



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Kathy Sullivan talks about her flight

A big homecoming for Kathy Sullivan

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SANTA CRUZ — UCSC graduate Kathy Sullivan brought a bit of outer space to Santa Cruz today.

On her October trip into orbit aboard the space shuttle Challenger, Sullivan was the first American woman to walk in space. She came back to campus this morning, bringing with her the message that America has the technology and the capability to forge ahead with the exploration of space.

At a press conference at Cowell College, Sullivan echoed Sally Ride's description of the exhilarating blastoff from earth into orbit as a "three-E Disneyland ride." But she described herself and as a sort of cog in a very complex machine with an enormous workload. She said she had to force herself to stop and consider she was in space, not in training.

NASA is now in the early planning stages for an inhabited, orbiting space station, and Sullivan said she hopes one day to work on that station.

She said such a platform for scien-

tific, technological and astronomical research is the next obvious step.

And the shuttle is a great "truck" to span the first 200 miles into space to such a platform.

She said the United States has the technology to press on and build colonies in space, on the moon, and on other planets. And such exploration offers more than only technological and scientific benefits that have flowed from two decades of space exploration, she said.

There are rewards and challenges, she said, that will remain unknown and undreamed of until they are uncovered by explorers and researchers in the future.

"The technology is available now to take us anywhere we want to go," she said, and support in Congress and the White House is there and growing. The nation must commit itself to spending the money to expand a program that now costs one-half cent of each tax dollar, she added.

Sullivan, 33, is a New Jersey native

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who grew up in Southern California's Woodland Hills. She came to UCSC in 1969, she said, to work toward a career in a service- or a humanity-oriented field.

But, she said, her focus changed at school. She graduated with honors in earth sciences in 1973, and took a doctorate in geology from Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia.

Her father had taught her to fly, and her brother told her in 1976 that NASA was recruiting, especially women and minorities. He urged her to apply, and she was accepted in 1978.

After years of rigorous training and work for NASA, she got what she called "the icing" — her trip into orbit — with six other astronauts.

The impression she gave of space-flight was that astronauts are generally too busy to pay much attention to it, let alone gaze about in profound contemplation and wonder.

She said that while she waited for liftoff, during the countdown, she had a lapful of checklists to occupy her.

She was skeptical the thing was even going to get off the pad, she said. Nearly all the training launches incorporate 15 to 20 possible problems, so she said paying attention to the business at hand — watching for the glitches to rear their heads — occupied her.

But she made it clear that during the computer-controlled liftoff, even the most hardcore scientist is forced to take notice of the surroundings.

Sitting atop a four-million pound vehicle producing six million pounds of thrust, she said, a person is "very aware that chunk of hardware gets up and moves at pretty good rate."

She described a "claptrap" rattle, and said "You're very aware of the power — very aware the computers better be doing their jobs."

During the eight-day mission's 16-hour work days, Sullivan said veteran Mission Commander Robert L. Crippen reminded the rookies to take a little time to take a look around. She said it's common for first-time space travelers to pay little or no attention to their surroundings.

During her spacewalk, she said, while she helped perform a refueling experiment, she said she forced herself to stop for what seemed an unconscionably long time to look around — and mission films later showed that rest to be just seconds long.

She said looks forward to being active in space for the next five to 10 years, until "I get old and gray and flunk the flight physical."

The UCSC Alumni Association had a full day planned for Sullivan today, including a public lunch at the Elks Club and a seminar on campus this afternoon.