



0. CHALLENGER'S AFTERMATH - Story Preface

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Challenger's crew as they appeared on January 9, 1986 during a countdown-training break. Left to right are: Teacher-in-Space payload specialist Sharon Christa McAuliffe; payload specialist Gregory Jarvis; and astronauts Judith A. Resnik, mission specialist; Francis R. (Dick) Scobee, mission commander; Ronald E. McNair, mission specialist; Mike J. Smith, pilot; and Ellison S. Onizuka, mission specialist. Click on the public-domain NASA image for a full-page view.

When the crew families learned what their loved ones had never learned - that Morton Thiokol and NASA both knew about the O-ring design defect - lawsuits were filed. All the cases were settled before the shuttle flew again, with redesigned Solid Rocket Booster joints, in 1988.

The families have moved on, doing the best they can to privately cope with a public disaster that broke the hearts of their fellow citizens. As a memorial to the lost astronauts, Challenger Learning Centers now help hundreds of thousands of students every year to learn real-life challenges and consider careers in science.

In the years since America's Space Transportation Systems - more commonly known as the "space shuttles" - have resumed flights, there were no further disasters until February 1, 2003. Sixteen minutes before it was due to land at the Kennedy Space Station, *Columbia* had a catastrophic failure. All seven members of the crew, plus the ship, were lost.

Despite the disastrous loss of Columbia, America's space-shuttle program continued until *Atlantis* landed for the last time on July 21, 2011. The program had lasted thirty years.

Space exploration, however, continues. Stunning pictures from Jupiter and other planets amaze scientists and the public alike. The Hubble space telescope, initially suffering from a design flaw, was repaired and regularly transmits incredible data. Magnificent pictures of vast assemblies of stars are only one small example of its tremendous contribution to the study of space.

But the example of the lost astronauts, who gave everything they had, is incomparable. And the words of Dr. Feynmann, concluding his observations on the *Challenger* disaster, must never be forgotten:

For a successful technology, reality must take precedence over public relations, for nature cannot be fooled.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/CHALLENGER-S-AFTERMATH-Challenger-Disaster>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/CHALLENGER-S-AFTERMATH-Challenger-Disaster>

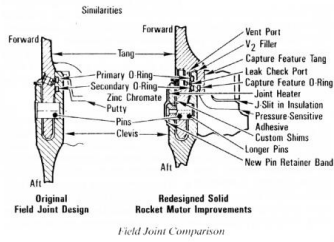


Challenger Crew - Lost on January 28, 1986

Image online via NASA. Public Domain.

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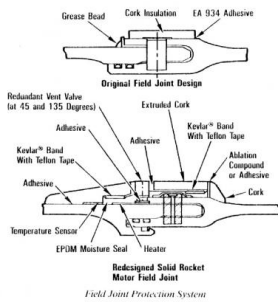
Redesigned Field Joints - Shuttle Solid Rocket Motor

Image and quoted passages from NASA's 1988 *NSTS Shuttle Reference Manual*. Online, courtesy NASA.

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Field Joint Comparison

Image online, courtesy NASA. See NASA's 1988 *NSTS Shuttle Reference Manual* for additional information on the shuttle's redesign after *Challenger's* explosion and the failure of mission STS 51-L.

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Challenger Explosion - "Nature Cannot be Fooled"

Clip from *Challenger: The Untold Story*, online courtesy the [National Geographic](http://www.nationalgeographic.com) channel at YouTube. Copyright, National Geographic, all rights reserved. Clip provided here as fair use for educational purposes and to acquaint new viewers with the program.

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