



Truth, Lies, and O-Rings: Inside the Space Shuttle Challenger Disaster

By Allan J. McDonald

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On a cold January morning in 1986, NASA launched the Space Shuttle *Challenger*, despite warnings against doing so by many individuals, including Allan McDonald. The fiery destruction of *Challenger* on live television moments after launch remains an indelible image in the nation's collective memory.

In *Truth, Lies, and O-Rings*, McDonald, a skilled engineer and executive, relives the tragedy from where he stood at Launch Control Center. As he fought to draw attention to the real reasons behind the disaster, he was the only one targeted for retribution by both NASA and his employer, Morton Thiokol, Inc., makers of the shuttle's solid rocket boosters. In this whistle-blowing yet rigorous and fair-minded book, McDonald, with the assistance of internationally distinguished aerospace historian James R. Hansen, addresses *all* of the factors that led to the accident, some of which were never included in NASA's Failure Team report submitted to the Presidential Commission.

Truth, Lies, and O-Rings is the first look at the *Challenger* tragedy and its aftermath from someone who was on the inside, recognized the potential disaster, and tried to prevent it. It also addresses the early warnings of very severe debris issues from the first two post-*Challenger* flights, which ultimately resulted in the loss of *Columbia* some fifteen years later.

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Editorial Review

Review

We all watched in shock and disbelief when Challenger was lost. Probably no one felt more disappointment and regret than Allan McDonald, who had warned us not to launch that day. His story tells of loss, grief, and the eventual rebuilding and recovery."--Robert "Hoot" Gibson, former Space Shuttle pilot and commander "A major contribution to a difficult episode in the history of human spaceflight."--Roger D. Launius, Division of Space History, Smithsonian Institution "McDonald tells the heartbreaking tale of how he saw his words of warning ignored, and the fateful consequences of that decision."--Donald C. Elder III, Eastern New Mexico University

From the Back Cover

A Popular Mechanics Best Book

Winner of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics Gardner-Lasser Aerospace History Literature Award

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"A major contribution to a difficult episode in the history of human spaceflight."—Roger D. Launius, Division of Space History, Smithsonian Institution

"There have been many accounts of the circumstances surrounding the loss of the Space Shuttle *Challenger* on 28 January 1986, but few, if any, give as much of an insider's view as this book."—*Quest*

"McDonald argues convincingly that the *Challenger* accident need not have happened, had his warnings been heeded; therein lies the tragedy."—*Space Policy*

"A major contribution to the literature of the management of technology as well as to the history of the space program."—*Choice*

"Whistle-blowing yet rigorous and fair-minded book."—*Spaceflight*

"An even-handed take on an American aerospace tragedy."—*Book News*

"Recounts the decision to launch *Challenger*, the investigation of the accident, and the return of the shuttle to space flight. McDonald's book is, like the shuttle itself, a massive, complex, and fascinating work."—*Florida Historical Quarterly*

Allan J. McDonald retired as vice president and technical director for advanced technology programs at ATK

Thiokol Propulsion in 2001. He was the director of the Space Shuttle Solid Rocket Motor Project at the time of the *Challenger* accident and, later, vice president of engineering for space operations during the redesign and requalification of the solid rocket motors. James R. Hansen, professor of history and director of the Honors College at Auburn University, is the author of *First Man: The Life of Neil Armstrong*.

About the Author

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