

State and Local

Challenger widow continues dreams of victims

By Tom Eikel
Reporter

The Challenger mission and the dreams of those involved will continue, Dr. June Scobee said Saturday.

Scobee, widow of Challenger commander Dick Scobee, said that she will move forward in her role as director of the Challenger Center — the first hands-on space education center in the nation.

Leadership truly is a sign of those people who follow through with an idea and make a commitment," Scobee said to more than 100 people attending a symposium at the College Station Hilton. The symposium was sponsored by the American Business Women's Association.

Dr. Bill Nash, who introduced Scobee as his friend and his former student at Texas A&M, expressed confidence in her ability as a leader. "I am quite sure that the Challenger Center will become a reality with her at the helm," Nash said. She rises to each occasion with courage, with compassion and with compelling visions of the future."

Nash, a professor of educational psychology at A&M, became friends with Scobee when she began her doctoral studies at A&M in 1980.

"I had the privilege of serving as her teacher and one of her graduate committee advisers," Nash said. "The pursuit of creativity and excellence in all her endeavors . . . was evident to us at Texas A&M throughout her doctoral studies."

During the period in which Scobee attended A&M, her husband became involved at the University as well. Dick Scobee, who died in the 1986 Challenger explosion, was one of the founding members of the Council on Development in A&M's College of Education.

Following the Challenger disaster two years ago, Scobee left her University position to help develop the Challenger Center, and is now chairman of the board of the Challenger Center Foundation.

Scobee said that challenges are to



Photo by Melissa Martin

Dr. June Scobee, chairman of the board of the Challenger Center and wife of Challenger Commander Dick Scobee was introduced by Dr. William Nash at a symposium Saturday.

be met, every day, in all facets of life — in business, home and school — and it is this idea of challenge for which the center is named.

"The idea (for the center) was born out of a love of people who knew the crew . . . families that came together to meet a challenge to continue a mission for the crew of the Challenger space shuttle," she said.

Scobee said the Challenger Center will continue the shuttle's mission to meet the scientific and educational goals of the crew.

The Challenger Center has a two-fold purpose, Scobee said.

First is the creation of a national headquarters located in Washington, D.C. The center's board is involved in the process of selecting a site so that construction can begin.

Scobee said this facility will be a mock-up of a futuristic space station complete with all the systems necessary to keep a space station up and operational, including navigation, guidance, power and environmental control systems.

Crew members will be required to

apply various science, math and communications skills in order to meet challenges and problems as they rise in this learning facility. The second part of the program enables children to apply these same skills.

"It's a futuristic program that takes this era of education and moves into the 21st century," Scobee said.

Students don flight suits and climb aboard a flight simulator for the journey to the space station. Once there, Scobee said, students and their teachers will stay on board for as long as a week at a time, sleeping in the crew quarters, eating in the galley and working on scientific projects that they design.

All the while, the youngsters will work as a team, solving problems.

Video cameras will monitor students in the Challenger Center, and these signals will be transmitted via satellite to fellow students in their classroom back home, she said. Students at home will act as mission control, guiding their friends at the center.

Each of the students in the center will have a flight manual outlining the specific lessons and jobs they are to perform, she said.

"But along the way, trainers at NASA are helping us come up with problems," Scobee said.

These problems, or scenarios, are presented to the students, who must solve them using skills learned in the classroom — just one part of the learning experience, she said.

Scobee said the center is unlike most space programs for children in that it begins in the classroom, with students and teachers working together to master the skills they will need when they climb aboard the space station.

Scobee said there will be a network of eight mission-control stations and various Challenger Center affiliate sites around the nation. The first is being built in Houston at the Houston Museum of Natural Science. This prototype will be a smaller version of the center in Washington, D.C.

The site is scheduled to open in

May, with children from the Houston Independent School District participating, she said.

The space station and mission control for this facility are to be housed in the same complex. Students will make use of the complex for a two-hour period, which works well with the classroom, she said.

Also, all of the objectives of this program are being matched with those of the Texas Education Association.

Scobee said that although no method has been set for choosing those classes which will participate yet, the center's program will begin with students at the sixth-grade level. Eventually the program will expand to encompass all grade levels, she said.

Scobee said she hopes A&M will play an active role in the realization of the Challenger Center.

"We need all the help we can get from the best in the nation, and why not start with the Aggies?" Scobee said, acknowledging that A&M is a leader in the areas of technology, communication and education.

"We hope to have a special center located on the A&M campus. . . and we hope to have former students join us to build Challenger Center, especially the one here at A&M," she said.

Scobee said it will be up to the advisory group to come up with ideas about the nature of A&M's center.

"It could be another prototype," she said. "It could be a special research center to help us with the ideas to advance education and technology — there are so many possibilities only the imaginations are a barrier at this point."

"I'm looking forward to working with a team of people who can help that."

A&M already is participating in some aspects of the Challenger Center program.

"Right now I'm working primarily with educators in creating the reading materials for the classrooms," Scobee said. "That's headed up by

Donna Norton (a professor in A&M's Educational Curriculum and Instruction Department), and we have a team of people behind them including the president, Frank Vandiver."

Besides her work on the center, Scobee serves on the Governor's Space Science Industry Commission, the National Advisory Board of Directors for the National Association for Gifted Children and the advisory board of the Teacher in Space Foundation.

Scobee came to A&M after a successful career teaching at various levels in public schools.

During Scobee's first year at A&M, she joined with Nash in his efforts to start an institute for gifted and talented youth, which involved the development of a summer program for high ability teen-agers. This program is held each year on the campus of Texas A&M at Galveston, he said.

By her second year, Scobee had originated an outstanding study program in space science, which still continues today, Nash said.

"Quite naturally she involved her husband Dick and other astronauts as resource personnel," he said. "And thereby provided rare opportunities for these youngsters to view America's future in space," he said.

After receiving her Ph.D. from A&M in 1983, Scobee taught graduate courses on gifted education at the University of Houston-Clear Lake and subsequently was elected to serve as the director of the Texas A&M Gifted and Talented Space Science Program.

Scobee is the mother of two children, a son and a daughter. Her daughter, Kathie Krause, is married and lives in Bryan with her husband and their son. Krause, who attended the symposium with her mother, works at the Public Information Office at A&M.

Scobee's son Rich, also married, graduated from the Air Force Academy in 1987 and is now in pilot training with the Air Force.

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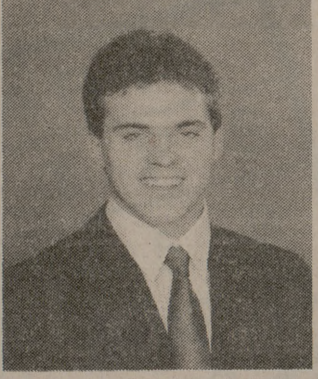
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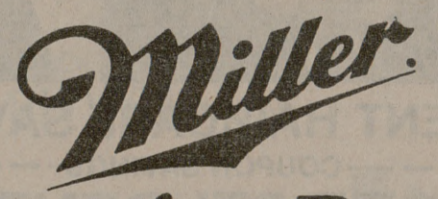
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