

# Meet The Battalion

Wednesday, Nov. 5  
2-4 p.m.

Forsyth Galleries, MSC

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## THE BATTALION

## Teacher-astronaut carries on dream

By Marcia Dunn  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SPACE CENTER, Houston — In just over a week, Barbara Morgan should have been rocketing into orbit as NASA's first fully trained educator-astronaut, carrying on the shattered dream of Christa McAuliffe.

Like the space shuttle fleet, though, Morgan is grounded indefinitely.

Her ship, Columbia, is gone along with seven more friends, lost in a wintry Texas sky. Yet the former Idaho elementary schoolteacher who was McAuliffe's backup for the Challenger flight is determined to persevere. NASA remains committed to the education-in-space program as well.

In fact, NASA has gone far beyond the brief training McAuliffe and Morgan got for Challenger. Morgan is a full-fledged astronaut now, and the space agency plans to accept a few more teachers into the astronaut corps early next year.

Morgan, who is helping with the teacher selection, insists she hasn't had a single second thought about flying in space since the Columbia tragedy.

She didn't after the Challenger accident, either.

"It all goes back to what we are doing and why we are doing it, and space exploration is very, very important," Morgan told The Associated Press. "It's important to us as human beings and, certainly from my point of view as a teacher, it's crucial for our kids and for the future. In any bad situation, you figure out what you're going to do to try to make things better and go forward."

In one of her first interviews since the February disaster, Morgan talked last week about the shock and anguish she felt when Columbia broke apart over Texas.

Morgan was in the shuttle training aircraft that Saturday morning, flying over the Florida touchdown site, observing the landing weather and awaiting Columbia's arrival. The next time Columbia took off, in November, she would be on board, bound for the international space station.

Her excitement and anticipation swiftly disintegrated into grief. Almost 17 years to the day of the Challenger launch explosion, she found herself once again consoling the wives, husbands, children and parents of seven dead astronauts.

"It's just like after Challenger," said Morgan, a slender, soft-spoken woman who turns 52 later this month. "People kept asking, 'Gee, aren't you glad it wasn't you.' I do get that question and I get this question this time. 'Gee, that was your ship.'"

"And I can tell you none of those thoughts went through my mind at all. I mean, all you're doing is thinking about the people and the families and what we can do to make things better."

Morgan was a close friend of them all. She had worked and trained alongside McAuliffe for the previous half-year; if McAuliffe got sick or injured before the flight, Morgan would have stepped in.

On Feb. 1, Morgan was aboard the shuttle training aircraft with chief astronaut Kent Rominger and two other crew who were in radio contact with Mission Control. At first, Columbia's loss of communication did not worry her; brief blackouts sometimes happen during re-entry. But as the silence stretched from seconds into minutes, she feared the worst.

By the time the training plane landed, Morgan knew Columbia and its crew were gone. She didn't need to hear Mission Control declaring an emergency or see TV pictures of the raining wreckage 1,000 miles away.

Nine months later, Morgan speaks in a strained voice to describe that day.

"I don't have a whole lot to say about it, except it was horrible," she said. "More than anything, it's really, really sad."

**"It all goes back to what we are doing and why we are doing it, and space exploration is very, very important."**

— Barbara Morgan  
teacher-astronaut

Back in 1985, when McAuliffe and Morgan were selected as the two teacher candidates for NASA's teacher in space program, their shuttle training flight in Houston lasted a mere five months.

When Morgan finally was invited to join NASA in 1998, she moved from McCall, Idaho, to Houston, and five years of training passed before she was assigned to a space station construction mission. Her launch date was Nov. 13, 2003, aboard Columbia.

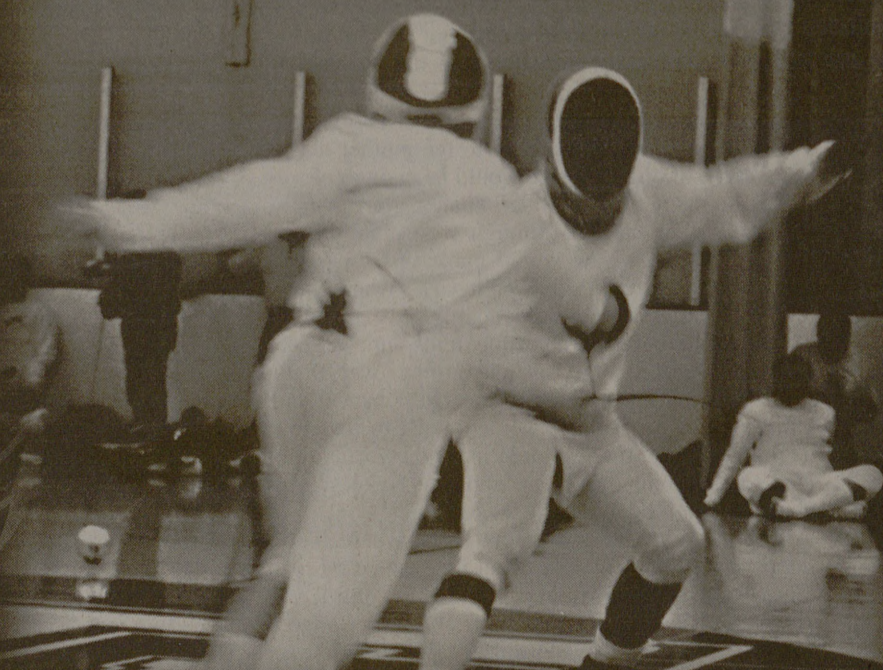
While Columbia circled Earth in January with unknown to the space agency, a deadly gash in the left wing, Morgan joined NASA Administrator Sean O'Keefe in launching a program to recruit more teachers as astronauts.

The requirements: teachers of kindergarten through 12th grade who have bachelor's degrees in education, engineering, math or science, and who are U.S. citizens and have taught for at least three of the past four years.

The courage it takes to enter a school with metal detectors at the doors every day is the same courage it takes to strap into a rocketship, according to Morgan. The commitment is also the same.

Sure, children ask her if she will be afraid to fly in space. She tells them she'll be "really, really, really alert on the launch pad just as everybody else is. But at least for me, I made those decisions a long time ago, pre- and post-Challenger."

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JUST  
THE  
VICTORY,



IT'S THE  
SPIRIT  
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CHALLENGE

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### SPORT CLUB EVENTS, BE A PART OF IT!

| Club          | Date                     | Location             |
|---------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Archery       | Nov. 7-9 3p.m.-12a.m.    | Archery Room         |
| A&M Fencing   | Nov. 7-9 Varies          | Indoor Soccer Courts |
| M. Water Polo | Nov. 7-9 8a.m.-10:30p.m. | Rec 50 M Pool        |

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### AQUATICS—MAKE A SPLASH

| Program             | Registration | Class  | Cost      |
|---------------------|--------------|--------|-----------|
| Adult Learn to Swim | TODAY!       | Nov. 3 | \$25/\$35 |
| Polar Bear Club     | All semester |        | FREE      |

### Go All Out with TAMU OUTDOORS

| Upcoming Events             | Registration    | Event Date |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| FREE Climb Technique Clinic | At Event        | Nov. 4     |
| Mt Bike Ride and Clinic     | Sept. 1-Nov. 4  | Nov. 9     |
| Lead Climbing Clinic        | Sept. 1-Nov. 10 | Nov. 11    |
| Rock Climbing 101 Clinic    | Sept. 1-Nov. 19 | Nov. 19    |
| FREE Climb Technique Clinic | At Event        | Dec. 2     |

### BREAK TRIPS

| Break Trip            | Registration    | Event Date  |
|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Horsepacking Big Bend | Sept. 1-Nov. 14 | Nov. 26-30  |
| Ski Colorado          | Sept. 1-Dec. 1  | Jan. 11-17  |
| Costa Rica Adventure  | Sept. 1-Dec. 12 | March 14-21 |

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