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00:00:01,460 --> 00:00:05,820

NARRATOR: Even astronauts need a place to stay before they rocket into space.

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00:00:05,820 --> 00:00:09,560

For the crews of the space shuttle, launching from Kennedy Space Center in Florida,

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00:00:09,560 --> 00:00:12,980

that place was the astronaut crew quarters, a set of bedrooms,

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00:00:12,980 --> 00:00:18,900

offices and facilities built into the center's Operations and Checkout Building.

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00:00:18,900 --> 00:00:23,930

Resembling a college dorm, the crew quarters doesn't scream technology and space

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00:00:23,930 --> 00:00:27,180

as much as it whispers comfort and familiarity.

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00:00:27,180 --> 00:00:30,580

And that's the idea, give the astronauts a place to relax,

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00:00:30,580 --> 00:00:34,010

eat and sleep before they go to work in space on missions that will mark

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00:00:34,010 --> 00:00:38,150

some of the most taxing times in their lives.

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00:00:38,150 --> 00:00:39,960

Bob Cabana, KSC Administrator & Former Astronaut: My first impression when I arrived was, wow,

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00:00:39,960 --> 00:00:44,690

I'm in astronaut crew quarters. I mean, you walk in, it was before it had been remodeled,

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00:00:44,690 --> 00:00:49,290

on my first flight, and these are the rooms that the Apollo astronauts stayed in.

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00:00:49,290 --> 00:00:52,690

There's nothing fancy about it, it's not going to the Ritz Carlton,

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00:00:52,690 --> 00:01:00,440

it wasn't even a Motel 6, but it was astronaut crew quarters and that was really special.

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00:01:00,440 --> 00:01:03,710

NARRATOR: Gemini astronauts were the first to stay in the crew quarters.

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00:01:03,710 --> 00:01:07,550

All the Apollo astronauts slept here before going to the moon.

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00:01:07,550 --> 00:01:13,020

The facility grew when the space shuttles began taking more and more people into space at a time.

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00:01:13,020 --> 00:01:20,820

The aura of crew quarters grew with each landing and each new spaceflight achievement, even among the ast

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00:01:20,820 --> 00:01:24,350

A couple of the rooms were seen publicly on launch day, but most of it

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00:01:24,350 --> 00:01:28,450

remained a mystery until the shuttle's retirement.

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00:01:28,450 --> 00:01:32,700

Kennedy Space Center Director Bob Cabana, a former astronaut who spent many nights in

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00:01:32,700 --> 00:01:37,200

crew quarters preparing for his missions or helping others get ready for theirs,

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00:01:37,200 --> 00:01:40,550

showed off some of the lesser-known areas of the facility,

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00:01:40,550 --> 00:01:45,620

along with the spots that are familiar to space program enthusiasts.

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00:01:45,620 --> 00:01:50,710

Bob Cabana: The dining room, what you guys probably remember seeing all the time is the

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00:01:50,710 --> 00:01:56,190

crew sitting at the table and they're all smiling and everybody's up,

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00:01:56,190 --> 00:02:01,440

ready for launch and they're in their crew shirts and they take general shots of

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00:02:01,440 --> 00:02:06,200

everybody and then they move off and the crew actually sits down and eats.

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00:02:06,200 --> 00:02:10,060

NARRATOR: The cooks at crew quarters have to accommodate a range of tastes,

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00:02:10,060 --> 00:02:13,260

keeping in mind that astronauts are often concerned about how their

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00:02:13,260 --> 00:02:16,060

stomachs will behave once they get into weightlessness.

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00:02:16,060 --> 00:02:17,470

Bob Cabana: I'll never forget my first flight.

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00:02:17,470 --> 00:02:21,100

We're sitting around the table and one of my crewmembers,

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00:02:21,100 --> 00:02:27,230

it's his first flight and after the cameras all left,

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00:02:27,230 --> 00:02:30,940

he's got steak and eggs and hash browns and coffee and

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00:02:30,940 --> 00:02:37,670

He's pouring hot sauce on and my commander looks over and goes, "Ah, going for color and distance, I see."

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00:02:37,670 --> 00:02:44,050

NARRATOR: Like the rest of the facilities in crew quarters, the bedrooms are not extravagant, but they work.

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00:02:44,050 --> 00:02:45,870

Bob Cabana: You know, it's just a very small room.

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00:02:45,870 --> 00:02:52,800

You've got a desk, a bed and a shower and a toilet in the bathroom.

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00:02:52,800 --> 00:02:56,140

Very sparse, but very functional. It's very quiet.

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00:02:56,140 --> 00:03:00,560

It's an elevated floor back here with sound insulation underneath,

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00:03:00,560 --> 00:03:08,880

sound insulation up above and so crews that are on weird schedules can actually come in here and get some s

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00:03:08,880 --> 00:03:13,960

NARRATOR: But a quiet room doesn't always do the trick when a launch is waiting the next day.

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00:03:13,960 --> 00:03:17,690

Bob Cabana: ?it's not anxious, it's just, you want to get off and go do it.

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00:03:17,690 --> 00:03:19,290

In fact, one of the hardest things,

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00:03:19,290 --> 00:03:22,550

some of the folks really like coming down to crew quarters and just relaxing a little bit before

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00:03:22,550 --> 00:03:27,310

they fly and I came down and it was like, oh, I want to launch. We're here,

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00:03:27,310 --> 00:03:32,070

let's launch tomorrow. You know, but you can't do that right away.

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00:03:32,070 --> 00:03:35,210

NARRATOR: A new conference room was built to accommodate the larger crews of

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00:03:35,210 --> 00:03:39,500

the shuttle and International Space Station, including foreign crew members.

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00:03:39,500 --> 00:03:42,700

Bob Cabana: This is where they go over all the flight data file,

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00:03:42,700 --> 00:03:46,850

get any changes, updates, they get the weather briefing on the screens here.

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00:03:46,850 --> 00:03:53,230

It's a place to come and relax. We have simulators that simulate robotic arm operations for

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00:03:53,230 --> 00:03:59,520

both shuttle and station as well as a simulator that lets you actually land the

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00:03:59,520 --> 00:04:05,210

space shuttle and it's a pretty good simulation.

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00:04:05,210 --> 00:04:09,970

NARRATOR: Space is a lousy place to get sick. So specially trained doctors and nurses,

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00:04:09,970 --> 00:04:15,750

along with exam rooms, are on hand to make sure everyone stays well before heading into orbit.

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00:04:15,750 --> 00:04:19,340

Bob Cabana: Pre- and post-launch there are examinations that have to be done,

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00:04:19,340 --> 00:04:22,630

you got to go see the doc, if anybody got sick while they were in crew quarters

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00:04:22,630 --> 00:04:25,280

they had to go see the flight doc and just make sure.

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00:04:25,280 --> 00:04:27,980

It's those last-minute checks that everything's OK and it's just

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00:04:27,980 --> 00:04:34,680

the standard exam rooms and a private place to meet with the doctor.

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00:04:34,680 --> 00:04:38,490

NARRATOR: A staff is on hand to take care of all the aspects of an astronaut

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00:04:38,490 --> 00:04:41,870
crew's day, from housekeeping to scheduling.

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00:04:41,870 --> 00:04:44,820
Bob Cabana: The people down here are family. They get to know you.

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00:04:44,820 --> 00:04:48,490
The folks that run crew quarters, they keep it clean, they cook for you.

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00:04:48,490 --> 00:04:54,300
I mean, they are friends that I've made for life and have bonded with from my time down here.

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00:04:54,300 --> 00:04:57,530
NARRATOR: As much as the crew quarters is set up to mirror everyday life,

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00:04:57,530 --> 00:05:02,490
there are rooms that are meant solely for the unique demands of going into space.

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00:05:02,490 --> 00:05:07,050
Bob Cabana: All right, of course, you guys have seen this on TV hundreds of times.

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00:05:07,050 --> 00:05:12,670
This is the suit room, where the crew gets suited up to actually go fly in space.

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00:05:12,670 --> 00:05:17,910
You're tight with the suit techs that are working with you and it's that last,

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00:05:17,910 --> 00:05:23,140
"Hey, we're getting ready to go fly in space. It's really, it's a big deal, it's kind of neat.

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00:05:23,140 --> 00:05:26,470
NARRATOR: There's also a launch day tradition that plays out in this room.

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00:05:26,470 --> 00:05:30,580
Bob Cabana: Probably the biggest tradition is the game Fargo Possum.

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00:05:30,580 --> 00:05:35,370

Fargo Possum is low-handed poker and the rule is you can't leave crew quarters

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00:05:35,370 --> 00:05:41,140

and go launch until the commander wins the hand, has the lowest hand, and that sometimes takes awhile.

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00:05:41,140 --> 00:05:44,440

STS-135 Commander Chris Ferguson: All right! Now we can fly!

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00:05:44,440 --> 00:05:48,210

NARRATOR: Now suited for space, and following several days at crew quarters,

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00:05:48,210 --> 00:05:51,980

the astronauts get to take a walk through the corridor to the elevator that

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00:05:51,980 --> 00:05:56,730

will take them to the waiting Astrovan and out to the launch pad.

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00:05:56,730 --> 00:06:01,430

Cabana served as the Flight Operations Director during a number of shuttle missions,

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00:06:01,430 --> 00:06:05,050

watching over the astronauts as they prepared to head into orbit.

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00:06:05,050 --> 00:06:10,210

His advice to fliers was pretty simple: Let it sink in.

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00:06:10,210 --> 00:06:14,650

Bob Cabana: Mostly what I tell first-time fliers is, when you get ready,

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00:06:14,650 --> 00:06:20,080

and you're up in space and you have a free minute, make a memory.

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00:06:20,080 --> 00:06:23,940

Stick your nose up to a window and make a memory because the eyes

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00:06:23,940 --> 00:06:27,380

God gave you are so much better than any camera.