

# Author and Retired Aerospace Engineer Allan J. McDonald to be Featured on Close Up Radio

OGDEN, UTAH, UNITED STATES, March 2, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On a cold January morning in 1986, NASA launched the Space Shuttle Challenger. What happened next is one of the great American tragedies: an explosion in the sky. All seven crew members on board, including schoolteacher Sharon Christa McAuliffe, were killed.

What many people don't know about Challenger is how easily it could have been prevented.

Retired aerospace engineer Allan J. McDonald is the author of *Truth, Lies, and O-rings: Inside the Space Shuttle Challenger Disaster*, which recounts McDonald's experiences at on that fateful day and examines the role of ethics in leadership.

"There have been several books written about Challenger, none by anybody involved in the event," says McDonald. "I decided that an accurate historical record of what really happened was important."



Major NASA contractors must have a representative onsite for all space shuttle launches. These individuals are responsible for resolving problems and supporting the launch. As the director of the Space Shuttle Solid Rocket Motor Project, McDonald served in this role for the engineering contractor Morton Thiokol.

It was 18 degrees Fahrenheit in Florida the night before the Challenger launch: a bad forecast. McDonald was concerned such below-freezing temperatures might impact the integrity of the solid rockets' O-rings, and the boosters would not operate properly in those temperatures.

According to the vice president of engineering, the lowest recommended temperature for a safe launch was 53 degrees.

"The engineers went through methodical presentation that evening," recalls McDonald. "We assumed at that point they would just scrub it for another day and wait for warmer weather."

Instead, NASA challenged the basis for that recommendation, claiming the data was inconclusive.

Engineer Bob Ebeling told his wife that night Challenger would blow up.

"There was a mechanical failure and a failure in the management system," says McDonald. "They made the decision to launch and it proved to be the wrong decision."

McDonald would later testify before the Rogers Commission, a presidential commission formed to investigate the accident. As he sought to draw attention to the real reasons behind the disaster, McDonald was singled out for retribution by his employer, until the commission's chairman William Rogers personally intervened. Today, McDonald is the only American ever to be reinstated to his job by an act of Congress.

As a result of his efforts, McDonald would be instrumental in implementing the sweeping changes that markedly improved the safety of future missions.

"Leadership is about making tough decisions, it's lonely and difficult and sometimes impossible," says McDonald. "That's why a more conservative approach is probably the wisest course. There's always another day."

Close Up Radio will feature Allan J. McDonald in an interview with Jim Masters on March 4th at 3pm EDT

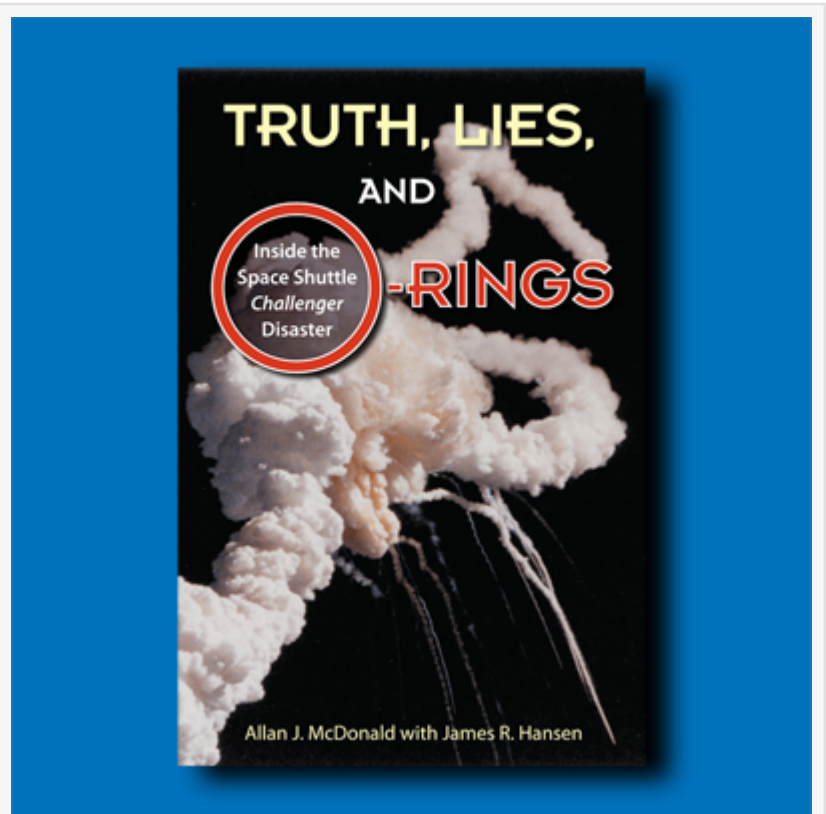
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Truth, Lies, and O-rings: Inside the Space Shuttle Challenger Disaster is available on [Amazon](#) and [Barnes & Noble](#)

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