

Transcribed Excerpt from NASA Astronaut Peggy Whitson Interview, September 1, 2017

Your broke quite a few records on this mission and set a new standard for astronauts everywhere. What are your thoughts about being a space superwomen and breaking so many records?

I have noted in more than few interviews that I am not overly comfortable with the praise about the records. I honestly do think that it is critical that we are continuously breaking records, because that represents us moving forward in exploration. I feel lucky to have been in a position to take advantage of the opportunities that I have had, and yet I do acknowledge that my dedication and work ethic helped put me in those positions. Recognizing all that, it is still difficult for me to come to grips with the fact that I have the potential to be a role model. I am working on paying forward some of the advice and mentoring that I have received on the my journey, in hopes that one day those young people will do the same, and look back on a life in which they leapt at the opportunities and broke their own records.

Looking back on this particular flight, what were your fondest and most challenging moments?

I have been blessed with some really special crewmates. Being able to be a really integral member of the team, no matter what role I was in, was truly special. Some folks describe our common existence up here as like being in a family. While family described some of the everyday part of living and working together up here, it doesn't sufficiently encompass the reliance on our combined skills on complex, technical and even dangerous work. It's family, but so much more.

One of our more challenging events was an SCU (umbilical for the space suit) started leaking just before the start of an EVA [extra-vehicle activity, or spacewalk]. There were a number of little failures leading up to this point, so I was pretty sure that we were not going to be able to go out the door. The ground team and Thomas Pesquet, who was serving as the suit IV [intra-vehicle officer], however, went through some heroic efforts and in the end made it happen. Just another typical NASA day of making hard things look easy.

How did this mission differ from your previous two flights, given its extra length? Do you feel you're returning as strong as ever? How much longer could you envision yourself staying up there, if you had to? An entire year? Longer?

Yes, I do think I could have flown in space longer. The resistive exercise device is much better than the previous versions, and does a fantastic job of keeping us fit from a bone and muscle perspective.

Is this your last spaceflight, in all likelihood? What's next for you? Do you envision staying at NASA? What's your hope for the future of spaceflight?

I am not sure what the future holds for me personally, but I envision myself continuing to work on spaceflight programs. My desire to contribute to the spaceflight team as we move forward in our exploration of space has only increased over the years.