

# High schoolers' experiment lost again on launch failure

June 29 2015, by Seth Borenstein

---



In this photo provided by Kellye Voigt, from left, Gabe Voigt, Joe Garvey and Rachel Lindbergh pose for a photo outside the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex in Cape Canaveral, Fla., Sunday, June 28, 2015. The students had a science experiment aboard a SpaceX rocket to the International Space Station that broke apart shortly after liftoff. It was the second time they had lost their experiment in a rocket failure. (Kellye Voigt via AP)

Three high school students were going to get the science lesson of a lifetime by flying their experiment in space.

Instead they got a life lesson about loss, but more importantly about determination, as they watched their experiment get wiped out for the second straight time by a rocket failure on Sunday.

The [students](#) from North Charleston, South Carolina, had come up with an intricate electronics circuitry experiment. It was supposed to fly last October to the International Space Station on an Antares rocket out of Wallops Island, Virginia.

But it blew up as they watched from only 1.7 miles away. Joe Garvey was knocked over by the blast coming off the launch pad. Rachel Lindbergh felt the heat on her face.

Eight months passed. Every other student team got to fly their experiments again, but finally Sunday was the turn for Joe, Rachel and Gabe Voigt, and their teacher, Gabe's mother, Kellye.

They drove down to Cape Canaveral, Florida, and joked about their luck. But Rachel, the eldest of the three students and a physics major headed to the University of Chicago, doesn't talk about luck. She talks about independent events and variables.

Then the SpaceX rocket launched Sunday carrying their experiment. It soared into the sky. High fives were exchanged. They started heading back for lunch.

Then their phones started buzzing with text messages, condolences. Rachel's was from her grandmother.



The SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket and Dragon spacecraft lifts off from Space Launch Complex 40 at the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Cape Canaveral, Fla., Sunday, June 28, 2015. The rocket carrying supplies to the International Space Station broke apart shortly after liftoff. (AP Photo/John Raoux)

"We thought grandma must have been watching the wrong channel," Rachel recalled from her hotel.

She wasn't. The rocket broke apart. Their experiment was lost again.

This one didn't hit as hard or hurt as much, maybe because they really didn't see it, Joe said. That's [rocket](#) science. Failure happens, Rachel said.

"There's a lot of life lessons to take from this too," Gabe said. "If something happens, that doesn't mean it's the end of that."

After their first launch, the students improved the experiment to include circuitry from the [space](#) shuttle Endeavour, which was better than what they tried at first. Next time, they'll do even better, the three students vowed.

Joe said all he wants to do is get this done before he graduates in two years—he and Gabe will be juniors in the fall.

Within 10 minutes, teacher Voigt got a call from their mentors at NASA's Goddard Space Center. They're going to get more space shuttle circuitry to fly again.



The SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket and Dragon spacecraft breaks apart shortly after liftoff at the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Cape Canaveral, Fla., Sunday, June 28, 2015. The rocket was carrying supplies to the International Space Station. (AP Photo/John Raoux)

Rachel and Joe will be at a space conference next week in Boston to talk about their experiment.

"Disappointing, sure," Rachel said. "You can't let things stop you."



The SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket and Dragon spacecraft lifts off from Space Launch Complex 40 at the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Cape Canaveral, Fla., Sunday, June 28, 2015. The rocket carrying supplies to the International Space Station broke apart shortly after liftoff. (AP Photo/John Raoux)

**More information:** The students' experiment:  
[tinwhiskies.weebly.com/](http://tinwhiskies.weebly.com/)

© 2015 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: High schoolers' experiment lost again on launch failure (2015, June 29) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-06-high-schoolers-lost-failure.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.