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NASA commentator hopeful launch will ease bad memory

SPACE CENTER, Houston (AP) — Steve Nesbitt hopes a successful launch for Discovery will bring his career as NASA commentator full circle and help erase the awful memory of being at the microphone when Challenger blew up and left him searching for the right words. "I knew I had tremendous pressure to say something, obviously," Nesbitt recalled recently. "I just felt this compelling need to keep talking except there was no information." Nesbitt sat in Mission Control on Jan. 28, 1986, preparing to take over the commentary from Kennedy Space Center as soon as Challenger cleared the launch tower. He was listening to flight controllers, reading off altitude and velocity numbers — and only occasionally glancing at the television screen that showed the ascending shuttle.

Suddenly he heard the flight surgeon exclaim, "What was that?" "I knew instantly this was terribly wrong. But I had not seen the initial part of it. All I saw was this white cloud and two (solid rocket boosters) SRBs. "But I didn't see a shuttle." Nesbitt said he didn't want to speculate about the fate of the astronauts and the orbiter at that instant. "I just had this belated look at the television screen, which is about like looking through a pipe — you don't see the whole sky." The three short sentences Nesbitt ad-libbed were replayed endlessly by the nation's TV and radio networks: "Flight controllers are looking very carefully at the situation. Obviously a major malfunction. We have no downlink." To many, those words were a be-

wildering understatement. In hindsight, he said, he doesn't think he could have done anything different. Nesbitt, 37, has received a promotion at JSC — from public affairs specialist to deputy director of the media services branch — and Discovery may be his last flight as a commentator. "I requested to be able to do this launch," he said. "It would give me a feeling of having come full circle. Not ending my career as a commentator on that mission (Challenger) would really mean a lot to me." He's certain he'll be tense Thursday morning, pacing and drinking lots of coffee during the couple of hours before his job begins. "I'm always nervous for launches, but I think I'll be even more so for this one," he said.

Jury finds mother guilty of letting boyfriend kill son

HOUSTON (AP) — A Pasadena woman was convicted Wednesday of injury to a child by omission after a jury found she allowed her boyfriend to kill her 5-month-old son. Jurors in State District Judge Mary Bacon's court took less than two hours to convict Reba Annette McFadden, 22. She now faces up to life in prison. McFadden testified Tuesday she didn't take her son to a hospital because her boyfriend, Chance Saunders, 17, threatened to blame the injury on her.

Prosecutor Jan Krocker showed jurors pictures of a raw wound on the back of Darrell McFadden's head. McFadden said she thought the festering sore was caused by cradle cap. No evidence of the skin condition appeared in official pictures taken Oct. 17, when the baby died of a skull fracture. The mother said the cradle cap had cleared up two days earlier, but the injury remained. Defense attorney Xavier Grenas said his client was threatened by Saunders.

"I think the evidence is conclusive," Grenas said. "Even experts, even the police department did not see something which raised their suspicions. If they couldn't see them, how could she be expected to see them. She had explanations and according to the state's own medical examiner those explanations were reasonable." Saunders was convicted in June of killing the child and sentenced to 7 1/2 years in prison after witnesses testified they saw him squeeze the infant's head in a store Oct. 2.

Boy with no hands learns to bowl

BROWNWOOD (AP) — Shane Wood is 10 years old. He's in the fifth grade, does well in his studies — and what's more, he's learning to bowl. Ordinarily, neither is a big deal — that is unless you have no hands. Shane was born without hands. He has learned to live without them, with the help of prostheses provided for him by physicians at Scottish Rite Hospital in Dallas. With that help, Shane has always mastered what his peers have done. Dana Perry, Shane's mother, says her son is independent and has never complained or considered himself "different." He has been going to Scottish Rite since he was two months old, being

fitted with various types of prostheses as he grew. "He's not dependent on them, but uses them when it becomes necessary," Perry said. But when Shane wanted to learn to bowl, he found none of the prostheses he had were suitable for bowling. With painstaking care, he wrote to his physician, Dr. Tony Herring at Scottish Rite, asking if he could get a prosthetic attachment that would enable him to bowl. The hand-written letter itself was a triumph for Herring, who has worked with Shane and delighted in his progress ever since the boy began treatment at Scottish Rite. Two months after Shane wrote the doctor, his bowling prosthesis was ready for fitting in Dallas.

The bowling ball he uses has one hole to accommodate the prosthesis. "When he went to the bowling alley without his prosthesis he put his arm in the hole and knocked over several pins," Perry said. "Physicians and staff at Scottish Rite are always looking for ways to make things easier for Shane," Perry said. "When he started the first grade, the physical therapy department made him a special pair of scissors that he could use. Now he doesn't need them because he can use a scissors like anyone else." Before he started kindergarten, Shane spent a week at Scottish Rite so staff members could train him to hold pencils, cut, color, and anything he needed to do in a class.

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