

If you read Cadet Classifieds, you know that a lot of people want to know more about U.S. Space Camp! Two Space Camp veterans, Kenny Rubin and Alex Kuhns, sent this firsthand report.

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INSIDE SPACE CAMP

By Kenny Rubin and Alex Kuhns

Going to Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama, was so great it seemed like a year's worth of experiences packed into five days. We learned about space and space travel, tried out simulators (machines that astronauts train on), took many field trips, and had the best time of our lives.

We did so many things in such a short time that it would be impossible to explain them all. So we'll just tell you the basic story.

"DON'T BREATHE!"

The week at Space Camp starts on Sunday afternoon. Our parents couldn't get us on a

flight on Sunday, so we arrived Saturday and had a day and a half of playing volleyball, basketball, Trivial Pursuit, and just hanging out. (See "Space Camp Suggestions.") Practically everyone else arrived on Sunday.

Sunday evening we met our counselors, and the staff explained the rules of Space Camp. The basic rule was, "Don't breathe." That's how strict they were. There were rules for everything: making your bed, restricted items in the gift shop, taking showers, keeping with the group, etc. If you broke any rules, they threatened to send you home — and they meant it.

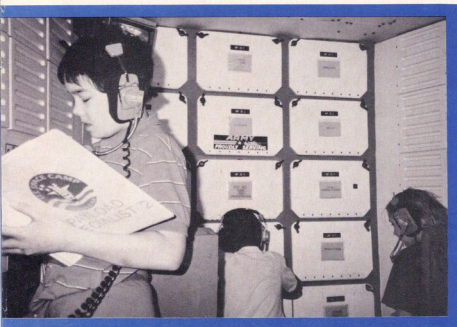
After dinner our counselor showed us around the Space Camp training center and we went to a demonstration about the Space Shuttle. Then we went to bed. Curfew that night was 10:15. All other nights curfew was at 9:30, except for Thursday night. Because graduation was the next day, Thursday night we had a party!

UP AND AT 'EM

Every day we were awakened at 6 a.m. by blasting rock music! From 7 to 7:10 we did calisthenics. Then we went for morning orientation, followed by breakfast.

The exact daily schedule of

SCENES FROM SPACE CAMP. CENTER: Kenny Rubin (arms upraised) and Alex Kuhns (left of Kenny) celebrate their successful Shuttle mission. LEFT: Kenny (second from left) was flight director for the simulated mission. RIGHT: Alex (holding folder) was a payload specialist.



activities varied for each group, but everything we did was exciting. One day our counselor took us on a tour of Rocket Park on The Space and Rocket Center grounds. Rocket Park has the most complete display of rockets and missiles in the country. Another trip was to NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center. We saw the training facilities for the astronauts, and the big "neutral buoyancy" tank. (This is a special swimming pool used by astronauts to practice doing tasks in weightlessness.)

We used the pool at a local university for neutral buoyancy experiments and a Gemini rescue simulation. In the Gemini rescue simulation, we jumped off the diving board and swam to a little boat raft, paddled the raft to a net with our hands, got in the net for about ten seconds, and swam to shore.

In the Space Camp training

center we did various things. We learned about spacesuits and tried them on. We looked at actual spacesuits worn by Shuttle and Apollo astronauts. We also learned about the whole Shuttle setup.

WHAT A RIDE!

A good part of our astronaut training was performed on simulators. Simulators of all kinds, shapes, sizes, and purposes dot the Space Camp training facility and The Space and Rocket Center park.

The 1/6 Chair gave us an idea of what it is like to walk on the Moon, where gravity is 1/6 that of the Earth. The counselors showed us three ways of walking in the chair: bunny hop, side to side (hop on one foot, land on the other), and jog. It felt like floating through the air and suddenly landing. This

KENNY AND ALEX'S SPACE CAMP SUGGESTIONS

GENERAL HINTS:

- Don't bring any snacks. They won't let you eat them.
- Before you arrive at Space Camp, you will receive a flier asking if you want to buy a flight suit and a videotape. Be sure to ask your parents to buy a flight suit for you. The suits are like the ones the astronauts wear. They are great souvenirs. We also recommend that you order a videotape, which is taken during your stay at camp. Cameramen will record you doing practically everything during the week. You'll receive your tape a few weeks after you get home. It's good for memories. However, the music on the video leaves something to be desired. If you don't order one, you will be placed in a group that is not videotaped and therefore you won't be able to order one later with you in it.
- Be sure to bring some kind of duffel bag to carry things like: camera, film, mementoes, and your flight suit in case you have to take it off when it gets hot.
- It's okay to bring traveler's checks. They can be cashed at the gift shop. Be sure not to keep your traveler's checks together with your cash, in case one or the other gets lost. Kenny lost his wallet with a large sum of cash, but because he still had traveler's checks, he still had spending money.
- There isn't that much time to go to the souvenir shops, but bring at least \$50 to spend because all of the things are expensive. If you plan on taking pictures, we advise that you bring lots of film because you don't get much time to go buy some.
- The meals generally are not that good. So have some extra spending money so you can go to the fast food place at the camp if you don't like what they serve.
- Campers sleep in dorms that are big rooms with lots of bunk beds and lockers. Each camper gets a locker. You have to fit all your belongings in that locker. Don't bring a big suitcase

Continued on page 10

or too much stuff and don't worry about wearing the same shorts three days in a row. If you plan on reading after lights out, bring a flashlight so you can slide under your covers and read.

- Keep an eye on your personal possessions. "Some kids" have fun pickpocketing pens from other kids' pen pockets on their flight suits. There are also tourists around watching the activities.

- One major thing to watch out for is throwing away your personal possessions on the lunch trays. Kenny found out by experience that this can be painful, when he accidentally threw out his bag of souvenirs.

- Don't fall for one of the favorite tricks of the counselors. If they ask if you want to go to the "zero-g" (zero gravity) room, tell them you know that there is no such thing. A zero-g room would be impossible to achieve on Earth because of Earth's gravity. Contrary to what you might think, counselors are human and have a sense of humor.

- You should wake up early enough so you can take a shower and have time to make your bed and get dressed. They're really strict about being late.

- The weather in Huntsville can get hot. It hit 95 degrees when we were there (March). Dress accordingly and bring sunglasses.

- The bottom line is: Have fun, pay attention, and listen. We personally guarantee you'll have a great time!

FOR EARLY ARRIVALS

- Bring lots of games and books to keep you busy. Also, being skilled at volleyball and basketball helps as they are the only outdoor sports available to newcomers.

- As soon as you arrive, find out where to register and go there right away. Get registered as quickly as possible. When you register you get a card that tells your name and the state and town you live in. This card entitles you to full Space Camp privileges, like eating in the dining room and not having to pay for your own food. Your entire existence at Space Camp depends on this card. Kids who arrive on Sunday get their cards immediately when they get off the bus. We had great trouble getting registered and ended up paying for our own pizza for dinner that evening.

experience was not bad, but not the best.

The 5DF Chair simulates five of the six "directions of freedom," which are: side to side, yaw, pitch, roll, and forward and backward. The ride on the 5DF chair is hard to describe. We felt we were weightless and could move in any direction we wanted, except up and down. The opinions of campers in our group ranged from "It was boring!" to "Awesome."

The Lunar Odyssey is actually a giant spinning planetarium theater that simulates landing on the Moon at an established Moon base. Some of the people who rode it did not take the operator's advice to keep their eyes on the ceiling screen and turned their heads from side to side. They got dizzy and ruined the ride for everybody by making the operators stop it.

When Kenny went on the Lunar Odyssey, he had an itch on his nose. He reached up to scratch it and all of a sudden the theater must have accelerated to 3 g's (three times normal gravity)! His hand went flying to his face. He had to use his other hand to help pull the first one away from his face!

In the Shuttle Liner, you supposedly go aboard a Space Shuttle and dock with a futuristic space station orbiting the Earth. The Shuttle Liner was a disappointment to everyone we spoke to because all it did was tilt up and tilt down.

PUTTING OUR TRAINING TO USE

Most of our training was geared for teaching us about the space program and especially for preparing us for our mission. On one of the last days of the program, campers fly an imaginary Space Shuttle mission

that combines all the fun of Space Camp with all the drama and tension of a real mission into space.

We used a Shuttle simulator that looked like a smaller, less detailed version of the real Space Shuttle Columbia. Just to the left of this simulator was a long table of panels and instruments for mission control.

Each of us took a written test about what we had learned so far during the week. The results helped decide what jobs we were assigned. On the back of the test paper we also had to write what job we would like. There were six jobs in mission control and six aboard the Shuttle. Kenny was the flight director in mission control, while Alex was on board the Shuttle as a payload specialist.

During each group's flight there were two emergencies that were randomly picked by the computer controlling the simulation. All of a sudden one of our computers went down! We had turned off two other computers, and the one we were counting on failed. We elected to turn off the failed computer and turn on one of the computers that was off.

The other emergency was right before re-entry. Our payload bay doors wouldn't close. We chose to have a mission specialist go out and manually close them.

A TERRIFIC TIME

We did many other terrific things at Space Camp, like build and launch model rockets, listen to a talk by an astronaut, and make prototype space stations. Just getting to know great kids from all over the country was also terrific. One thing we both agree on — we can't wait to go back!