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# Yonkers-born astronaut to spend six months on space station

BY ERNIE GARCIA • [ELGARCIA@LOHUD.COM](mailto:ELGARCIA@LOHUD.COM) • JANUARY 31, 2011

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By most people's yardsticks, two weeks is a long time for a trip — except on a space shuttle when there's work to be done.

"It almost seems like a dream because it happens so fast," said Ron Garan Jr., a Yonkers-born astronaut who soon will spend an even longer stretch — six months — on the International Space Station. His journey is expected to start March 29, when he blasts off from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.

Garan made his first trip to the space station aboard the Space Shuttle Discovery in June 2008 to help install the Kibo Japanese Experiment Module. His second, longer visit via the Soyuz TMA-21 will give the Roosevelt High School graduate more time to reflect.

"This mission will allow me to process the experience as it's happening," said Garan, 49, a Texas resident. "We will not be visitors to space. We will be residents of space."

Amid experiments on the human body, combustion research and materials science, Garan and his fellow astronauts will hold educational broadcasts for students on Earth. He also will have the honor of being part of the mission that commemorates the 50th anniversary of human space flight.

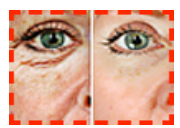
Besides the names of Garan and the other crew members, the space station's mission patch number 28 includes the names of Alan Shepard and Yuri Gagarin, the Russian cosmonaut who made the first human space flight April 12, 1961.



Ron Garan Sr. stands by a wall of clippings and photos of his son, Ron Jr., a NASA astronaut, in Yonkers. Ron Garan Jr. will launch March 29 aboard a rocket leaving Baikonur, Kazakhstan, headed to the International Space Station. Garan Sr. plans to have regular chats with his son via the Internet video-calling program Skype while his son is in space. (Xavier Mascareñas/The Journal News Xavier Mascareñ)



Astronaut Ron Garan



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"Fifty years ago on April 12 we as a species became different," Garan said during a NASA news conference Wednesday. "We were no longer confined to the Earth. It was a pivotal moment."

The arcane science experiments in which Garan will participate may not be easily understood by people on Earth, but Garan insisted that they are critical.

"The science conducted on board is amazing and it's really going to help out people in everyday life," Garan said, citing car engines as an example of an industry that can benefit from space station research. "If we're able to make a combustion reaction even one percent more efficient, it will have a tremendous impact."

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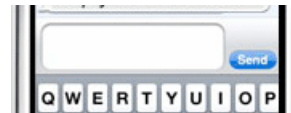
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