

## SKILLS CORNER

**An Italian astronaut on a Shuttle mission**

*Paolo Nespoli was the second Italian astronaut to travel aboard the Space Shuttle on a scientific mission in 2007. Our correspondent was at the NASA centre at Cape Canaveral to interview him.*

INTERVIEWER: *Good morning Mr Nespoli, pleased to meet you.*

PAOLO: My pleasure.

INTERVIEWER: *First of all, when and where were you born?*

PAOLO: I was born on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1957 near Milan, in Italy.

INTERVIEWER: *Were you interested in Science and Astronomy when you were young?*

PAOLO: Yes, I was! And I was a good student in all the scientific subjects... poetry and literature weren't really my favourites... My idea was to become an astronomer – but now I've got a Degree<sup>1</sup> in Aerospace Engineering<sup>2</sup> and a Master of Science<sup>3</sup> in Aeronautics and Astronautics...

INTERVIEWER: *I imagine you can fly a plane and you can do many other dangerous activities... was this part of the training?*

PAOLO: Well, yes. I can fly, but I'm also a parachute instructor and a scuba diver<sup>4</sup>.

INTERVIEWER: *Wow, that sounds really exciting. And what are your hobbies, what do you do in your free time?*

PAOLO: I enjoy doing yoga, scuba diving, piloting airplanes, assembling computer hardware and electronic equipment<sup>5</sup>. I also like 'playing' with computer software.

INTERVIEWER: *That doesn't sound very relaxing...*

PAOLO: Well, you know... I'm a lucky person. I do what I like in my life. That means that there isn't much difference between my work and my hobbies...

INTERVIEWER: *Yes, I understand you quite well... I started writing a school weekly newspaper when I was ten... What's the strongest<sup>6</sup> memory you have of the first day on the Space Shuttle?*

PAOLO: Yes, that was on October 23<sup>th</sup>, 2007. I don't want to sound predictable<sup>7</sup>, but it was definitely seeing the Earth from Space – our planet's so beautiful, and fragile... it's got a vivid bluish halo<sup>8</sup> around – the atmosphere – and it seems that nothing horrible can happen to you! It's a real gift, especially when you see it at dawn<sup>9</sup> and at sunset<sup>10</sup>.

INTERVIEWER: *Finally, what do you suggest to young people who want to become astronauts?*

PAOLO: They have to study hard and be ready to make a lot of sacrifices if they want their dream to come true.

INTERVIEWER: *Thanks a lot, Mr Nespoli.*

PAOLO: Thank you.

**GLOSSARY**

1	<b>Degree</b>	Laurea
2	<b>Engineering</b>	Ingegneria
3	<b>Master of Science</b>	Dottorato in Scienze
4	<b>scuba diver</b>	subacqueo
5	<b>electronic equipment</b>	apparecchiature elettroniche
6	<b>strongest</b>	più forte
7	<b>predictable</b>	prevedibile
8	<b>halo</b>	alone
9	<b>dawn</b>	alba
10	<b>sunset</b>	tramonto

