

Space Shuttle Has Never Been T

(Editor's Note: Wes Young did summer intern work with the BESSEMER CITY RECORD. A graduate of Kings Mountain High School and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, he is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Bill Young of Bessemer City. He wrote the following article for the HENDERSON DAILY DISPATCH for which he is a staff writer.)

Consider the space shuttle - you know, that hulking piece of unpleasant-looking machinery the government is going to hurtle into space sometime soon.

The latest National Geographic has an extremely informative article on the space monstrosity this month, well worth reading for enlightenment, especially if you enjoy "black humor."

This article notes the space shuttle's enormous dimensions, and they are worthy of consideration too. For instance, the space shuttle will be big enough to carry five elephants into space at the same time. Note that. One might well ask why the govern-

ment would see any benefit to the nation in sending a small herd of pachyderms into orbit; it is difficult to see the advantages, either to the taxpayers or to the elephants. The article unfortunately does not inform us on this point.

By WES YOUNG

It is no doubt classified information. For one of the major users of the space device will be the military. The shuttle will be used to send armored satellites into space for the conduct of "our next war" as the article so eloquently puts it. This war will be fought with satellites emitting "high-energy death beams" across the voids of space, unleashing terrible destruction from afar to an extent previously unheard of. Keep your helmet handy.

The mechanics of the space spittle - I mean, shuttle - are interesting as we examine its several component parts. The selling point of the whole business has been the reusability of the shuttle, but the biggest section of it - a huge fuel tank that dwarfs the actual vessel as

the Titanic would the Santa Maria - will not be used again at all. When it is spent in a matter of seconds it will be released to come crashing down to the earth, and if you are lucky your home insurance takes into account the resultant eventuality.

The big part of the rocket will only function when the ship is airborne, if it is lucky enough to get that far. On the ground it is too heavy to even lift itself up by its own power, so two more rockets have been strapped to its side to lift it.

These rockets - like the rest, one learns - have never been tested. They are solid fuel rockets, a new concept in the ever-expanding vistas of space research. Once you light a solid

fuel rocket, the article states, that's it. There's no way to turn it off, there's no way to speed it up, slow it down, or even steer it.

However, when these men go up in the flying wonder, they will have the benefit and knowledge of the vast technical research that has gone into its construction.

They will know that nothing with wings has ever flown as fast as the space shuttle. They will know that scientists don't know if the wings will stay on at all.

They will no doubt recall their knowledge of the journey the behemoth took from its site of construction to the launch pad. They will think about the tiles. The rocket - I mean, the little part of it that will contain

human cargo with the spacious comforts of a slave ship - is equipped with tiles on the bottom that are designed to shield the ship from being fried during its hopeful return. On its journey to the launch pad the mild winds of earth ripped off some of the tiles, forcing the scientist to try another brand of glue.

The article informs us - and the astronauts too, I presume - that losing one of these tiles on the journey upward would be sufficient to bake the contents of the vessel on its descent.

The ship has THOUSANDS of these tiles.

The men are bound to be thinking about that. Thinking is about all these men will be able to do, for nearly everything done

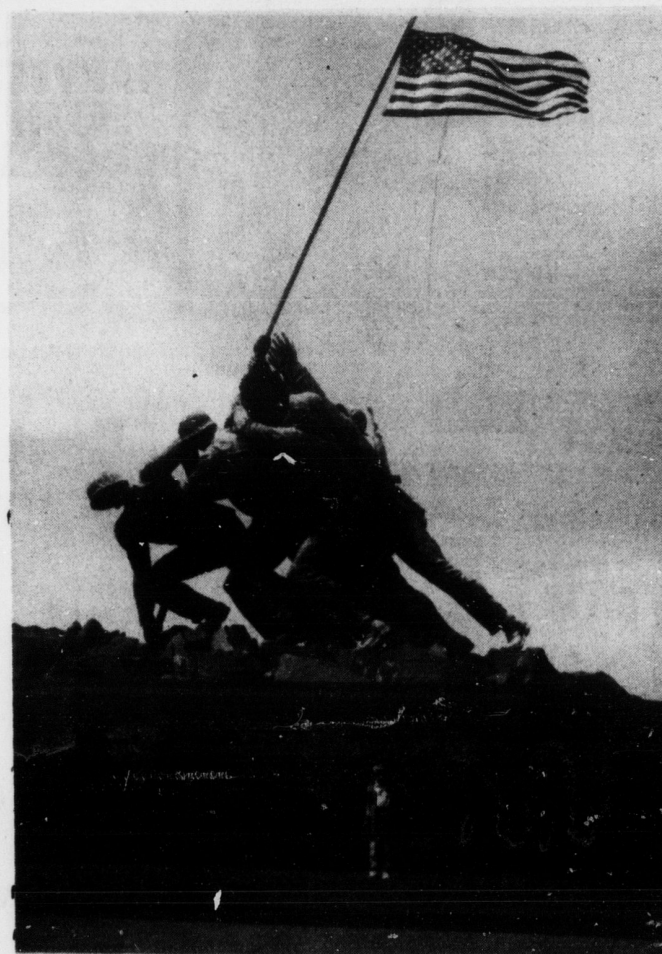
on this flight will be done by a committee of computers. Gone will be the hundreds of ground control technicians we're used to seeing. Four computers (remember the saying about "too many crooks" - how did that go?) will run the show by taking votes and passing resolutions.

The article explains this in detail. If one of the four computers disagrees with the others, it will be outvoted and shut off. If one of the remaining computers still can't agree with the other two what to do about the problem, it will be shut off too, and so on.

There will be a fifth computer which will, like the chairman of a board of commissioners, not have a vote unless the others are



WASHINGTON FIREMEN ANSWER CALL - Fran, Calvin and Jonathan Johnson's Washington, D.C. tour bus pulled up Saturday to a corner where George Washington University Hospital is located just as hook and ladder fire trucks converged on the scene. The location and details concerning the fire call were not disclosed to the public. Calvin, who is a member of the Bessemer City Fire Department, was intrigued in seeing the equipment, etc. used by Capitol firemen. Added to their interest was knowing President Ronald Reagan was hospitalized in the area. (Calvin Johnson photo)



FLAG RAISING ON IWO JIMA - When Calvin, Fran and Jonathan Johnson made a weekend tour of Washington, D.C., they visited the memorial monument depicting the raising of the United States flag on Iwo Jima in 1945 during World War II. Roy Johnson, father of Fran and Calvin and grandfather of Jonathan, was aboard the U.S.S. President and was a front-row witness to the initial raising of the flag by U.S. Marines. (Calvin Johnson photo)

Easter Service

Members of Concord United Methodist Church will start the observance of Easter Sunday at an 8 o'clock breakfast in the church dining hall.

The Easter worship service follows at 9 a.m. and Sunday School at 9:45 a.m.

There will be no 11 o'clock service.

The Rev. Harry Queen is minister.

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ORANGE JUICE

ORANGE JUICE

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FRIED CH...

GORTON...12

FRIED FIS...

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SEALTEST...

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