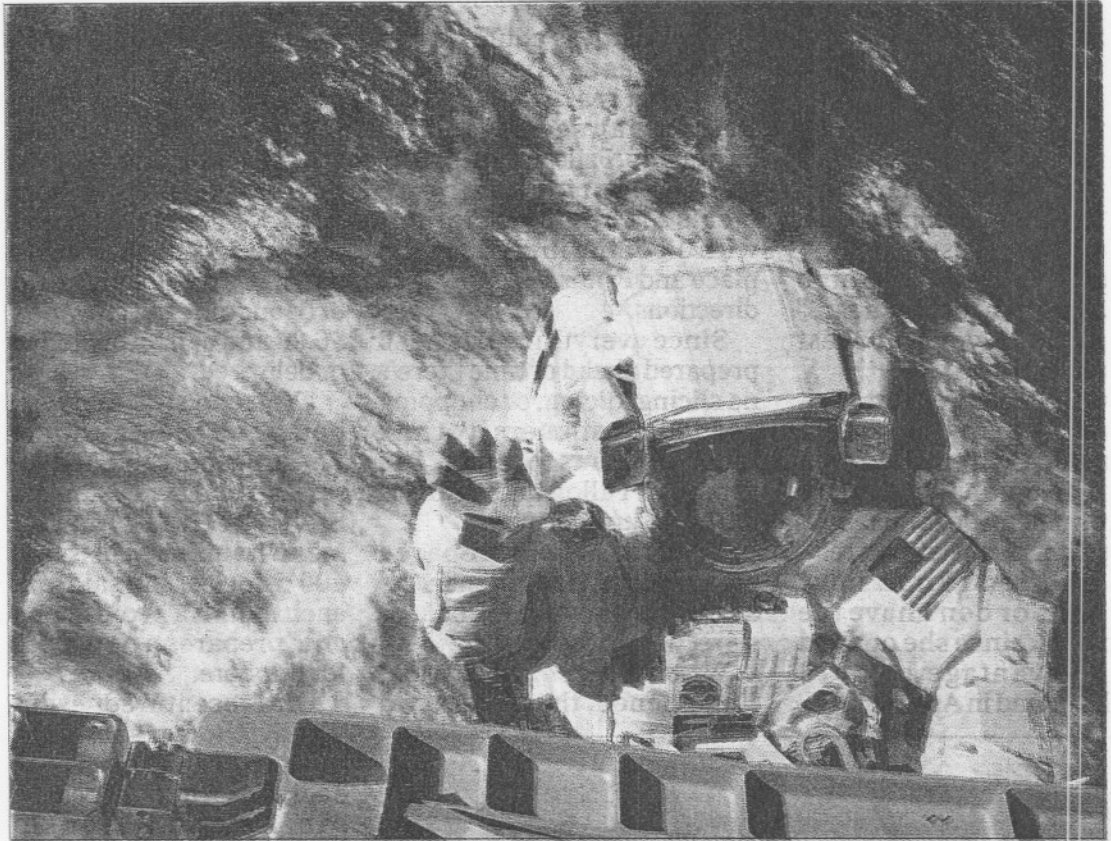


BOCA RATON FORUM

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GREETINGS FROM SPACE: Astronaut Steven Swanson, STS-117 mission specialist and Florida Atlantic University graduate, waves to the camera during the mission's second extravehicular activity June 13. See related story and photos, page 3. PHOTO/NASA

FAU grad gets to work in space

By **NICK POWELL**
FORUM NEWS EDITOR

One of the four astronauts who performed spacewalks during June's space shuttle mission to install additional solar panels at the International Space Station was a graduate of Florida Atlantic University's computer sciences program.

Steve Swanson attended FAU from 1984 to 1986, studying for his master's degree in computer sciences. He later joined the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's astronaut corps and put that educa-

tion to use aboard the STS-117 mission.

Swanson was born in Syracuse, N.Y., but considers Steamboat Springs, Colo., his hometown. He has a bachelor's degree in engineering physics, as well as master's and doctoral degrees in computer science.

It was after Swanson, 46, finished his studies at FAU that he decided to put his knowledge to work in the space program.

The STS-117 mission logged 5.8 million miles during its 14 days in space, and

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■ SWANSON

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Swanson looks forward to another trip shortly. This time, it will be a family vacation with his wife, Mary, and three children for a lot fewer miles.

In a phone interview last week from the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Swanson discussed his education, career and space experiences.

Forum: We read that you have been kind of an adventurer since your youth. How did that curiosity bring about your interest to become an astronaut?

Swanson: As a kid, I always liked to go into the woods and just explore, not staying on the path. Just taking off and find different spots and new places to go is what I loved doing. Nowadays, there aren't too many places left in the world to explore. When I got out of FAU and was figuring out what to do with my life career-wise, that's when the idea hit me to ronment. ... I knew how to do the tasks very well. But when you put the whole thing together in the environment you are in, it becomes very different. ... Once you get used to it up there and your body is all set, it is just a great time.

Forum: What education that you learned at FAU was the most beneficial for you to function as an astronaut?

Swanson: One thing I studied about a lot in computer sciences at FAU was local area networks. I was in charge of the one do the exploring adventure and use the information I gained at FAU and other schools. Being an astronaut was that answer.

Forum: Now that you are a space veteran, how close were your experiences in space to the training you received months before the mission?

Swanson: For our technical jobs, like the rendezvous and spacewalks, we trained very well. But what you can't train for is being in the zero-gravity envi-

on the shuttle, which we hooked up the laptops and created our own network up there. Keeping it running was my job. The main thing you get out of school [at FAU] is a good basic knowledge and understanding of how everything works in computers.

Forum: Did you take anything from FAU along with you in space?

Swanson: I took a flag with me from FAU. I am planning to come to the school, hopefully sometime in the fall, and present the flag.

Forum: How was the experience of working alongside Russian cosmonauts in the space station?

Swanson: I had taken some Russian language training at NASA. [The Russians'] English was much better than my Russian. We got along very well, and they were hospitable toward us.

Forum: Has your life changed much since you went from astronaut trainee to veteran astronaut?

Swanson: Not much. (Laughter.) I am already back doing jobs in the office. At home, there is no difference. What's left are the memories of a great experience. That's what is different for me. And no one can take that away from you. I will treasure it forever.

Forum: Are there any future shuttle assignments scheduled for you?

Swanson: Not yet. Maybe, in the next year or so, I can get another assignment to fly on the shuttle.

The best view of a shuttle launch

Five. Four. Three. Two. One....

That unmistakable countdown to zero can mean only one thing: a launch at the Kennedy Space Center.

Each time a space shuttle is launched, and there have been 118 missions since the program started in April 1981, thousands of people position themselves along Brevard County causeways. And they jam parks and waterfront sites or just step outside their homes or offices to catch a glimpse of the orbiter flying skyward with its dual plumes of flame.

When I lived in Indian

River County, 60 miles away from the space center,

launches at that distance even brought oohs and aahs from spectators assembled along the beach.

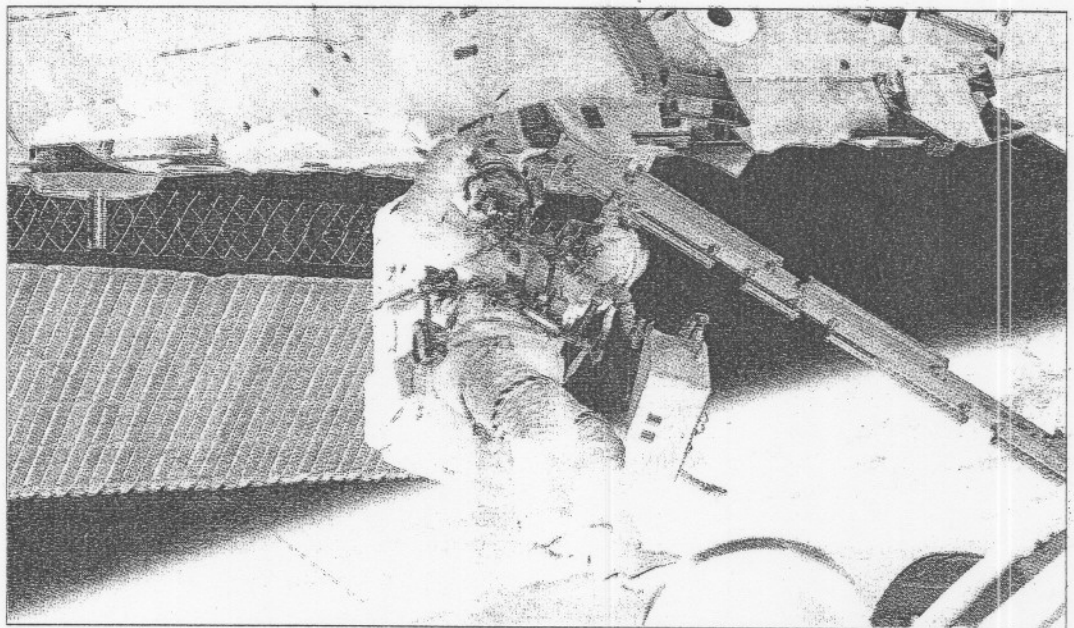
Boca • tology

Studying Boca
WITH NICK POWELL

But probably the best vantage point for any launch – inaccessible to most of the population – is the Kennedy Space Center press site.

Only employees of media companies who are on assignment and pass rigid background checks for accreditation may enter space center property and gather at a small site just south of the famed Vehicle

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IMPORTANT WORK: During a six-hour spacewalk June 13, STS-117 mission specialists Steven Swanson and Patrick Forrester (out of frame) worked on the initial stages of retracting an older solar array before removing launch restraints on a new solar rotary joint, which is designed to rotate so the new hardware can follow the sun while the International Space Station orbits the earth. PHOTO/NASA

Assembly Building.

I've been fortunate to have attended about six shuttle launches in the past 15 years, working for several news organizations in Florida. The most recent was June 8, when Atlantis carried FAU graduate Steve Swanson into space for some spacewalk duties at the International Space Station.

What makes shuttle watching from the press site such a unique experience is feeling the massive power that an orbiter exudes while going up in space.

Several days before a scheduled launch date, television satellite trucks begin arriving at the press site. Crews set up tents from which on-air talent make their reports, as well as lay thousands of feet of wires for equipment.

On launch day itself, the press site crowd swells to several hundred people, all of them media types on the lookout for a perfect vantage point to capture high-quality liftoff images.

About five minutes before liftoff, the photographers gather along the press site waterfront to take the closest-possible pictures. Maybe 10 minutes later, that same area is abandoned with the successful launch of another mission.

The true benefit of being an accredited reporter at a shuttle launch is the noise and reverberation the shuttle sends over the entire



THE VIEW'S FINE: Mission Specialist Steve Swanson occupies the commander's seat during STS-117 flight-day activities June 19. PHOTO/NASA

space center during its first two minutes of flight.

The sound from the shuttle's main engines and solid rocket boosters take only a few seconds after ignition to arrive at the press site. About 20 seconds into the flight, both the sound waves and shock waves start to reach a crescendo.

At its peak, the noise sounds like numerous firecrackers exploding in rapid succession. It's not deafening, but combined with the ground vibration, the exhilaration of witnessing the world's most complex machine leave the earth cannot be compared.

Another neat observation at the press site a couple of minutes after June's launch was the shadow that the setting sun created as it shined on the dense smoke trail that the shuttle left behind.

The Kennedy Space Center Visitors Center sells

viewing passes for shuttle launches about one month before a planned mission. Ticket holders can watch a launch from different vantage points, based on the ticket type purchased. Sell-outs are normal; visit www.ksctickets.com early for the best tickets.

After the current shuttle mission, with launch at press time scheduled Wednesday, the next launches are tentatively set for Oct. 20 and Dec. 6. Each launch is special and no two can be experienced the same way.

If you've never gone to watch a shuttle launch, make a point to do so soon. The shuttle program is scheduled to end in 2010, so there are only about 12 missions left.

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Boca Hospital offers wi-fi to physicians, patients, guests

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Boca Raton Community Hospital has announced it has begun offering wireless "wi-fi" access through its guest network. Service began Aug. 1.

The network is available to physicians, patients and guests of the facility. It will allow wireless Internet access within most areas of the hospital.

"We are providing this service as a convenience and courtesy to our visitors and guests," said Robin Hildwein, chief information officer and executive director of information systems. "We recognize that many of our patients, our guests and our physicians rely on the Internet to communicate with family and friends, do research on important topics and to stay connected with work and their careers."

Serving the community since 1967, Boca Raton Community



BOCA RATON
COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

Hospital has 400 beds and more than 700 primary and specialty physicians. Areas of expertise include cancer, cardiovascular disease and surgery, minimally invasive surgery and women's health.

In 2012, Boca Raton Community Hospital will become the Charles E. Schmidt Medical Center, the first new academic medical center to open in the United States in nearly thirty years. The planned 530-private room teaching hospital will be located on 38 acres of Florida Atlantic University's Boca Raton Campus and be the teaching hospital for the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine.