

Iowa astronaut details space flight

Whitson brings slide show of travels to Mount Pleasant



"Space flight is never going to be without risk."

Peggy Whitson
astronaut

By Steven Martens
News correspondent
MOUNT PLEASANT — In many ways, Peggy Whitson's presentation Friday to a crowd of about 300 in Mount Pleasant was much like a vacation slide show — with a twist.

Whitson's slides were taken 248 miles above the Earth during her six months aboard the International Space Station.

Whitson, 43, is a native of Beaconsfield and a 1981 graduate of Iowa Wesleyan College in Mount Pleasant. She spoke about her experiences aboard the space station as part of the festivities surrounding the inauguration of William Johnston as the college's 27th president Friday and received an honorary doctorate degree from the college.

Whitson and two Russian cosmonauts flew the space shuttle Endeavour to the space station, leaving June 5, 2002, and returning to Earth on Dec. 7.

During her time aboard the space station, Whitson conducted several experiments ranging from growing soybeans, like her father, to test-

ing exercises designed to limit bone loss in astronauts. Whitson described the feeling of the launch into orbit, during which the astronauts experience three-times the normal force of gravity, as "three minutes of feeling like two guys are sitting on your chest."

She described everything from the feeling of taking a space walk: "I've never had such a sensational feeling of flying" — to the relatively mundane task of trying to assemble a hamburger in space, a task that required the efforts of all three crew members.

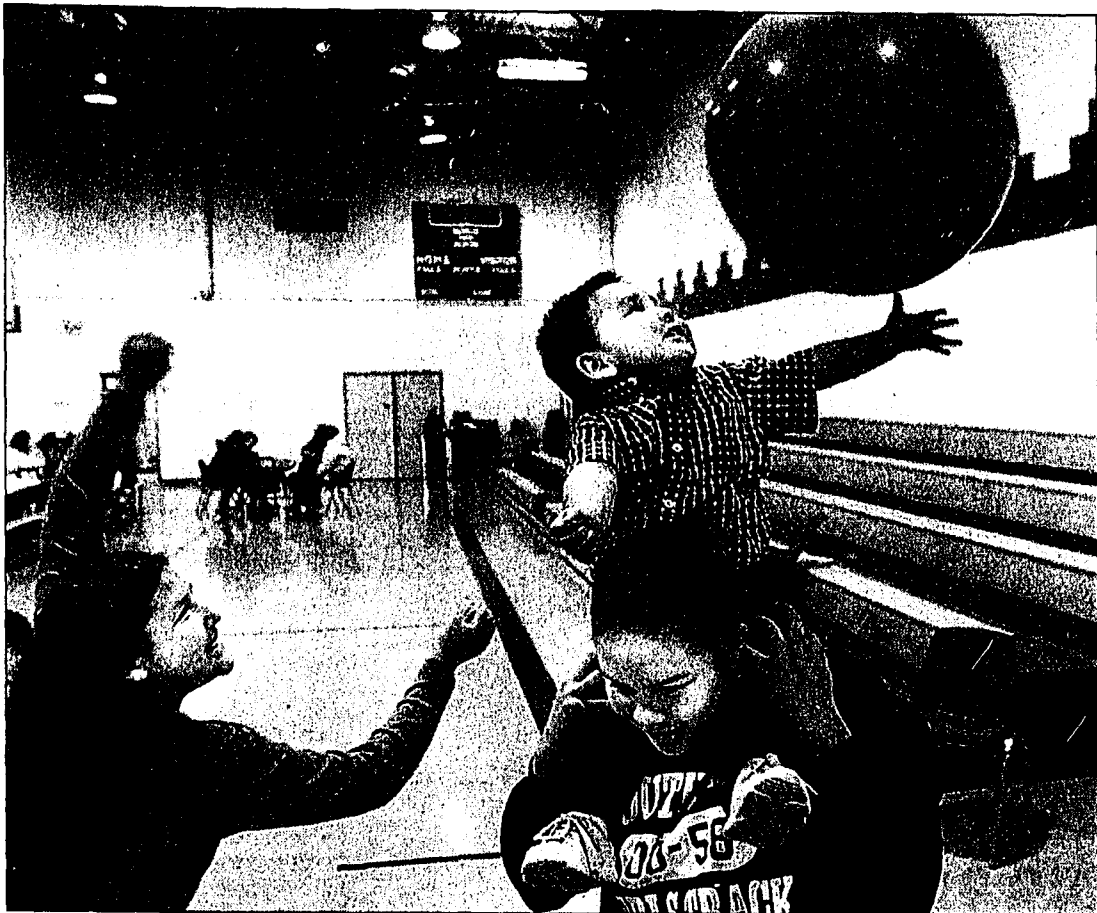
While in space, the crew also installed a new truss on the station that will be used to hold solar panels to power a future expanded laboratory, and Whitson worked to repair a carbon dioxide removal system. Whitson's slide show included everything from breath-taking photos of the Earth to a picture of one of the crew members with their faces painted with stars and

stripes to celebrate the Fourth of July. Whitson said she was reluctant to leave the station, but has plenty of work to do on Earth. Her next assignment will be conducting experiments during extended deep-sea diving off of Key Largo, Fla., and she will conduct training for NASA for future space station crews.

Whitson said perseverance paid off in chasing her childhood dream of becoming an astronaut. It was 10 years after she earned a doctorate from Rice University until she was finally granted an interview for the space program and several more years before she received her first flight assignment.

Despite the recent Columbia disaster, Whitson said manned space travel has led to many scientific discoveries and said NASA will work to make future shuttle missions as safe as possible.

"Space flight is never going to be without risk," she said.



Jim Slosiarek/The Gazette

Steff Benda, 12, carries Dante Davenport, 19 months old, on her shoulders as Dante reaches for a giant blue balloon tossed to him by Taylor Deane (left), 9, Wednesday at the Meskwaki Nation Tribal Center at the Meskwaki Settlement west of Tama. Members of the new Tribal Council and their supporters have occupied the tribal center around the clock since March 26.

Meskwaki: Tribe posts security guards at center

■ From page 1B

their chief.

Chief Charles Old Bear appointed a new Tribal Council.

On March 26, the new Tribal Council moved into the Tribal Center and assumed control of the tribe's business, including the casino. The new council felt taking control of the Tribal Center was important since it is the headquarters of the tribe's casino operation and its administrative center.

But the old Tribal Council was unwilling to give up control so easily. They had already refused a petition of the people to hold a general meeting last fall and they ignored petitions for a recall election last October.

"They've had their hands in the cookie jar so long," said Pushetonequa, "that they don't want to give it up."

While some may see the takeover of the Tribal Center as an occupation, it looks more like a family gathering.

To be sure, the tribe's business is being conducted by the new Tribal Council. From a small conference room telephone, they remain in contact with their attorneys, banks, operations at the casino and the media. They have remained at the building since March 26, sleeping on the floor a few hours each night.

The rest of the building is turned over to members of the tribe who pass the time talking and cooking for the 50 to 100 people who are gathered at the center at any one time.

Two banquet tables covered with food prepared by women of the tribe feed whoever is hungry at any hour. On Thursday morning,

hamburgers and fried potatoes were served at 2 a.m. when the security guards changed shifts. That followed the Wednesday evening meal of fried chicken and fry bread.

"My mom makes the best fry bread," said Taylor Deane, 9, who with her cousin Lauresa Squire, 7, has only a vague idea of what's happening. To them it's just a chance to be together at the Tribal Center.

Activities, which usually include basketball in the gymnasium and bone dice, a traditional American Indian game, have been curtailed for four days.

A member of the tribe has died and out of respect no games are allowed. Only the children may play, and from toddlers up, they take full advantage of not having to compete with the older boys for the gymnasium.

Amanaga Bear, 10, who likes to use his traditional name, and Nankotea Bear, 9, play what looks like a card game with Japanese Yu Gi Oh cards. They call it dueling.

"We have been informed that we can no longer play Yu Gi Oh at school," said Magatemaga Young Bear, 9.

As they play, Jovani Victor, 2, struggles to get into the middle of the game.

In the hallway a group of men watch war coverage on CNN, slipping outside occasionally to smoke.

Security guards are posted at the building's two entrances 24 hours a day to prevent any action by the old Tribal Council.

A sacred fire burns in the front of the Tribal Center giving an autumn smell to

the cool spring air. Before checking the perimeter of the area, security guards douse themselves with smoke from the fire.

The night drags on without incident, as they all have since the new Tribal Council moved into the center, and about 10 p.m. most of the children and their mothers head for home. Those who stay spread out on sleeping bags and join their elders for a few hours of sleep.

When they awake, the tables in the gym are already replenished with breakfast food. For the children, it's time for school.

While they are at school, their elders traveled to Cedar Rapids where a federal judge will hear a lawsuit brought by Alex Walker Jr. asking the court to return control of tribal business to him and his council. The court has yet to rule on the suit.

At the hearing before Judge Linda Reade, both sides claimed support of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. A recent letter reaffirms the BIA policy not to intrude on intra-tribal disputes. "No intervention by the Department of the BIA is required at this time," the letter said.

It's a lot like Iraq, said Babette Pritchett. A small group had the power but they did not have the interests of the people at heart. Like the people of Iraq, the Meskwaki people are waiting to be liberated, she said.

"We are doing this for our elders and our children," said Kay Deane, Taylor's mother. "They are our future," she said, pointing to a toddler.

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Clinic

■ From page 1B

Mercy has encouraged physicians employed at the clinic to go into private practice in Coralville and said the hospital will lease the existing clinic to physicians who choose to do so and will offer other help "at fair market value."

That comment drew a pointed response from Melissa Stahl, a Coralville resident with a long relationship with the clinic.

"An inconvenience to me is finding a new dry cleaner," Stahl said. "I will never be able to replace the experience I had in that office."

In response to comments by Dr. Susan Goodner, a physician at the clinic, Reed and Dick Schwab, who chairs Mercy's board of directors, agreed to meet with Goodner and other clinic physicians to explore options.

"Mercy will work with the physicians to set up a reasonable solution to having them continue to practice in Coralville," Schwab said.

Reed and Schwab agreed a Coralville city representative could participate in that meeting.

Renewal: Hearing set for May 28

■ From page 1B

because it is close to a "high-demand commercial core" at Lindale Mall and Collins Road that is running out of land for development.

Local builder, Ryan Companies USA Inc., is helping to drive the creation of the urban renewal area with its plans to redevelop the old Vigortone Ag Products facility at 5264 Council St. NE.

Ryan wants to turn an existing, 92,000-square-foot building there into offices and also plans to use three lots on the 20-acre site for commercial use, Luther said.

On Wednesday, the City Council approved Ryan's request to change the property's zoning from industrial to commercial.

The council will hold public hearings May 28 to discuss the creation of the urban renewal area.

On that date, the city also will discuss turning the area into a tax-increment financing (TIF) district to add another incentive for development.

The City Planning Commis-

Cedar Rapids officials also will discuss turning the area into a tax-increment financing (TIF) district to add another incentive for development.

sion and taxing jurisdictions other than the city will weigh in on the plan.

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Toddville church collects items for family who lost home to fire

The Gazette

TODDVILLE — The Toddville Free Methodist Church will collect household items and furniture for the victims of a Cedar Rapids house fire.

Vickie Reed-Grahlman, 32, Kylie Reed, 9, Nicole Reed, 7, and Ida Mae Grahlman, 3, survived the April 5 fire at 3755 H Ave. NE, which claimed the lives of Jaymie Grahlman, 6, and Jay Grahlman, 38.

Beginning at noon Sunday and running through 6 p.m. Tuesday, people can bring household items to the church, 309 Johnson Dr. in



Jay Grahlman

Father, daughter died of fire injuries



Jaymie Grahlman

Toddville.

One of the event coordinators, Brian Zirtzman of Cedar Rapids, said the family needs

just about everything, including beds, dressers, towels, dishes and clothes.

"Anything," he said. "They lost everything."

The children's sizes are:
• Kylie: clothes size 10 misses, shoe size 7 1/2 ladies.
• Nicole: clothes size 6x-7, shoe size 12 1/2 kids.
• Ida Mae: clothes size 3-4T, shoe size 8 1/2 toddler.

Large item pickup is available by calling the church at 393-1490. For more information on the event, call Zirtzman at 366-4073.

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