

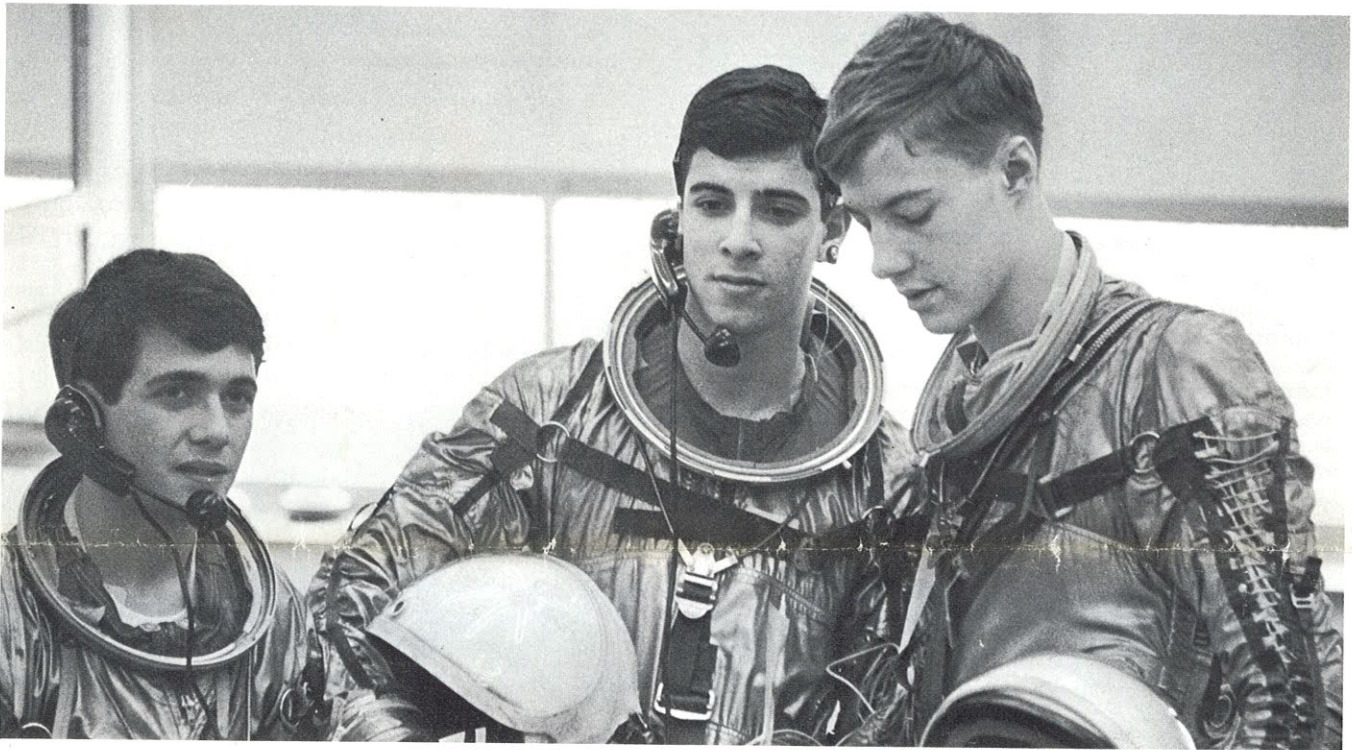
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NORTHEAST HIGH . . . A SPACE MAGNET



Pilot Lewis Hirsch, command pilot Warren Kurnick and engineer Donald Nibouar after five days in 'orbit'.

If NASA isn't careful, a group of young Philadelphia high school students may reach the moon first — on paper, anyway. Philadelphia's Northeast High School has been designated as a Magnet school by the Federal Government, based largely on the school's unusual extracurricular activity known as Project SPARC, short for Space Research Capsule. Project SPARC consists of a 12½ foot capsule, patterned after the Apollo spacecraft; a complete mission control center; and more than 60 hard-working students, some of whom have already been "in orbit."

Magnet schools are those schools that specialize in a particular field of study such as business, science, or the arts. As Magnet schools, they are eligible for federal funds to expand their programs. Students in a given metropolitan area may attend a Magnet school to specialize in a field for which they have unusual aptitude or interest. Northeast High School will emphasize the aerospace sciences, including mathematics, chemistry, physics, biology, and, after school, Project SPARC.

The equipment for the project was designed entirely by the students, under the direction of its founder, physics teacher Robert Montgomery, Jr. Mr. Montgomery has traveled extensively in Europe, and has done research on the young people of sixteen countries. He organized Project SPARC to see if it was possible to perform original research at the high school level.

The most recent project test consisted of a five-day, simulated earth-orbital flight by three "astronauts" in a completely sealed capsule. The capsule contained its own oxygen-replenishment system, flight controls, and refrigerated food-storage compartment.

Months of preparation went into the five-day test. The astronauts followed a strict routine of flight experiments, exercise, eating, and sleeping.



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