

→ safety + operations

Leadership in action> **Jim Wetherbee**

EXHIBIT # 22
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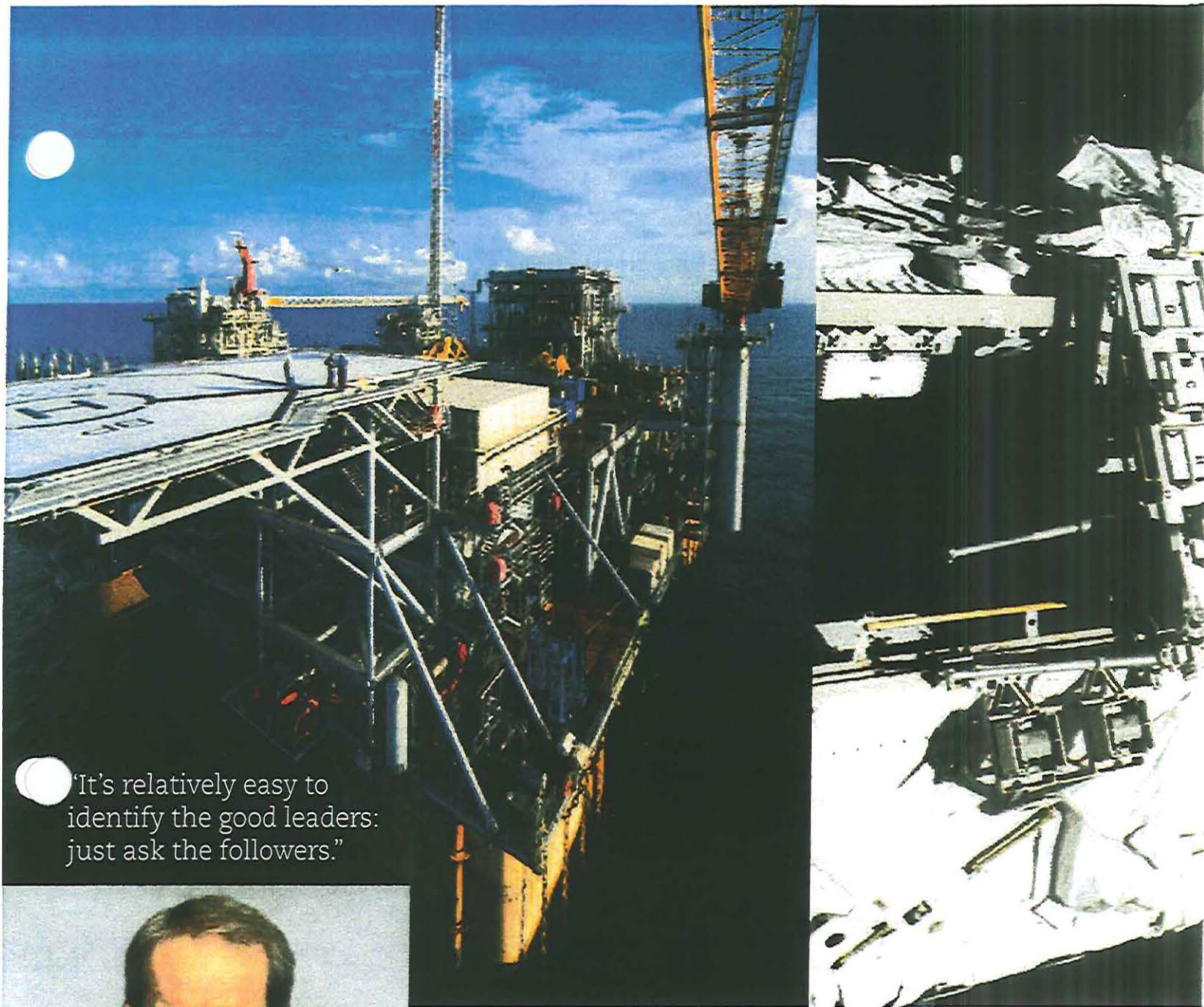
Report> Paula Kolmar
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STAR MAN IN AUDIT

Former astronaut Jim Wetherbee knows a thing or two about the importance of safety and leadership. Now working for BP, this experience is helping the company in its drive to become a leader in process safety.



Giant leap: Jim Wetherbee became an astronaut in 1985, eventually clocking up an impressive 1,592 hours in space during his career.



“It’s relatively easy to identify the good leaders: just ask the followers.”



Star man: Wetherbee now focuses on the leadership behaviour. Top: BP’s Na Kika platform in the Gulf of Mexico. Top right, maintenance work is carried out on the space station.

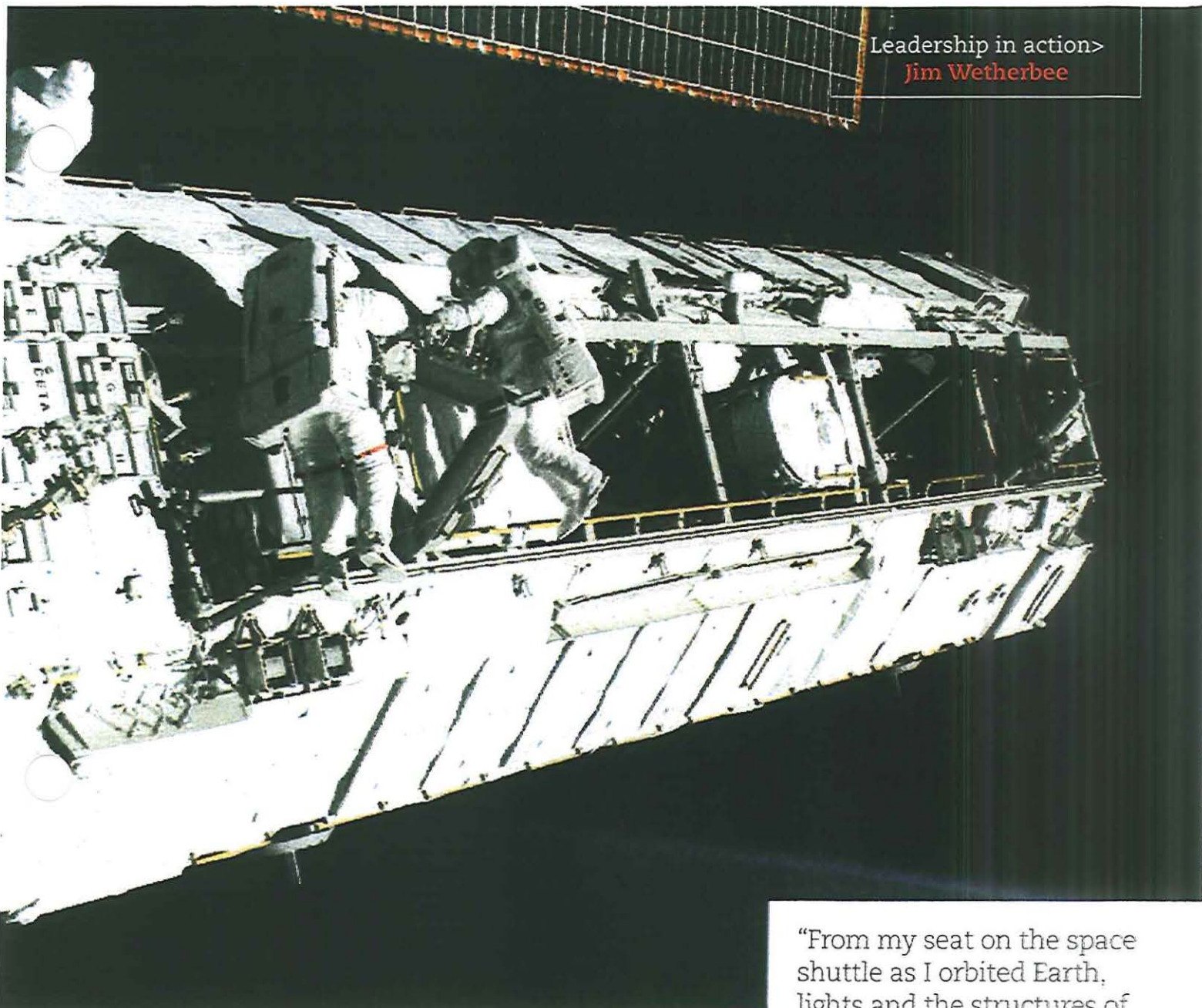
“**F**rom my seat on the space shuttle as I orbited Earth, lights and the structures of thousands of offshore platforms were visible. I always wondered what it would be like to be on one, what made them work and how much oil and gas moved through those specks on the ocean,” says former astronaut Jim Wetherbee.

Watch what you wish for while up among the stars: his wish came true. Today, Wetherbee has a good idea about how offshore platforms operate, because he’s an auditor on BP’s formative safety and operations (S&O) audit team. S&O audit is made up of world-class men and women

with safety expertise and experience from industries where risk is an everyday reality that needs to be controlled, managed and made a high priority. Teams within the audit group travel to BP’s refineries, offshore platforms and other onshore operations around the world to work closely with employees on key elements of safety compliance, risk analysis and leadership behaviour.

The internal programme is designed to continue improving BP’s safety performance and compliance, making facilities as safe as possible for people, the environment and production.

Each member brings valuable expertise to the team; Wetherbee is a stellar example of why BP’s S&O audit is premier in the industry. With a background as an astronaut and commander with six space



shuttle missions for NASA, he focuses specifically on the leadership behaviour of staff in BP facilities – from the business unit leader to the line supervisor.

BP has produced a booklet outlining leadership behaviours for managers and supervisors, highlighting the need to value expertise, energise people, act decisively and deliver results. Measuring a person's performance and compliance against this framework, however, is challenging and subjective. "S&O audit does research, visits sites, examines documents and conducts interviews, so that we can put together a product to help the business unit leaders increase operational safety and performance of the facility. It's valuable to have objective data that can be measured and analysed," says Wetherbee. But that's rarely the case when assessing leadership performance.

"It's relatively easy to identify the good leaders: just ask the followers," he says. "But to find useful information about effective leadership, I look for a consistent message about safety in operations during interviews with the workers. That reflects how well the leader is doing. The interviews can also serve as indicators of where deficiencies may exist. Then, we have an idea of where to look for objective evidence that needs to be addressed."

A leadership auditor not only has to have a good understanding of the four criteria, but must have strong and extensive experience in management roles. Jim O'Brien, vice president of S&O audit and its creator, brought Wetherbee to the audit group specifically because of his rare and unique leadership experience, combined with a passion for zero defect »

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Jim Wetherbee

» process safety implementation. Commanding crews on space shuttle missions is not dissimilar to supervising refinery operations, says Wetherbee: "Launching a shuttle into space requires energy management, just as running a refining plant or a processing facility does. Shuttles are attached to rockets that use the controlled release of tremendous amounts of energy. BP's facilities must control and move tremendous amounts of energy while containing it. Both are hazardous and require people with effective leadership skills."

Wetherbee's last mission was just before the *Columbia* accident in early 2003. He led the search and recovery operation for the shuttle's crew in Texas and then spent two years analysing the causes of the fatal re-entry.

"This gave me an insight into the workings of the organisational safety culture. I realised that leadership support is extremely important in promoting safety within organisations," says Wetherbee. It was at this juncture that he began looking for a company he could believe in and a place where he could make a difference. "Living near Texas City, I followed the news and follow-up reports about the 2005 refinery explosion very closely. It was inspiring to see that the leaders at BP had the

resolve to learn from it and improve safety at all of their locations," Wetherbee says.

When he heard about a position in the new S&O audit team, he says, "It reminded me of the excitement I felt 20 years ago when I applied to NASA to become an astronaut."

His considerable expertise in looking into the *Columbia* shuttle accident on behalf of NASA gave him the confidence that he could use what he had learned to help prevent similar tragedies for a company that wanted to be world class.

Wetherbee adds: "I believe BP's executives under the superb leadership of Tony Hayward are leaders and thinkers, who are focused on a vision that embraces safety and performance at the highest achievable levels. My experience working in the high-risk environment of space and my knowledge of BP's programme to embed strong and effective leadership skills in our managers and workers lead me to believe confidently that BP can become a world-class company among all companies – not just in energy."

Now Earthbound, Wetherbee sees the twinkle of stars like the rest of us. That's ok he says, "Now, I've got the best job on the planet." ■

■ This article first appeared in *Horizon*, BP's staff publication.



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What is it like to sleep in space?

JW: Some astronauts like to feel as if they're sleeping on a surface, to remind them of being in an Earthbound bed, which helps them sleep. To simulate this in space with zero gravity, straps are provided to keep the body tightly wrapped in a sleeping bag. This includes a forehead strap to keep the head firmly attached to a pillow. To me, this deflated the exhilarating experience of zero gravity. Rather than using a sleeping bag and pillow, I simply slept without touching any surface at all. It's the ultimate air mattress.

What is the view like from space?

JW: The view of Earth took my breath away. It is definitely a water planet in the most rich and vivid blue you could imagine and blinding white. Since Earth's surface is mostly water, from space, our beautiful home appears brilliant blue with pure white clouds. The stars have an amazing variety of colour when viewed from space and they shine steadily without twinkling, since we are outside the distorting effects of the atmosphere.

Shuttles look small on the inside, how does a crew find room to work?

JW: It may be small, but there is an interesting perspective when operating in space. With the absence of gravity, we are not limited to working from the floor and the normally unused volume in the third (vertical) dimension is suddenly opened up, so the interior seems much bigger. All the walls from top to bottom and the ceiling, plus the total space inside, give us expanded room in which to work and manoeuvre. It creates interesting new options for sleeping and eating areas. I always enjoyed eating dinner upsidedown on the ceiling.



Blue planet: waves of clouds along the Andean mountain range cast an orange glow (above). Below, Wetherbee is helped with his launch and entry suit before entering the space shuttle *Endeavour* in 2002.

