Barbara Morgan, an elementary school teacher in McCall, Idaho was selected to serve as back-up to Teacher in Space Christa McAuliffe in 1985, and trained with the crew of the space shuttle Challenger.

After the Challenger accident, Morgan returned to the classroom and continued working for NASA’s education division until 1998, when she was selected as an astronaut (the first educator to become an astronaut). In August 2007, she served on the crew of mission STS-118 and flew on the space shuttle Endeavour to help construct the International Space Station.

Now a Distinguished Educator in Residence, Ms. Morgan joined Boise State University in 2008 after a 10-year career as a NASA Astronaut and 24 years as a public school teacher. Barbara has taught in McCall, Idaho, in Quito, Ecuador, and on the Flathead Indian Reservation in Montana. As a member of Boise State’s Division of Research and Economic Development, Morgan represents the university and provides vision and leadership to the State of Idaho, primarily in STEM education. Her work includes policy and program development, advocacy, and mentoring. She uses her experience as a classroom teacher and NASA astronaut to initiate and cultivate University and K-12 opportunities, locally and nationally.
“From Christa McAuliffe, I learned to look for the best in all situations and all people. She taught me to not worry about what is not important and at the same time to work harder at what is important. What was important to Christa? People. And their dignity. Her classroom was based on mutual respect. She taught her students to respect themselves, too. She taught them to do the best they could do, and to stay true to their inner selves. Before the Challenger launch, up through the last day, Christa made time in the crew quarters here to write college recommendations for her students. At a time when many people would think only of the impending launch, Christa was taking care of a teacher’s business.”

THE CHALLENGER CREW

“And now, here is what I learned from the crew, together. It is also what I learned — and what I still learn — from the crew’s families. It is this: Courage is contagious. Courage is shared. Courage is more than bravery or boldness — because courage lives in the heart. Once you weigh the risk, and once you decide that to explore and to discover are worth the risk, then you can dream, you can plan, and you can build. Then you train, — and you train, — and you train, — and you train. So that when the crew launches, they launch, ready — with happy hearts — thankful for the opportunity to represent America, happy to represent history and all of humankind, as humankind reaches for the stars. The Challenger crew were wonderful human beings. They were very much like — all of you, here today.“

– Barbara Morgan

DuPont extends special thanks to Ms. Morgan for sharing her personal remembrances of the Challenger crew and for permission to reprint.
“Ron McNair taught me faith. Strong faith. Faith in a higher being, and how strong faith creates faith in oneself and in others. Ron showed me how to be accepting of all others. He showed me that a leader leads by caring, and that one way to show you care is to learn about the people you lead. Ron talked to Christa and me about our homes and our families. He asked us about our schools and our students and our other interests. Ron also spent time with the students whose experiments he was going to conduct on orbit. He treated their experiments as professionally as he treated every experiment on the Challenger mission.”

“From Greg Jarvis, I learned that no matter how many times you face disappointment, you keep going until you reach your goal. Greg taught me that a leader leads by example, and he set a great example for the entire crew. Because of scheduling reasons, Greg had been “bumped” from several earlier missions. Once, he was bumped just a month before his crew was scheduled to launch. But Greg joined the Challenger crew bright, eager, and excited to work with everyone. He became a valuable team member, immediately. He helped the crew, both technically and psychologically. As soon as he appeared, it was obvious that Greg would make the flight more successful.”
“WHAT I LEARNED FROM THE CREW”

Remembrances by Barbara Morgan
Former NASA Astronaut and Backup Teacher in Space

Shared here and on the following pages, Ms. Morgan pays tribute as the keynote speaker at the 2016 Day of Rememberance on January 28, 2016, the 30th anniversary of the Challenger accident.

“Dick Scobee, Mike Smith, Ellison Onizuka, Judy Resnick, Ron McNair, Greg Jarvis, Christa McAuliffe.

I would like to share some memories, some of what I learned from each of the Challenger crew members. And what I learned from the crew as a team.”

Christa McAuliffe, left, and Barbara Morgan were selected to serve as Teacher in Space. Morgan served in 2007 on the space shuttle Endeavour and was Backup Teacher in Space for McAuliffe on the 1986 Challenger mission.
Our commander, Dick Scobee, was a deep and poetic thinker, and a loving person. He was so modest, that even now, it is still hard to praise him, without thinking I'll embarrass him. But Dick taught me that a true leader guides more than he commands. A true leader seems to walk beside us rather than ahead of us. And when we arrive at our goal, we realize he was already there, before us. Dick was there with us even when the training was over for the day. Dick and his family welcomed us as members of their family. Until the early hours of the morning, we sat with Dick and June on their living room carpet and talked about the wonders of spaceflight. And about the wonder of children, and how exploration and discovery can motivate them for the rest of their lives.

“From our shuttle pilot, Mike Smith, I learned that a true leader leads by trusting the people he works with. Mike took me on my first T38 jet trainer flights. They were the most exciting flights I had ever had. He showed me how to fly in formation, how to do barrel rolls, and lazy eights. Then he told me it was my turn. Mike said, ‘Push the stick.’ When I asked, ‘Which way?’ he said, ‘Any way you want. Push the stick.’ Mike had more confidence in me than I had in myself. And so I flew the T38, in long sweeping arcs and barrel rolls high above the Gulf of Mexico. Mike’s trust in me set me free. Of course, he also kept his hand on the stick the whole time!”
“From Judy Resnik, I learned balance. A leader does not have to be all things at once. Judy served as the Flight Engineer on Challenger. She sat right between and behind Dick and Mike. She monitored everything each of them did. Check, check, reminder, re-check. She was always on top of the situation. On the job, Judy was all concentration. Off the job, Judy was fun. And she was a friend.”

“From El Onizuka, I learned that a leader leads by learning and by allowing others to learn alongside him. El invited Christa and me to some of his shuttle systems classes so that we could see how he learned so that we could learn what he learned. We didn’t want to get in El’s way, so we stood back in the back corner of the simulator. But El had us move up and stand right next to him. And watch. El and his trainer went through a series of malfunction exercises. Then, El told us to take his place and to find the problems and fix them. El was the funny one. Even dressed in his bulky spacewalking suit, getting ready to train in the deep water of the WETF pool, El could do a great imitation — poolside — of Godzilla. El’s humor really helped the team.”
The DuPont Challenge honors the memory of the seven heroes of the 1986 Challenger Space Shuttle and all who encourage the next generation to explore the frontiers of science.

The competition for grades 6-12, now celebrating its 30 anniversary, has inspired more than 250,000 students to research STEM-oriented developments and to communicate their ideas and personal insights in a compelling essay. Each year, we receive nearly 10,000 entries from the United States, Canada, and their territories.

Sponsoring teachers of the first-place student essayists in the Junior and Senior Divisions are awarded an expenses-paid awards trip to The Walt Disney World® Resort, a V.I.P. awards luncheon and exclusive tour of Kennedy Space Center — plus an expenses-paid trip to NSTA’s National Conference.

Take The DuPont Challenge! Visit: thechallenge.dupont.com

In the aftermath of the Challenger accident, the crew’s families came together, firmly committed to the belief that they must carry on the spirit of their loved ones by continuing the Challenger crew’s educational mission. Their efforts resulted in the creation of Challenger Center for Space Education.

Challenger Center and its global network of Challenger Learning Centers use space-themed simulated learning and role-playing strategies to help students bring their classroom studies to life and cultivate skills needed for future success, such as problem solving, critical thinking, communication and teamwork.

A not-for-profit 501(c)(3) education organization, Challenger Center reaches hundreds of thousands of students, and tens of thousands of teachers every year.