a real blow, because there's one real dent in the drogue. I must have hit it going about a foot and a half per second. I was convinced that I just wasn't getting in there good enough. But then I realized that this was about the fifth time, and I said, "Okay, we have to start reading data procedures." Then we contacted the ground and continued stationkeeping. We went through all the procedures, and finally resolved it by pulling the hatch out.

KERWIN

It was something. We got it all squared away; we got that hatch back on, and you moved on in. You were holding your plus-X there and Paul was saying that he didn't think it was working. Meanwhile, I had counted up to 7 seconds. And it just had to settle at exactly the right attitude.

CONRAD What you don't realize is that, as you're thrusting and holding the probe in the nose, it is retracting at its proper rate, which is very slow. It just seemed like I was thrusting and we were retracting forever and getting closer and closer. All of a sudden, all 12 of them banged in. They ripple-fired and there wasn't a latch it didn't make.

WEITZ It was square enough, but it didn't sound like 12 to me.

KERWIN Perhaps three.

CONRAD Well, it worked, and that was the end of a long day. Now, we went right ahead. We pressurized the tunnel and checked the latches. We went to bed that night, and I think everybody slept very well in the command module.

KERWIN/
WEITZ Much better than I expected.

CONRAD And we were quite comfortable even though we had all the extra material in there. We left it pressurized, and it was tight.