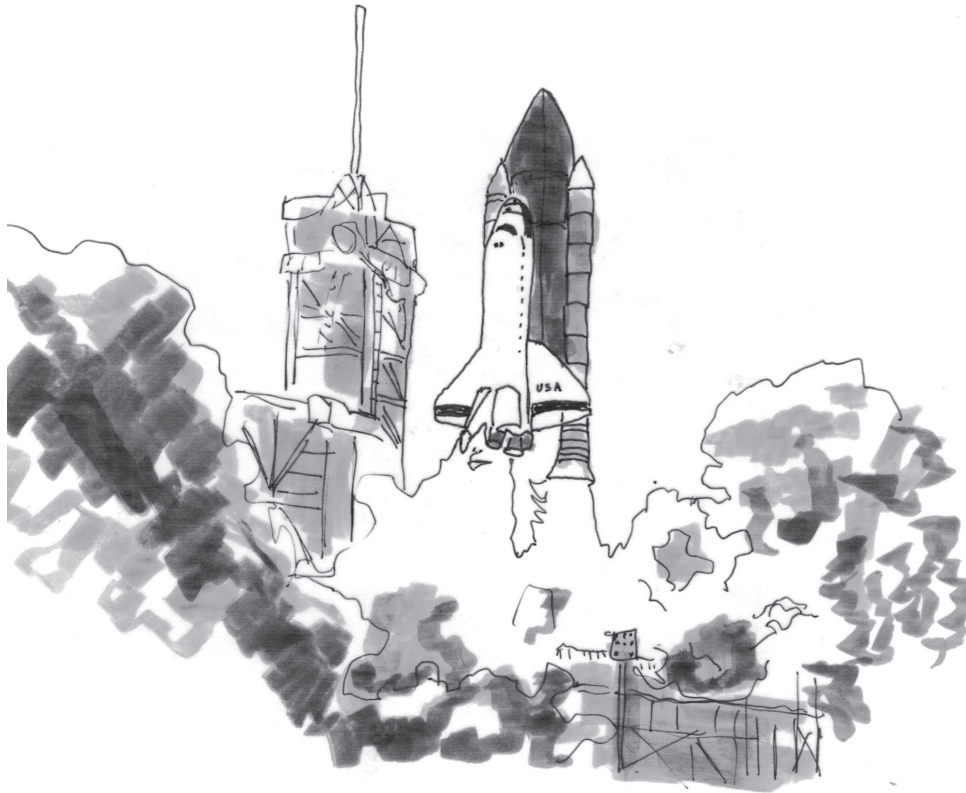


Big TV Moments

Remembering the Challenger



In just about every person's lifetime, there's that big TV moment. It's an event that you never forget. It's something you experienced at the same time with millions of other viewers.

My big TV moment was in 1986 when I was about 10 years old. The launch of the Space Shuttle Challenger was going to be shown live on TV. I was home sick that day. My mother and I got cozy in bed to watch the launch together.

Back then, space shuttle launches were a big deal. The Challenger launch was an even bigger deal because its crew included not one, but two female astronauts! One of whom was an elementary school teacher.

Big TV Moments

The shuttle was attached to rocket boosters. These launched the shuttle into the air. The boosters would later separate from the shuttle. They would fall back to earth before the shuttle got to space.

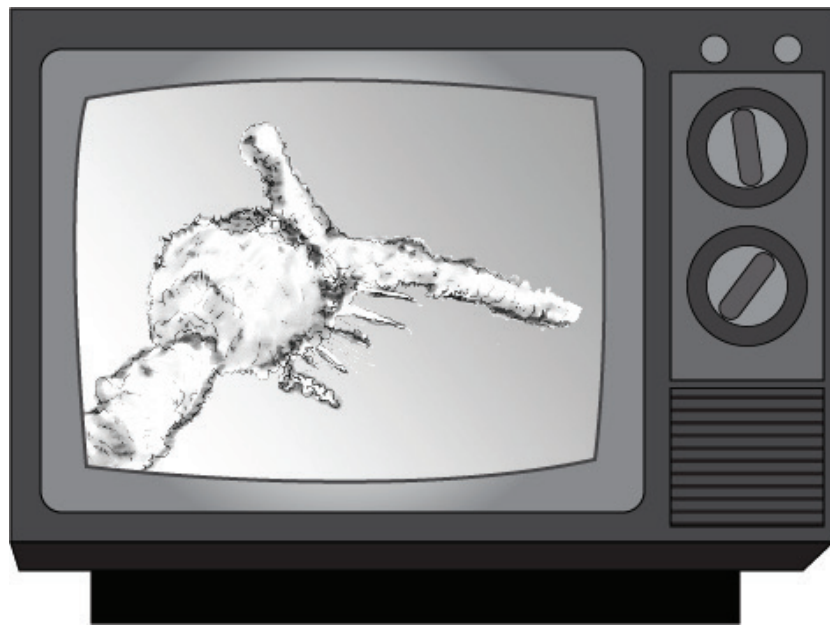
"T-minus 4, 3, 2, 1. And we have liftoff!" Fire spewed out from under the boosters. They lifted straight up into the sky.

Together, millions of people watched with us as the shuttle climbed higher and higher into the sky, leaving a trail of smoke in its wake.

The TV announcer said, "So the twenty-fifth space shuttle mission is now on the way after more delays than NASA cares to count..."

Suddenly, there was a big blast of fire—a giant fireball. We couldn't see the shuttle anymore. There was too much white smoke. Then the smoke trail forked off in two directions.

"It looks like some of the boosters blew away from the shuttle," said the TV announcer.



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We could hear the people standing on the ground near the launch. There were cries of confusion and alarm.

“We’re looking very carefully at the situation. Obviously it’s a major malfunction,” said the NASA announcer.

Many thin white streaks formed as parts fell from the sky. No one wanted to believe the worst. Not even NASA’s engineers.

“We have a report from the flight dynamics that the vehicle has exploded.”

People in the crowd began to shake their heads. They cried out in disbelief. They covered their mouths with their hands. So did my mother and I at home.

Everyone was in shock. We just watched the last moments of the astronauts’ lives. We knew their families were watching, too. All our pride and hope for these new astronauts blew up in the sky in front of our eyes.

The news replayed the crash for days and days after. My teacher rolled a TV set into our class to watch news about it. How did this happen? Whose fault was it?

To this day, I can’t help but think about the astronauts’ families and how I was there to share this tragedy with them.

