

CHRISTA McAULIFFE

A profile of the woman seeking to be the first teacher in space. **Story, 3A.**

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THE CREW

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This is a six-page special report on the tragedy aboard the 25th flight of the Space Shuttle. Stories were compiled by FLORIDA TODAY staff writers and the Associated Press and Gannett News Service.

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Shuttle explodes; crew of seven dies

Reagan cancels speech

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Reagan today postponed the State of the Union address he had planned for tonight and instead prepared to address the nation on the Space Shuttle tragedy.

"The president, like all Americans, watched this on television," presidential spokesman Larry Speakes said. "He felt very keenly the emotion that must be felt by the families down there, who have watched this in person, and very keenly what the American people must be feeling."

"He consulted with the congressional leadership, and the consensus of opinion of the executive and legislative branches was that it was appropriate to postpone" the speech, his fifth annual address of the state of the union.

So, Speakes said, Reagan will deliver the speech to a joint session of the Senate and the House next Tuesday.

Reagan had been scheduled to, in the words of one aide, "redefine the role of the government for the next decade and into the next century."

Speakes said that Reagan, instead, would speak from the Oval Office about the explosion. Details and timing of the address were still being worked out, he added.

The spokesman also said Reagan was delaying three days of campaign-style speech-making he had planned to buttress his State of the Union.



FIREBALL: Challenger, in view from Cocoa Beach, explodes 75 seconds after liftoff.

First teacher among victims

By Chet Lunner
FLORIDA TODAY

The Shuttle Challenger exploded about a minute after lift off today from Kennedy Space Center apparently killing all seven of its crew members.

Recovery ships were immediately sent to the scene but the crew, including teacher-in-space Christa McAuliffe, 37, of Concord, N.H., were presumed dead after the 100-ton vehicle's giant external fuel tank exploded in mid-air.

Also aboard were commander Francis R. Scobee, 46; pilot Michael J. Smith, 40; Judith Resnik, 36; Ronald E. McNair, 35; Ellison S. Onizuka, 39; and Gregory B. Jarvis, 41.

Preliminary indications are that one of the twin solid-rocket boosters on the side of the Shuttle somehow separated and struck the giant fuel tank carrying 526,000 gallons of volatile liquid propellant.

It fell approximately 18 miles down range. The rescue effort is to be coordinated by the commander in chief of the North Atlantic Fleet of the U.S. Navy, in Norfolk, Va.

President Reagan told reporters at the White House: "It's a horrible thing all of us have witnessed. I can't rid myself of the thought of the sacrifice of the families who were there at the Cape and watching this tragedy also. I can't help but think what they must be going through."

Families of the crew, 1,200 students from McAuliffe's high school, hundreds of news media and spectators were first stunned, then wailing and tearful, as the magnitude of the disaster became clear.

The students were cheering

the launch when a teacher shouted for them to be quiet when the explosion occurred.

It was the first flight accident in the NASA shuttle program, which began here with the flight of Columbia in April 1981.

"Oh no," "oh God," "I can't look," spectators cried as the brilliant white smoke filled the clear sky above them.

"There has been an explosion," mission control announced from Houston over a public address system. "We had an apparently normal ascent up to the time the main engines throttled down, then back up. One minute or so into the flight, there was an apparent explosion."

Reagan "stood in almost stunned silence" as he watched a replay of the tragedy-felled mission on television at the White House.

"You could read sorrow and anxiety on his face as he watched," said White House spokesman Larry Speakes.

Reagan had been meeting with aides when the Space Shuttle Challenger exploded. Informed of the tragedy, Reagan broke off the meeting and went immediately to a small study to watch television and await word of the astronauts' fate.

"There was concern, anxiety, silence," said Speakes.

NASA officials were unable to immediately determine what had caused the tragedy. The single, solid trail of smoke that usually follows a Shuttle aloft suddenly split into several smaller arching lines and the spaceship seemed momentarily suspended before appearing to break into pieces.



CHALLENGER'S CREW: From left, front row, are Michael Smith, Francis 'Dick' Scobee, Ron McNair; back row, Ellison Onizuka, Christa McAuliffe, Gregory Jarvis and Judy Resnik.

NASA

THE 25TH SHUTTLE — A SPACE TRAGEDY



FLORIDA TODAY—AP

HEADED FOR SHUTTLE: Teacher astronaut Christa McAuliffe smiles for cameras this morning as she leaves crew quarters for fatal flight.

Christa McAuliffe

America's teacher astronaut wanted to humanize space

Associated Press

Sharon Christa McAuliffe had said she hoped to "humanize the technology of the space age" for her students but approached her flight on the Shuttle Challenger with a child's sense of wonder.

"I still can't believe they are actually going to let me go up in the Shuttle," the teacher from Concord, N.H., said in September as she pinned on her NASA identification badge.

This morning, her flight ended moments after launch in a fireball which shattered the spacecraft.

McAuliffe was named in July as winner among 11,000 teachers who had applied to be the first educator in orbit.

"I want to de-mystify NASA and space flight," she said during competition among the 10 teacher finalists in Houston. "I want students to see and understand the special perspective of space and relate it to them."

Through all the training, her husband, Steven, a lawyer, and their children Scott, 9, and Caroline, 6, have remained behind in Concord.

However, her husband and the children were on hand at Kennedy Space Center for this morning's tragic launch.

She said recently that Scott understood what she was doing, but that Caroline called occasionally to ask: "Mom, are you in space yet?"

McAuliffe, 37, taught elementary school in Bow, N.H., for nine years before joining Concord High School as a teacher in economics, history and law three years ago.

She said in her application to

"I want to de-mystify NASA and space flight. I want students to see and understand the special perspective of space and relate it to them."

— Christa McAuliffe
teacher astronaut

the space administration that she would like to record her trip to help "humanize the technology of the space age" through the observations of a non-astronaut.

"I think everybody who knows her, knows there may have been candidates of her equal, but none superior to her," her husband, Steven, told reporters after his wife's selection was announced.

He said he believes she was selected because she is "unpretentious and genuinely a nice person whom people really identify with."

Returning triumphantly to New Hampshire, McAuliffe had told reporters and fellow teachers that space exploration is not just for astronauts, but is in the future of every child.

"If we don't prepare kids for the future we are not doing our job as teachers," she said. "I really feel strongly that we really need to include (space exploration) as part of the curriculum."

McAuliffe, who goes by the name Christa, has a bachelor's degree from Framingham State College in Massachusetts and a master's degree from Bowie State in Maryland.

She and her husband, Steven, were high school sweethearts in Framingham.

Her father, Ed Corrigan of Framingham, Mass., said he didn't believe she was serious at first.

"When she made out the application and started all this she said, 'I'm going, Dad,' and she certainly is," he said. "She will be a wonderful representative for NASA. I commend the judges."

Listening to all she's gone through so far has been an education for us."

In an interview days before launch, McAuliffe said she was "not naive enough to think that I am the best in my profession."

"I happen to be from a small state that didn't have as many applicants as California, for example."

There's a lot of luck in being at the right place at the right time," she said.

In the final competition, said McAuliffe, she believes the fact that she knew little about the space program helped.

"I want to de-mystify NASA and space flight," she said. "The astronauts are not really connecting with the average student in the classroom."

I want students to see and understand the special perspective of space and relate it to them."

Explosion shatters dream for teachers, students

By Paula Harrison
and Ann Mittman
FLORIDA TODAY

Dreams shattered for hundreds of teachers and students as they watched the Space Shuttle Challenger carrying teacher astronaut Christa McAuliffe explode in flames this morning.

The Shuttle, launched shortly after 11:38 a.m., erupted into a ball of flame about a minute into its flight.

The teachers and students who flocked to the space center to see McAuliffe off on her space journey

left the launch site in shock, tears and disbelief.

While the teachers and students pulled together in shared grief, the McAuliffe's family was taken to the launch control center to be briefed by NASA officials and to be looked after by medical personnel.

The children from from Scott McAuliffe's elementary school class were sobbing and screaming as they watched the tragedy from the grandstands. They were being comforted by the parent-chaperons. One woman was crying "Why them?"

Officials barred the press from talking with the children or the chaperones. People walked away from the grandstands in stunned silence.

Christa McAuliffe's spokeswoman, Linda Long, said she didn't think McAuliffe had spoken to her two children this morning because the children were staying in Orlando with their father.

McAuliffe awakened at 6:30 a.m. while her family was on its way to the launch site. The last time she saw her parents, Ed and Grance Corrigan, was Friday at lunch when they had a barbeque at

the beach house.

Barbara Morgan, the backup teacher-in-space, applauding in the grandstands as the Shuttle took off, was taken to a secluded area and was not available for comment. Long said Morgan would probably not be available for a couple of days because she was so upset.

"One minute there was the anticipation, the laughter, the dreams and the next minute there was a horrible, horrible explosion," said Gordon Corbett, a Yarmouth, Mass., science teacher. "God this is awful, this is the worst

thing that has ever happened."

Corbett said the disaster will never be forgotten. "I'm supposed to be in the classroom the day after tomorrow, talking to kids that look up to me for answers. Jesus, what do I do?"

Corbett was interviewed about the Shuttle going up last week for a radio program in Maine and told reporters that the Shuttle was extremely safe. "I said they'd be safer going up in the Shuttle than I would riding on my airline."

An Albuquerque, N.M., couple, Mr. and Mrs. W.B. Oliver, came here to visit their son and to watch

their first launch. Both said they were sorry they had witnessed the Shuttle explosion.

Oliver described it as a "huge fireball," but said he didn't at first realize that the vehicle had exploded.

Mrs. Oliver echoed her husband.

"We didn't know what to expect. People around us said it wasn't normal. I've never seen anything like this before," she said, adding: "To me it was absolutely spectacular until I realized it wasn't normal."

In many classrooms the question is 'Why?'

Associated Press

Students watching in horror on schoolroom televisions as Space Shuttle Challenger exploded over the Atlantic today were "in a state of shock, asking ... why?" said an participant in the Classroom Earth project that was to relay space teacher Christa McAuliffe's lessons back to millions of pupils.

"At first they didn't realize what happened," said teacher Fred Lewis of Marissa, Ill., one of 11,000 teachers who had unsuccessfully sought to be the first teacher in space.

He had built his own simulator — complete with launch computers, monitors and tape of a past Challenger liftoff — for his classroom, and his students were watching as the tragedy occurred.

"They're more or less in a state of shock, asking questions — 'What happened? Why? Couldn't they get out?' " Lewis said in a telephone interview from Marissa Junior-Senior High School.

"The unbelievable has happened," said Walt Westrum, executive director of the Classroom Earth project, which was to bring the space mission into classrooms around the country. Some 2½ million youngsters were preparing for McAuliffe's lessons from space.

McAuliffe and her fellow crewmembers were believed lost, and the despair registered in her school in Concord, N.H., was mirrored across the nation.

Westrum, superintendent of Hall High School in Spring Valley, Ill., said about 250 students at his school were watching the liftoff, and fell quiet when the Shuttle exploded. "Everybody's aghast," he said.

Paul Shebesta, principal of Story School in Milwaukee, said the reaction among the 485 children, in kindergarten through eighth grade, at his school was deep sadness.

"I think that you get a deep lump in your throat like we did when President Kennedy was shot in 1963. It's a tragedy that hopefully we can remember and grow

from," Shebesta said.

Some teachers were crying at Garfield Elementary School in Phoenix, Ariz., said Principal Camarino Lopez. He said he was preparing an announcement for the school, but added, "How can one explain something like this?"

Children wept at many schools, including the Brentwood Science Magnet School, an elementary school in Los Angeles that had been following shuttle developments closely, said Principal Beverly Tietjen.

"It was a feeling of disbelief," she said.

"The fact that a teacher was involved was even worse," said a sobbing Carol Skrinka, a math and science teacher at Park Western Harbor Math and Science Magnet for Gifted Children, also in Los Angeles.

In Scottsdale, Ariz., 10- and 11-year-olds at Cocopah Elementary School hugged teacher Janet Ryan, saying, "I'm glad it wasn't you, Mrs. Ryan."

The middle school teacher said she had wanted to apply for the space teacher program but lacked enough consecutive years' experience.

"We're all just horrified," she said.

In Granite School District in Utah, officials said some schools were flying their flags at half staff shortly after the tragedy.

Teachers and students reacted with silence and shock at McCall-Donnelly Elementary School in Idaho, where Barbara Morgan, McAuliffe's backup as the first private citizen in space, teaches second grade.

"We feel we know her (McAuliffe) through the training films," said Sue Anderson, another second-grade teacher at the school.

Watching the launch on TV at Benjamin Mays High School in Atlanta was space teacher finalist Thomas Garmon, who had gone to Cape Canaveral last week as a guest of NASA and had met McAuliffe.

"She was a teacher's teacher, she was professional," he said.



FLORIDA TODAY — UPI

WITNESS TO TRAGEDY: In the Concord High School auditorium, a teacher watches in disbelief as Challenger explodes with fellow teacher Christa McAuliffe onboard.

Borman predicted Shuttle tragedy

By Linda Farrar
FLORIDA TODAY

Miami.

"I am deeply saddened by the tragedy at the Cape. My heartfelt sympathy goes out to the families of the crew and the members of the launch team," Borman's brief statement reads.

Borman's prediction was published by this newspaper on June 9, 1985, under the headline "Borman predicts Shuttle accident."

The Associated Press story said:

"PORTLAND, Ore. — It's only a matter of time before one of the nation's Space Shuttles is lost to an accident, says former astronaut Frank Borman.

"You are on the brink of technology with that Space Shuttle, and sooner or later they're going to lose one or two," said Borman, who orbited the moon 15 times on both the Gemini and Apollo space missions. "When that happens, the romance is going to deteriorate rapidly."

Borman, the chairman and

chief executive officer of Eastern Airlines, was in Portland to address the Greater Portland Convention & Visitors Association.

"The Shuttle has proven its worth as a reusable cargo vehicle but has had its share of equipment problems," Borman said.

Borman doubts there ever will be a basis for commercial passenger travel in space.

Sebastian applicant feared flight problem

By Elliott Jones
and Lourdes Fernandez
FLORIDA TODAY

Indian River County school teacher Karen Lynch applied to fly on Space Shuttle Challenger as the first teacher in space, but decided not to go because she was worried it would have problems.

When it blew up during its launch this morning, "I freaked," the English teacher said.

She applied exactly one year ago today.

Lynch teaches at Sebastian River Middle-Junior High School and her application was approved by Superintendent James Burns.

But one night she thought something would go wrong. "When I woke up I made up my mind that I would not go up (in space) even if I was selected."

Lynch said she never heard from NASA.

"God moves in mysterious ways," said Lynch, who has taught for almost eight years.

It "is such a horrible, horrible tragedy."

At the time Challenger blew up, Sebastian River Middle-Junior High School science teacher Bill Sistler was outside with several classes watching its ascent into the sky.

"Some of the students said, 'hey, that does not look right' " when the craft deviated off its flight path.

A school television monitor was recording NASA's broadcast of the flight and the voice transmission from the craft said, "Houston (control) we're engaging engines," Sistler said.

Then there was an explosion. Up until then, "Everything was clicking as usual. It was go, go, go," he said.

"One hundred fifty people were watching and became rather solemn and real quiet" at Vero Beach's South Beach Park, said lifeguard Art Kaczorowski.

"There were two explosions, so I knew immediately (that something was wrong). I was thinking of the teacher (in the Shuttle) and her family," the lifeguard said.