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Learning Life's Lessons in "Space"

Instead of vacationing on the white sandy beaches of the Grand Cayman Islands or at a cozy East End bed-and-breakfast, Kathy Boyle, director of corporate education, took a trip to space. That is, space camp.

"I always wanted to be an astronaut," admitted the Belle Harbor resident. "But in the 1970s when I was growing up, women weren't astronauts. So, I became a nurse."

Accompanied by seven of her friends, Ms. Boyle headed to the U.S. Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Ala., for a three-day vacation like no other.

Following a morning orientation about the space center, Ms. Boyle, who was part of a team of 15 people from throughout the country, practiced donning space suits, helmets and boots; learned how to tell time in the 24-hour military format; and interpreted data on screens in mission

control and the space station. Then it was off to build a metal-frame lattice during a spacewalk outside a replica of the space shuttle Atlantis.



Kathy Boyle, far left, and friend Marion Dunn of Belle Harbor during a painstaking spacewalk.

"It's physically exhausting and strenuous trying to assemble this structure while you are weightless," Ms. Boyle said. "Your foot is tethered to the shuttle so you don't float away and

all the while you have to get the components of the structure out of the bag without dropping them. Even though you are in a simulated zero gravity, you have to use a lot of energy to keep yourself and objects from floating away."

Next Ms. Boyle and her partner were assigned to construct a plastic polymer out of liquid chemicals and bake a cake using a microwave in the space station.

"As we were reaching for the different containers of powdered and liquid ingredients to prepare the cake, every few minutes space station alarms reported a problem with the water filtration system or air pressure. We would have to call mission control to

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