

AMERICAN TEACHER TO BE FIRST IN
"CITIZEN FOR SPACE" PROGRAM

"The first citizen-participant to fly in the Space Shuttle will be 'one of America's finest,' a school-teacher" were the words of President Reagan on August 27, 1984. At a ceremony honoring students and teachers, Mr. Reagan said as of August 27 he is directly NASA to pick a crew member from among more than two million teachers in the nation's grade schools and high schools.

Before and after that event, non-astronauts have flown on Shuttle but they have been scientists, individuals representing a company with a payload being carried on a particular flight, a representative of a foreign country, and in one case, an "almost civilian"...Senator Jake Garn. But being a politician with oversight over the NASA budget eliminated him from being a "non-partisan civilian."

On December 1, 1984 the hunt began. That was the opening day for applications from teachers who wished to apply for that "first American citizen in space." On February 1, 1985 the application period ended with 11,416 teachers applying. Then on April 5, 1985 NASA announced that the teacher chosen to be the first American citizen in space would fly on the Shuttle mission scheduled for January 22, 1986.

On July 1, 1985 NASA announced the 10 finalists for the position and these ten were introduced to the public. During the week of July 8, 1985 all 10 finalists gathered at the Johnson Space Center to be "poked, prodded, probed and pushed into a peculiar package." They were getting a taste of the training and physical exams that the astronauts go through. And on July 9, all 10 met face to face with a crowd of members of the press. They faced a battery of reporters just like the astronauts have to do; a public ritual that some astronauts say is the most nerve-wracking part of their job.

THE BIG DAY...JULY 19, 1985...Sharon Christa McAuliffe, a New Hampshire social studies teacher, was chosen as the first private citizen bound for spaceflight, as announced by Vice President George Bush. She will join five NASA astronauts on a six-day flight of the Challenger set to launch on January 22, 1986. Barbara Morgan, 33, a second-grade teacher in McCall, Idaho, was named as the backup for McAuliffe. The two will come to the Johnson Space Center in September 1985 for about 100 hours of training in how to live and work in space.

THIS MOST IMPORTANT EVENT COMMEMORATED BY SPACE COVERS BY SCCS

Over the years many space collectors have depended on SCCS to meet their cover needs in regards to the important space events, and this is certainly a highlight in that program. We have a set of eight covers, each with their individual cachet and each correctly postmarked on appropriate day with the Houston Mailer's Permit Postmark hand cancel. There is one cover for each of the following days: Aug 27, 1984, Dec 1, 1984, Feb 1, 1985, Apr 5, 1985, Jul 1, 1985, Jul 9, 1985 and two for Jul 19. (The July 19 set of 2 will contain one cover each for McAuliffe and Morgan). Descriptions of each of these eight covers will be found in the first part of this information sheet. And with each order, we will send a completed background information, in detail, for all of these events. And we will keep you posted on any more that come up in this "First Private Citizen in Shuttle" series. Start now, and you will not be disappointed.