

Florida trip sends girl into the final frontier

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

GENEVA — On her last trip to Florida, Mary Margaret Balsley lost a lot of weight — 75 pounds, to be exact.

Her diet and exercise program consisted of entering a weightless simulator at the Kennedy Space Center in Titusville, where gravitational conditions resemble those on the moon. The 90-pound Balsley, a seventh-grade student at St. Francis De-Sales/St. Stephen School, experienced the feeling of being one-sixth her normal weight when she sat in a chair in the simulator.

Balsley visited Cape Canaveral from Sunday, Feb. 19, to Friday, Feb. 24, to enjoy a gamut of simulated space experiences at the United States Space Camp, which is set up to teach elementary school students about the nation's space program.

Balsley learned of the program when a friend of her sister, Becky, called to ask if Becky wanted to go to the camp. Her sister wasn't interested, but Mary Margaret jumped at the chance to go with Elizabeth Wilson, a fifth-grade student at North Street School and a parishioner at St. Stephen's.

To qualify, campers must have good academic records and a recommendation from a teacher. Balsley had both, so off she rocketed to her adventure in Florida.

When she arrived at the camp, Balsley was assigned to the Saturn Team — one of six teams of 12 students each. She spent her first day touring the Kennedy Space Center and learning its history. She was impressed by the vast effort that goes into the center's missions, remarking, for example, that each launch of a spacecraft uses thousands of gallons of fuel.

Balsley and her teammates began building model rockets on Monday, and in the afternoon, visited the weight simulator. Tuesday was spent touring the Kennedy space center again, with a trip to the launch pad of the space shuttle Discovery. That

afternoon, the campers continued work on their rockets and heard a talk about transporting a rocket out to a launch pad.

The students were showered with more information on Tuesday evening during a lecture on meteorites at the Brevard Community College Planetarium. The next morning, Balsley's team woke up and set to work conceiving a space station, which their fellow campers voted best design.

"It was a little simpler than the others," Balsley said of the Saturn team's winning design for an orbiting space city with a gigantic circular living space in the center, supplied by four smaller circular storage areas attached by four equidistantly-spaced tunnels emanating from the central living space.

Balsley's favorite camp activity began on Wednesday afternoon, when she served as mission specialist for her team. She led five other students on their first assignment to eject a payload of cargo into space. Sitting in a simulated version of the Discovery capsule, the students tried to imagine what it was like to actually be in space — not always an easy thing to do, according to Balsley. "We were supposed to, but it was difficult because (space center employees) were walking around," she said.

Getting around was the priority on Thursday, when the campers drove the Apollo lunar rover in the space center's parking lot. Having never driven before, Balsley enjoyed the experience, noting that unlike the average driver on a trip to Wegman's, astronauts would take their lunar rovers to the moon, but not bring them back.

In the afternoon, the Saturn team had another mission. This time, Balsley exchanged her seat in the capsule for a seat behind the mission control panel. As flight director, she monitored the action on the panels' TV screens, pushing the proper buttons when needed. "I was pretty



Linda Dow Hayes/Catholic Courier

Mary Margaret Balsley flew high for an entire week at the United States Space Camp in Florida.

good," she commented. "I made sure everything was going smoothly."

The campers launched their model rockets that afternoon, and the next day were honored for their week-long efforts with a certificate and a pair of space wings. Bals-

ley and her Saturn teammates exchanged addresses, a prudent move given the seventh-grader's future plans for space travel.

"I might want to go," Balsley said, "but not by myself."

SPEAKING OUT

By Paul Hezel
DeSales High School

Experiences make up some of the most valuable parts of life. We attain experience each day, to a certain extent. Experience can be gained in any of several fields, whether social, academic or otherwise. Sometimes, even single incidents will have a significant impact on our lives.

Basketball is a pursuit at which one must work hard to improve. A person can-

not just walk onto a basketball court and expect to play well. He must work hard at the game, practice and play against tough competition to improve. Only by playing the game will he gain enough experience to play well against his competitors.

Academic subjects are another area in which experience is helpful in order to improve. Take writing. In sixth grade, I used to groan at the mention of writing a paragraph. Yet today, with much longer 10- and 11-page papers due in high school, I find it easier to write with the completion of each paper. If I had not written as much so early in school, gradually increasing in

amount with each assignment, completing such a long paper would seem nearly impossible. And there are still college papers to look forward to...

A lack of experience in an area may instill fear or a sense of intimidation. This fear must be overcome by attempting to do something. Downhill skiing scared me a bit the first time I went. I was not sure whether I could control myself well enough to avoid hitting a tree. Therefore, I didn't attempt to ski on anything but the easiest hills. I'm sure I could easily become a better skier. But I have yet to give it another try.

Some experiences leave longstanding

impressions on the mind. Imagine hiking for hours under the hot sun, dying of thirst, wondering if you will ever make it to the summit of Mount Marcy, the highest mountain in the state. Once you have reached the top, you look out in awe of the beautiful spectacle spread before you.

Experiences play a vital role in our development as people. We can learn how to deal with mistakes and handle pressures in life. Work experience, especially now, will help us obtain better jobs in the future. Throughout life, opportunities should be seized that may give us invaluable experiences, and therefore help us to develop and enrich ourselves.

Do adults minimize the impact of stress on your life?

MIGNON CUYLER, sophomore:

Yes, parents do fail in this area. Parents do not seem to understand that as teenagers, we are not used to stress, so we get very emotional, and we need all the help we can get. Instead of putting us aside, they should actually talk to us at a mature level and explain that this isn't the end. Life gets easier.



LISA DEE, sophomore:

The adults I deal with on a daily basis seem to understand the amount of pressure weighing on teens today. I personally have no free time to myself, with school and school work, so I'm glad to have adults who respect the fact that the younger generation does have stress and needs time to relax as well.



Nazareth Academy

AS TEENS SEE IT

ALESIA MUELLER, senior:

Yes, adults minimize adolescent stress. Indeed, they add to it. Adults are always searching into the future. They always talk about college, grades, money plans, or a career. I believe that an adolescent needs some time for himself to think and get things straightened out. I feel that adults are an added burden to adolescents and should be there to help them and not harp on them, or tell them what to do all of the time.



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The winner was Mary Wargo of Nazareth College.

MUSIC TRIVIA

This week's question:
What blind musician wrote the Aretha Franklin Hit, "Until You Come Back to Me?"

A: _____

Rules:
Each week, the Catholic Courier, in conjunction with the House of Guitars will feature a Music Trivia contest. All you have to do to enter is answer the question, fill in your name and address and the school you attend (if applicable), cut out the coupon and send it in to the Catholic Courier. If more than one correct entry is received, a drawing will be held and one winning entry will be drawn.
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All entries must be received within seven days of this paper's issue date. Winning names and answers will be printed the week following each drawing.

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