



## Week 5 of the Academy July 23rd - July 29th , 2001

Written by:

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**Monday:** "VANS' LEAVING!!!" Eyes open. 6:50. " @#%%&\*\*!!!! " ...Boing. Where are clothes. Glasses?... Broken. Contacts?... Lost. Office key?... Can't find 'em. Breakfast meal tickets? Who knows at this point..... Jump into van; eyes spitting fire. I think I'm going to die.

Perhaps it was a case of the Mondays. Oh wait, that was today. I was supposed to be summarizing last Monday. Last Monday was pretty much the same as this Monday, except Emily and Andy were gone and off to southern California a little early to be trained for her PI's project. I know this because Monday morning I went to visit Emily and she wasn't in her office and then I called Andy to confirm his participation in my experiment that morning:

"Hey Natcho, is Andy around? He is supposed to be in my experiment today?"

"Uh, . . . . Andy's in L.A."

"oh. oh yeah." Said I, seeing that we both forgot. Life in the Academy goes on...

**Tuesday:** This was a busy day at Ames. We spent the morning working with our PI's. From there we grabbed a quick lunch and headed to the NAI videoconference room for a lunch lecture about astrobiology and the philosophy of science from Bruce Jakosky at UC Boulder. Following the talk we headed over to the trailer conference room for a little safety training, the moral of which - phenol is bad. After this we hit the road for Lancaster. No major incidents along the road, just a lengthy drive to a small city in a flat place with very little vegetation. And so ended another day in the life of the Academy.

**Wednesday:** Wednesday we went to the NASA Dryden Flight Center and saw some very cool planes. We heard sonic booms, the X-38, (a new space ambulance), and the ultra hip X-43 painted all black and shaped like X so that goes Mach 10. Very cool thought the rest of the gang. As we saw cool planes, we also experienced some of the flattest land in the world and got to squeeze a little Astrobiology into an Aeronautics visit. Our tour guide said brine shrimp live there in that desert bed for over 100 years. Wow now if they aren't

extremophiles, I don't know what are. I guess Ames hasn't cornered the market yet on this research. ✍

We also heard great talks on managing with a moral compass, using the novel concept of a tow rope to get payloads to orbit, and design of the next generation passenger plane using the blended wing design.

That night we went to Nate and Jake's (some of the Academy's alumni) for a kick butt barbeque. There was a bouncy-thing and a tug-o-war vs. the Goddard alums. Wheel barrel races and a water balloon toss were good ice breakers to get our two Academies more familiar with one another.

After the BBQ the Academies continued the festivities back at the hotel as some used the Jacuzzi, while others hung out in Emma and Emily's room who were gracious hosts of all the Academites that night.

**Thursday:** Thursday morning many of us awoke a little dehydrated from the BBQ festivities and desert air. Emily was hardly walking as she aggravated the stress fracture in her foot, and the rest of us were examining our bruises from the bouncy thing and competitive events the night before. We left early for Pasadena and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory where we listened to lectures on a wide variety of topics, including the Cassini Mission and Martian Dust Storms. At lunch in the JPL cafeteria, a number of academy alums joined us to welcome us, chat, and network. Then we headed over to UCLA to talk with the Astrobiology folk there. We heard a couple of great lectures about Mars and hydrothermal vents. From UCLA we drove to the lovely Holiday Inn Express in Century City, where we quickly grabbed beach gear and headed to Santa Monica, and the beach club. We were pleasantly greeted with some tasty dinner courtesy of Doug's very youthful mother-in-law. We had a great evening on the beach playing on the playground, in the water and on the volleyball court.

**Friday:** Friday morning we were greeted at Scripps Oceanography Research Institute by the lifeblood of the Academy - Starbucks coffee. We sipped our precious coffee over a mind-blowing view of the ocean and somehow knew Scripps was a winner. Sitting in a lecture room with floor-to-ceiling windows of seascape, we tried desperately to listen to geo-biological lectures on the origins of life on earth. That afternoon we went to USCD and saw that some high school students have opportunities we could only dream of. These participants get to analyze satellite pictures anywhere in the world with EarthKam, and be part of a real life NASA mission. We all wished we could be that age again.

**Saturday:** Saturday started with vigor (ahem!) for many of the Ames crew in anticipation of their coming TV appearance. Others headed off to Disneyland or to the beach in Santa Monica. After a while, most of the Ames folk, and a couple of Goddard, left for Burbank to watch a taping of THE FEUD. We welcomed the

air-conditioned room (Louis is a big man remember) after waiting in the hot line. The taping flew by amazingly quickly, but was filled with various sorts of entertainment. The comedian responsible for engaging the crowd was amused by our NASA group and especially the contingent from Harvard. We were involved in various episodes of dancing and sound effects and many received t-shirts for their troubles. Following Family Feud we drove to Santa Monica and met up with Natcho and the gang there. At this point there was food and shopping and other LA experiences. The evening activities were varied but many checked out the LA bar scene on Sunset Blvd, though only a Goddard student braved riding the mechanical bull.

**Sunday:** Sunday morning came too quickly, particularly for those that had enjoyed the best LA had to offer the previous night. The day was spent in the vans. We took some wrong turns, ate some Anderson's pea soup, got caught in the Bay area traffic, and the bullet became a rough place to be. We were all a little sleepy when we got home. There was some pool action a little laundry to be done. Being back at Stanford brings some comforts of our temporary home, but also the unfortunate prospect of work that needs to be done.