



CHALLENGER EXPLODES...CREW OF 7 KILLED...SPACE SHUTTLE MISSION 51-L Jan 28, 1986

Houston Mission Control announced..."We have a malfunction, the vehicle has exploded." Space shuttle Challenger, on its tenth mission, had achieved liftoff at 11:38 a.m. EST and began climbing away from the launch pad, but less than 72 seconds later, there began a rapid sequence of events that lasted just more than one more second. Within only milliseconds, the explosive burning of liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen combined into an eruption of massive proportions.

Killed instantly were Francis R. Scobee, commander; Michael J. Smith, pilot; mission specialists Judith A. Resnik, Ellison Onizuka, and Ronald E. McNair; payload specialist Gregory Jarvis, and Christa McAuliffe, space flight participant.

It is doubtful that ever was there a more representative American spaceflight crew than this one for mission 51-L. It was composed of a school-teacher, a laser expert, two fighter pilots, and one member with a Ph.D. from MIT. One was a night school graduate. There was a Japanese-American, a Jew, a black, and Yankees and Southerners. Men and Women, fathers and a mother. These seven Americans, and explorers of space, came to Houston, volunteering to be members of the team aboard mission 51-L.

These seven who died knew and accepted the risks that come with exploring new frontiers. These seven were from among the best that our country can muster.

Challenger and its crew were travelling at Mach 1.92, at an altitude of 46,000 feet. above the Atlantic Ocean. The explosion was 20 miles off Florida at an altitude of almost nine miles. The force of the explosion produced a forward momentum which pushed debris a further 11 miles higher, shredding it into minute pieces.

The debris fell for 60 minutes after the explosion and hampered recovery efforts. But Search and Rescue teams began a "long painstaking recovery of debris from the ocean and beaches around the Cape." The process lasted about six months.

PRESIDENT REAGAN SPEAKS TO THE NATION

President Ronald Reagan, in his speech to the nation late in the afternoon of January 28, 1986, said it best in his moving tribute to the crew of Challenger. "The future does not belong to the fainthearted. It belongs to the brave. The Challenger crew was pulling us into the future, and we'll continue to follow them. I've always had great faith in and respect for our space program. And what happened today does nothing to diminish it."

He continued, "We don't keep secrets and cover things up. We do it all up front and in public. That's the way freedom is, and we wouldn't change it for a minute. We'll continue our quest in space. There will be more shuttle flights and more shuttle crews, and yes, more volunteers, more civilians, more teachers in space."

President Reagan then added, "Nothing ends here. Our hopes and our journeys continue." THE 51-L CREW AND HOW IT CAME INTO BEING

Originally chosen as the crew were five members. These were Francis R. Scobee, commander; Michael J. Smith, pilot; and mission specialists Judith A. Resnik, Ellison Onizuka, and Ronald E. McNair.

Gregory Jarvis had originally been chosen for an earlier flight but was "bumped" when NASA had Senator Jake Garn fly on his original mission. He was then slated to fly on mission 61-C but his place was taken by Rep. Bill Nelson. In October, 1985 Jarvis was then added to Challenger's 51-L crew.

Christa McAuliffe was selected on July 19, 1985 as the first "Private Citizen in Space" and added to the 51-L crew on that date.

SCCS COVERS FOR 51-L

Space City Cover Society, since 1967, had been noted for coverage of many space events that other cover producers did not furnish. Challenger's 51-L mission was no exception. The covers for the Kennedy Space Center launch were already at KSC. Also, the covers for the launch cancel for Houston were at the Houston post office. With the explosion of Challenger, calls were made to both post offices to cancel the SCCS covers with the January 28 a.m. cancel.

In Houston, a crew of several collectors was put together to put stamps on other covers for different events that would pertain to 51-L. Stamps of all kinds were spread out and sorted to make up the 22¢ rate. That is the reason that some SCCS covers contain the 22¢ flag stamp and others contain different stamps to make up the 22¢ rate. In addition to the cancels from Houston (machine cancel) and KSC machine cancel, SCCS also produced covers with the Mailer's Postmark Permit hand cancel. SCCS was authorized to use Permit #1 by the main Houston post office on 7-3-1972.



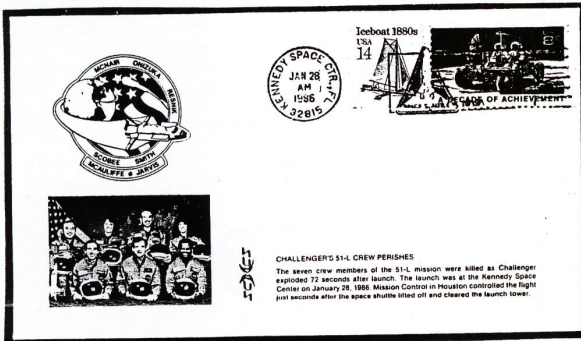
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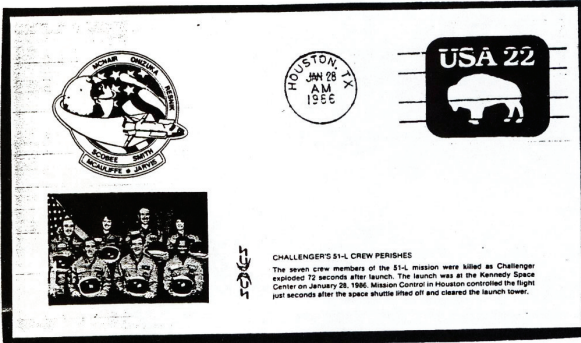
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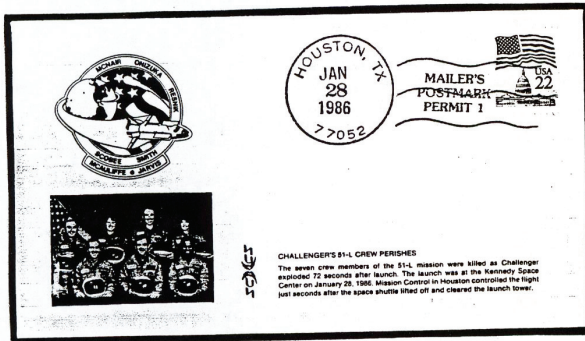
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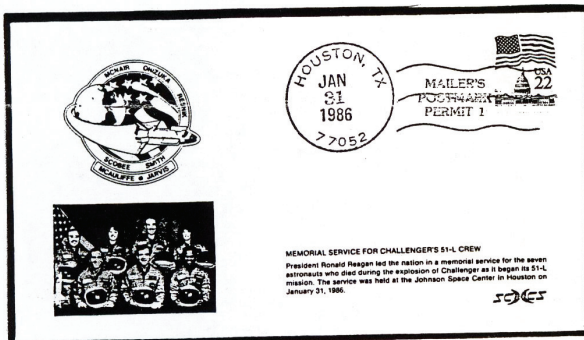
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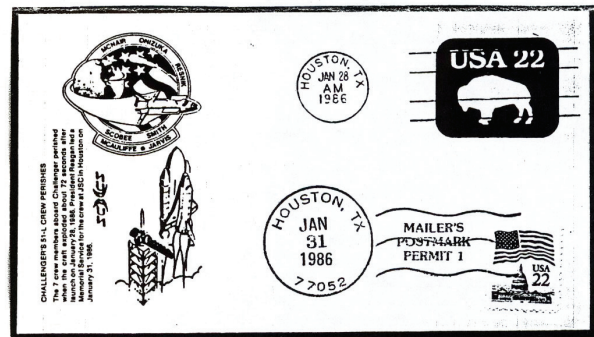
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Jan 28, 1986 Challenger Lost
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#51-L-6

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