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Challenger

by Atilla Akgun

On Tuesday, January 28, 1986, the United States space effort suffered a severe setback, the loss of seven astronauts and the space shuttle Challenger. This incident was the worst manned space disaster in history.

About one and a half minutes after a perfect liftoff, the Challenger exploded. Millions of people nationwide, many of them children, saw the liftoff and ensuing catastrophe broadcast live.

There is really no need to give the details about the explosion itself, since almost every American has seen it and because no one is really sure what happened. However, there are many questions that need to be answered in the aftermath of this national tragedy.

First of all, why? After twenty-four successful launches, what caused this one to go wrong? There are many theories, including a massive failure of the external fuel tank, a malfunction of one (or more) of the shuttle's three main engines, and a failure of one of the SRBs (Solid Rocket Boosters). These are just a few of the proposed theories. The one that seems most likely is a failure of an SRB. It appears that a seam in one of the Solid Rocket Boosters was not completely sealed. During the flight, the solid fuel caught fire at the opening and quickly grew. The flame worked as a blowtorch and burned through the external fuel tank. This caused the hydrogen and oxygen to burn and then explode.

Another question being asked regards the fate of the manned space program. The president has indicated that after a thorough investigation, the shuttle program will continue.

The question being asked the most is why the big deal? Many more U.S. Service men (225 of them) were killed just before Christmas, so what makes the death of seven astronauts so much worse?

Simply, nothing. Nothing makes their deaths worse. All death is tragic and should be dealt with in that light. Death should not be glorified, but it shouldn't be brushed off, either.

I am amazed at how quickly we Americans forget. We seem to hop from one tragedy to the next. This shouldn't be. With death comes suffering, grief, and sorrow, and after death comes rebuilding and rebirth, new life, new hopes, and the continuation of old dreams.

We musn't let those seven astronauts give their lives for nothing. We must press on, answer old questions, and discover new

ones with new answers. That is the unwritten law of the land.

Shuttle facts:

1. The shuttle is valued at \$1.2 billion.
2. Twenty-four successful missions were flown before the Challenger disaster.
3. The program has been plagued with structural and technical problems.
4. The accident occurred nineteen years and one day after the death of Grizom, White, and Chaffe, in a fire aboard the Apollo I.
5. At launch there are four main parts to the shuttle: the spacecraft itself, two SRBs, and the external fuel tank. The fuel tank is the only part that is disposable.
6. There were sixteen scheduled flights this year.
7. There are three launch sites. Two are run by NASA in Florida, and the other is run by the United States Air Force (USAF).
8. Astronauts acknowledge and have acknowledged the chance of a catastrophe all along.
9. NASA is now hoping for a flight in June.

Film

Penn State Hazleton Campus Foreign Film
Festival Opens

by Paula Gallery, Public Relations
(Pennsylvania State University Hazleton
Campus)

The Penn State Hazleton Campus Foreign Film Festival opened on February 4. Showings are Tuesday nights at 7:00 p.m. in the Library Highacres Room. Admission is free and is open to the public as well as to students, faculty, and staff of the Hazleton Campus.

Films are scheduled as follows:

02/25/86 **The Lavender Hill Mob** -
an English comedy with a plot that involves a bank robbery and much intrigue, starring Alec Guinness (78 minutes - black and white)

03/11/86 **Wild Strawberries** -
written and directed by a professor struggling with his advancing age, starring Max von Sydow. English subtitles (90 minutes - black and white)