

science & TECHNOLOGY

THE BATTALION

Atlantis mission completed

NASA Space Station pilot and crew prepare to com home from work on international station Wednesday morning

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) Space shuttle Atlantis' astronauts tied up their ship Monday for the ride home, leaving behind a fully stocked international space station.

NASA expects the space station's first permanent crew to move in in six weeks, after years of uncertainty and delay.

"This crew certainly has laid out the red carpet," said space station manager Robert Cabana. "They accomplished everything that we asked them to do, everything we wished they could do and, I think, about everything we dreamed that they could do."

All that remains is for Atlantis to return to Earth before daybreak Wednesday.

Atlantis and its crew of seven flew two laps around the space station ear-

ly Monday, following a smooth undocking the night before.

"It sparkled like a jewel out there when it was against the blue background of the ocean, a very, very beautiful sight for us."

— Scot Altman
Atlantis pilot

The astronauts beamed down video that engineers will use to assess the condition of the metallic outpost.

"It sparkled like a jewel out there when it was against the blue background of the ocean, a very, very beautiful sight for us," said Atlantis pilot Scot Altman.

The shuttle astronauts put away more than 6,000 pounds of supplies for the three men who are scheduled to move in at the beginning of November. They also installed the toilet, oxygen generator and treadmill inside the living quarters, which were linked up to the space station in July.

Russia's economic crisis had stalled construction of the living quarters, which in turn had stalled space station assembly in orbit. The

delays spanned more than two years.

"We pretty much got the place ready to live in," Altman said. "Maybe we left a couple of surprises for the future crew, but we don't want to give everything away. We'll let them discover it when they get up there."

Before American astronaut Bill Shepherd and his two-cosmonaut crew can move in, Discovery must carry up the first piece of space station truss, or girder. The truss will serve as the support structure for American-made solar wings and motion-control gyroscopes.

Discovery is due to lift off on this construction mission Oct. 5. Shepherd and company will follow from Kazakhstan on Oct. 30.

Scenes of Science and Technology

Wen Ho Lee case said to be based on racial profiling

NEW YORK (AP) — Nuclear scientist Wen Ho Lee was the victim of the same type of racial profiling that sent Japanese-Americans to internment camps during World War II, Asian-American civic leaders told a presidential commission Monday.

"The government's prosecution of Dr. Wen Ho Lee was politically motivated and tainted by racism from the start," said Margaret Fung, executive director of the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund. "The government of officials responsible for this debacle must be held accountable for their actions."

The 60-year-old Taiwan-born scientist, fired

from his job at the Los Alamos weapons lab in March 1999, pleaded guilty to one count of mishandling classified material and was set free last week. The federal government dropped 58 other felony counts that once charged him with endangering nuclear secrets.

President Clinton said Friday that Lee's nine-month pretrial detention conflicted with America's disdain for "abusive executive authority." But Clinton said he had seen no evidence of racial profiling in the case.

Scientists seek close look at threatening asteroids

LONDON (AP) — They may only strike every 100,000 years on average, but life-threatening asteroids could be heading Earth's way, and sci-

entists said Monday they want a closer look.

A panel set up this year by the British government to assess the risk of asteroids slamming into the planet called for an international program to build a powerful \$22.5 million telescope in the southern hemisphere.

"The risk is very real — and very tiny — but with awful consequences, and we ought to be doing something about it," said Sir Crispin Tickell, Britain's former ambassador to the United Nations and a member of the panel, which published its report on Monday.

Although millions are already being spent trying to track Near Earth Objects, or NEOs, scientists acknowledge they're very much in the dark. Asteroids near Earth travel at between 10 and 20 miles per second, making them hard to detect.

SCI F.Y.I.



STUART HUTSON

I am going to break the tradition of hosting questions from the general populace of Texas A&M today to answer a burning question from the graphics desk of The Battalion (the ones who are responsible for the wonderful illustrations you see on the pages of this paper every day).

Though we may never know for sure, there is a predominant theory.

The theory is that the human mind anticipates the body's own motions and then deliberately lessens the attention it pays to the resulting stimulus so it can pay attention to unpredicted external stimuli. An example of this would be your brain ignoring the constant pressure on your feet as you walk down the street.

A study published in the November 1998 issue of Nature Neuroscience attempted to help prove this theory.

Subjects equipped with brain-scanning equipment were tickled by a piece of soft foam on a plastic rod.

These subjects tickled themselves and were tickled by scientists from the University College in London.

Scientists concluded that different parts of the subjects' minds were active when they were tickling themselves as opposed to when they were being tickled. These scientists hypothesized that these extra areas were used to anticipate and help block out sensory input from self-tickling.

Research has also been done on what areas of the body are most ticklish. Generally it is found that the underarm is the most sensitive area, followed by the waist, ribs, foot, knee and neck.

It's that simple.

If you have a question that you would like answered, email sci-fyi@hotmail.com, and I will see if I can tickle your neurons with an answer. Please do not forget to include your name, class, and major.

Question: Why is it hard to tickle yourself?

Answer: I do not really want to know why you want to figure this out, but here it goes.

Although much research has been done on the subject, no one is really sure why you cannot tickle yourself.

Tickling has long been an enigma to neurologists and physiologists. With most stimulus/response research, scientists can induce a stimulus in a lab animal and then examine how the response works through decisive means such as cracking the animal's skull open and directly seeing which portion of the brain is stimulated.

Tom Champney, associate professor in the Department of Human Physiology and Medical Neurobiology, said there are two reasons why this research cannot be done with tickling.

The first reason is that you cannot tell when a lab rat is laughing. Secondly, you cannot usually crack open the brain of a living human without serious repercussions from the American Medical Association.

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Revolution

National Instruments Day Texas A&M University

Wednesday, September 20, 2000
Zachry Engineering Building

Technology Open House
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6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

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What's the Word?

Oratorical Contest

Is the Civil Rights Movement, still moving?

Informational Meetings

September 18, 2000
MSC 228 8:30 PM

September 20, 2000
MSC Visual Art Gallery
7:00 PM

Oratorical Contest
Thursday, October 19, 2000

1st Place \$1000
2nd Place \$750
3rd Place \$500

Persons with disabilities please call 845-1515 to inform us of your special needs. We request notification three working days prior to the event to enable us to assist you to the best of our abilities.