



**0. Columbia Space Shuttle Explosion - Story Preface**

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The Launch of STS-1, Space Shuttle Columbia. Photo online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

*It's gone.  
There are no survivors.*

President George W. Bush  
February 1, 2003

Ronald Reagan, a survivor of John Hinkley's bullet, studied the television screen as *Columbia* - America's first shuttle - blasted into space. It was April 12, 1981. The President had been shot two weeks before (on March 30, 1981 - barely two months after taking office) and was recovering in the Lincoln Bedroom of the White House.

In 2001, as Mr. Reagan battled the debilitating effects of Alzheimer's Disease, NASA celebrated the 20th anniversary of that historic first flight. Although the oldest shuttle in the fleet, *Columbia* (OV-102) had been refitted. She would soon be ready for another mission - STS 107 - which was delayed until January 16, 2003.

This time, however the shuttle would fly without a robotic arm onboard. This time, there would be no space walks. This time, the mission was completely dedicated to scientific experiments.

And this time, an American Space Transportation System would fail to successfully re-enter Earth's atmosphere.

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

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Columbia-Space-Shuttle-Explosion>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Columbia-Space-Shuttle-Explosion>

**Media Stream**



President Reagan is Shot

U.S. National Archives.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/President-Reagan-is-Shot>



### Reagan Recovering at George Washington Hospital

U.S. National Archives.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Reagan-Recovering-at-George-Washington-Hospital>



### Lift-off of STS-1 - The First Shuttle Flight

Image, NASA.

Information and quote, NASA's Mission-Pages web site.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Lift-off-of-STS-1-The-First-Shuttle-Flight>



### Columbia Space Shuttle Explosion

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### Ronald Reagan - First Inaugural Address

President Reagan's Inaugural Address, on 20 January 1981, online courtesy C-SPAN.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Ronald-Reagan-First-Inaugural-Address>



### Attempted Assassination of President Reagan - Remembering Jim Brady

Historical news footage, online courtesy ABC.

View this asset at:

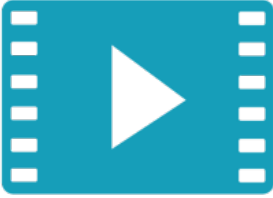
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Attempted-Assassination-of-President-Reagan-Remembering-Jim-Brady>



### Ronald Reagan - Describes Attempted Assassination

Video clip, courtesy Larry King Live, CNN, and YouTube.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Ronald-Reagan-Describes-Attempted-Assassination>



### First Shuttle Launch - Columbia, STS-1

Video of STS-1, launch of the shuttle *Columbia*, online courtesy NASA.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/First-Shuttle-Launch-Columbia-STS-1>



### First Shuttle Landing - STS-1

NASA video of STS-1 landing, online courtesy NASA.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/First-Shuttle-Landing-STS-1>