

Back from space

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Spree Hilliard/Lake Sun Camdenton students Brittany Bolz and Garrett Johnson ask astronaut Mike Hopkins about his experiences during a conference call Thursday morning.

Lake Sun Reporter

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Just days after returning from space, lake area native and astronaut Michael Hopkins is sharing how he is adapting to being back on Earth after spending months in space.

"It's been interesting. Because of the first time flying, I didn't know what coming back to Earth was going to be like and overall it's gone really well. I was a little bit surprised at how long it took to adapt," Hopkins told the Lake Sun via a conference call early on Thursday morning. "You hear people talk about sea legs when they come back from being on a boat for a long time and they rock. There was definitely a little bit of that going on. It probably took 24-48 hours for those feelings to go away. I'd lean over the sink to shave and I'd feel like I was going to fall right into the faucet. That has taken a little bit of adaptation but overall I feel really good."

Hopkins was on the International Space Station for a total of 166 days. He launched into space on Sept. 26, 2013 and spent months on the International Space Station. Hopkins, along with Expedition 38 Commander Oleg Kotov and Flight Engineer Sergey Ryazanskiy of the Russian Federal Space Agency (Roscosmos), undocked their Soyuz spacecraft from the station on March 10 and headed for a landing in Kazakhstan, southeast of Dzhezkazgan at 1 on March 11 local time in Dzhezkazgan.

When asked what he was most looking forward to when he returned home, he quickly said, "Seeing my family. That certainly has been the hardest part being away from them. My wife did an absolutely incredible job getting the boys where they needed to be and just running around like a crazy woman. It's been great to be back and be with them."

Many lake-area residents have been keeping up with Hopkins while he has been on his adventure in space. Students in the lake area, including those from his alma mater School of the Osage and two students from Camdenton R-III, have had the opportunity to visit with Hopkins about his experiences.

Osage students skyped with Hopkins while he was still in space while two Camdenton LASER 3284 team members spoke to him during a conference call on Thursday morning.

LASER 3284 President Garrett Johnson asked Hopkins what he felt like he was not prepared for even though he goes through extensive training. Hopkins told the CHS senior, "The one thing, as a first time flyer that I was not prepared for was micro gravity was actually going to feel like — so what it would feel like to float. When I first got to space, it was kind of interesting, I felt like I was falling the whole time. It probably took 18-24 hours before that went away. Then I would say within a couple of weeks or so before I stopped thinking in 'up and down.' There really isn't an up and down up there. So that took a little bit to adjust to as well."

Page 2 of 2 - Another LASER 3284 team member, Brittany Bolz, asked Hopkins about his education and how it helped him get to where he is today. Hopkins told her about his academic background and how he continued to learn during his career in the Air Force.

When the junior Safety Captain asked Hopkins what space was like he answered, "I don't know how to describe it either and I wish I did. I wish I could find the right words to describe what it's like. You definitely feel the largeness of space when you step outside the station."

Hopkins is a native from the Richland area and graduated from School of the Osage. He currently lives in Houston, Texas with his wife and two sons.