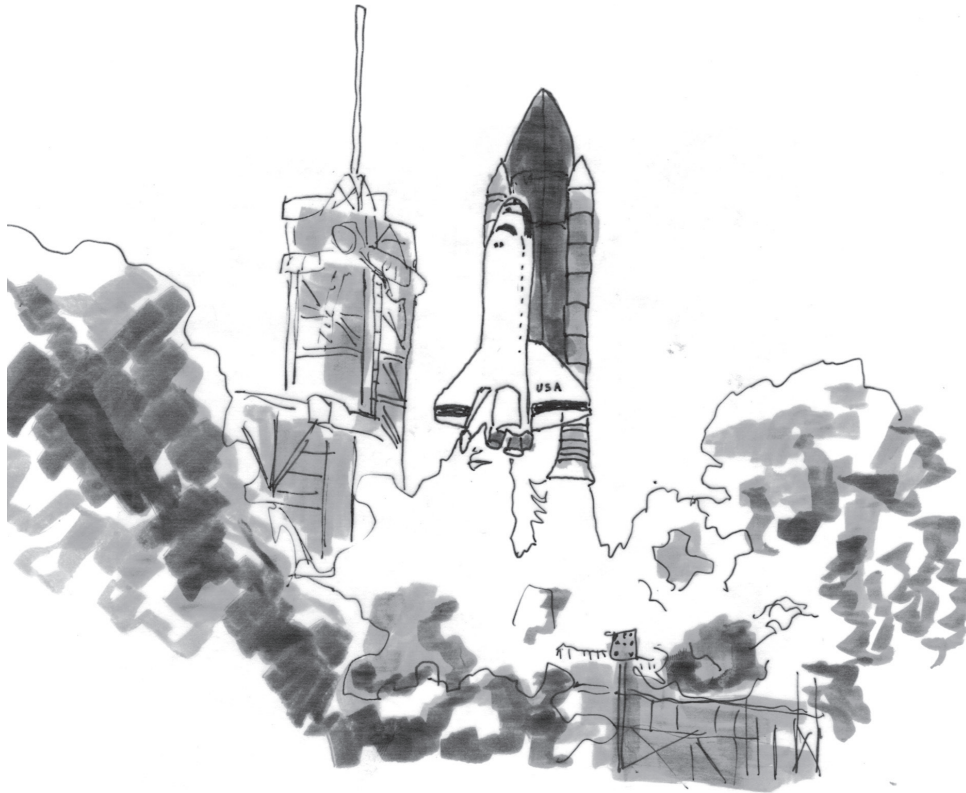


Big TV Moments

Remembering the Challenger



Have you ever had a big TV moment? It's an event that you never forget. It's something you experience at the same time with millions of other viewers.

My big TV moment was in 1986. I was 10 years old. The launch of the Space Shuttle Challenger was live on TV. I was home sick that day. My mother and I watched the launch together.

Back then, space shuttle launches were a big deal. The Challenger launch was an even bigger deal. Its crew included two female astronauts! One of whom was an elementary school teacher.

Big TV Moments

The shuttle was attached to rocket boosters. These launch the shuttle into the air. After they do their job, they boosters separate from the shuttle. The boosters then fall back to earth.

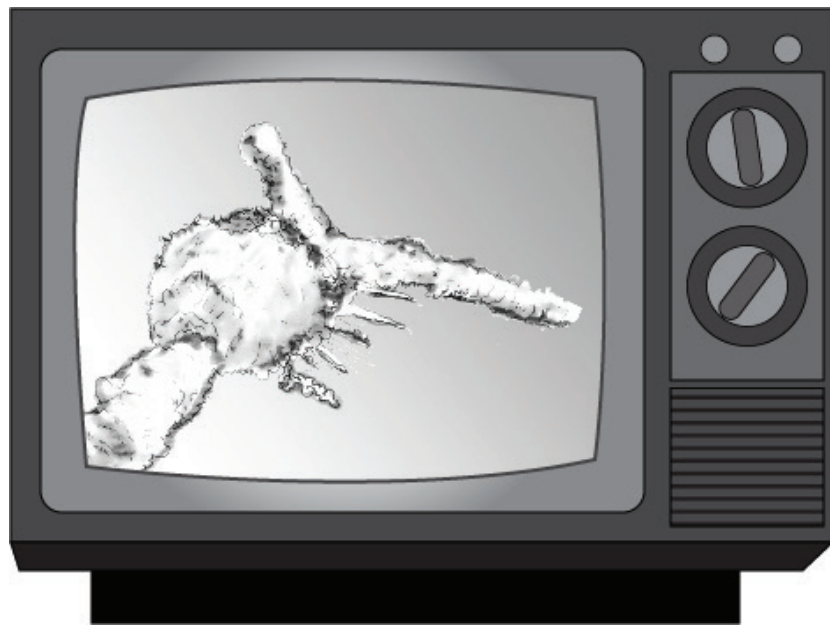
“T-minus 4, 3, 2, 1. And we have liftoff!” Fire shot out from under the boosters. They lifted straight up into the sky.

Millions of people watched the launch. The shuttle climbed high into the sky. It left a trail of smoke as it went.

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. There was a giant fireball. We couldn't see the shuttle anymore. There was too much white smoke. Then the smoke trail split in two directions.

“It looks like some of the boosters blew away from the shuttle,” said the TV reporter.



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We heard cries of confusion. These came from the people at the launch.

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

Thin white streaks began to appear. They were parts falling 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. So did the millions of others watching with us.

Everyone was in shock. We just saw 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 played the crash over and over for days. My teacher rolled a TV set into our classroom. We watched news about the crash. How did this happen? Whose fault was it?

To this day, I can’t help but think about the astronauts’ families. I still think about how I shared the tragedy with them as I watched the TV.

