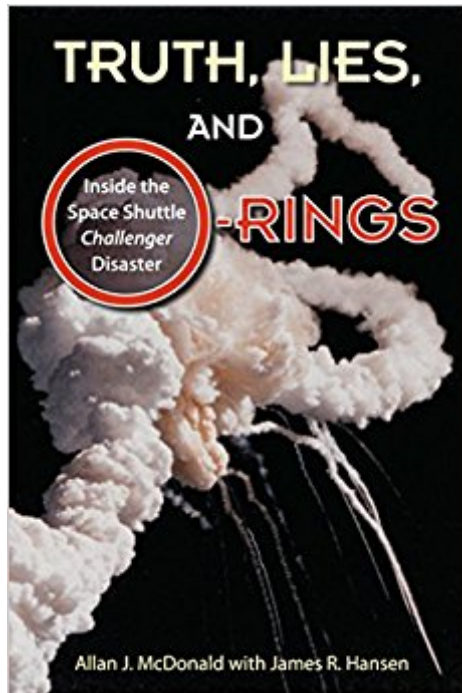


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# Truth, Lies, And O-Rings: Inside The Space Shuttle Challenger Disaster



## Synopsis

What they didn't want you to know "We all watched in shock and disbelief when Challenger was lost. Probably no one felt more disappointment and regret than Allan McDonald, who had warned us not to launch that day. His story tells of loss, grief, and the eventual rebuilding and recovery."--Robert "Hoot" Gibson, former Space Shuttle pilot and commander "A major contribution to a difficult episode in the history of human spaceflight."--Roger D. Launius, Division of Space History, Smithsonian Institution "McDonald tells the heartbreaking tale of how he saw his words of warning ignored, and the fateful consequences of that decision."--Donald C. Elder III, Eastern New Mexico University On a cold January morning in 1986, NASA launched the Space Shuttle Challenger, despite warnings against doing so by many individuals, including Allan McDonald. The fiery destruction of Challenger on live television moments after launch remains an indelible image in the nation's collective memory. In *Truth, Lies, and O-Rings*, McDonald, a skilled engineer and executive, relives the tragedy from where he stood at Launch Control Center. As he fought to draw attention to the real reasons behind the disaster, he was the only one targeted for retribution by both NASA and his employer, Morton Thiokol, Inc., makers of the shuttle's solid rocket boosters. In this whistle-blowing yet rigorous and fair-minded book, McDonald, with the assistance of internationally distinguished aerospace historian James R. Hansen, addresses all of the factors that led to the accident, some of which were never included in NASA's Failure Team report submitted to the Presidential Commission. *Truth, Lies, and O-Rings* is the first look at the Challenger tragedy and its aftermath from someone who was on the inside, recognized the potential disaster, and tried to prevent it. It also addresses the early warnings of very severe debris issues from the first two post-Challenger flights, which ultimately resulted in the loss of Columbia some fifteen years later.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

We all watched in shock and disbelief when Challenger was lost. Probably no one felt more disappointment and regret than Allan McDonald, who had warned us not to launch that day. His story tells of loss, grief, and the eventual rebuilding and recovery."--Robert "Hoot" Gibson, former Space Shuttle pilot and commander "A major contribution to a difficult episode in the history of human spaceflight."--Roger D. Launius, Division of Space History, Smithsonian Institution "McDonald tells the heartbreaking tale of how he saw his words of warning ignored, and the fateful consequences of that decision."--Donald C. Elder III, Eastern New Mexico University

What they didn't want you to know>We all watched in shock and disbelief when Challenger was lost. Probably no one felt more disappointment and regret than Allan McDonald, who had warned us not to launch that day. His story tells of loss, grief, and the eventual rebuilding and recovery."--Robert "Hoot" Gibson, former Space Shuttle pilot and commander"A major contribution to a difficult episode in the history of human spaceflight."--Roger D. Launius, Division of Space History, Smithsonian Institution"McDonald tells the heartbreaking tale of how he saw his words of warning ignored, and the fateful consequences of that decision."--Donald C. Elder III, Eastern New Mexico UniversityOn a cold January morning in 1986, NASA launched the Space Shuttle Challenger, despite warnings against doing so by many individuals, including Allan McDonald. The fiery destruction of Challenger on live television moments after launch remains an indelible image in the nation's collective memory.In Truth, Lies, and O-Rings, McDonald, a skilled engineer and executive, relives the tragedy from where he stood at Launch Control Center. As he fought to draw attention to the real reasons behind the disaster, he was the only one targeted for retribution by both NASA and his employer, Morton Thiokol, Inc., makers of the shuttle's solid rocket boosters. In this whistle-blowing yet rigorous and fair-minded book, McDonald, with the assistance of internationally distinguished aerospace historian James R. Hansen, addresses all of the factors that led to the accident, some of which were never included in NASA's Failure Team report submitted to the Presidential Commission.Truth, Lies, and O-Rings is the first look at the Challenger tragedy and its aftermath from someone who was on the inside, recognized the potential disaster, and tried to prevent it. It also addresses the early warnings of very severe debris issues from the first two post-Challenger

flights, which ultimately resulted in the loss of Columbia some fifteen years later. Allan J. McDonald retired as vice president and technical director for advanced technology programs at ATK Thiokol Propulsion in 2001. He was the director of the Space Shuttle Solid Rocket Motor Project at the time of the Challenger accident and, later, vice president of engineering for space operations during the redesign and requalification of the solid rocket motors. James R. Hansen is professor of history and director of the Honors College at Auburn University.

Interesting read. The company I worked for manufactured the O Ring In question .NASA blew it. Launched the rocket when the temp was below design specs. for the O Ring. I tried to talk people into reading this book, but very few took the challenge. Their loss !!!!!!!!!

The book "Truth Lies, and O-Rings" written by Allan J. McDonald, with James R. Hansen as co-writer is a fitting epitaph for one of the most disturbing technological catastrophes in modern time. Allan J McDonald is the retired vice president and technical director for advanced technology programs at ATK Thiokol Propulsion, the company that made the Solid Rocket Booster for NASA's Shuttle program. James R. Hansen is professor of history and director of the Honors College at Auburn University, and author of the book "First Man" an award-winning biography of Neil Armstrong. At the end of the book McDonald has taken us on a tour de force and we are confronted with the conclusion: It is not one factor alone that triggers a catastrophe, but many factors interacting together. This is true whether the accident is big or small. Some twenty years ago I was responsible for investigating why some biomedical apparatus used on patients in hospitals sometimes caused internal damages in them, and also deaths. And the conclusion was that the accidents had many sources interacting together. The daunting task is to cast light on that part of the interaction where the mistake(s) are being made. This work is especially critical when there is a man-machine interface, such as in NASA's Shuttle program. Allan J. McDonald has demonstrated that not only is this kind of work necessary, it is also beneficial for society as a whole; reason has limits and we must learn from our mistakes before we can proceed forward. The book is a "gold mine" for investigators within technological companies, insurance and financing, police and Government Agencies. Rarely do we have access to so much credible information from a source being at the very center of the overlapping interactions, from the President of the United States, Ronald Regan and down through NASA and its main sub contractors. And we shall never forget that we as corporations and individuals are here to serve the people, in this case the seven wonderful astronauts - who were overshadowed and sacrificed on that cold morning January 28, 1986. I had

no problems reading McDonald's investigative book. However, on the middle of page 465 I had to close the book for a while and take a pause. "Jane Smith, widow of Challenger Pilot Michael Smith, was very upset by what she had observed from the publicly televised hearings of the Roger Commission. She had also learned that the astronauts really had survived the explosion and had not been killed instantly as NASA first reported. Close examination of the flight films revealed the crew cabin separating intact from the rest of the orbiter after the explosion. People interested in or working with the subject "parallel and overlapping scenarios" should definitely buy this book; it's a gem! Author Allan J. McDonalds unique perspective makes this book required reading for researchers interested in the complexity of the Challenger catastrophe and it's consequences.

A must read for anyone interested in the space program, or disasters in general. Does an excellent job of detailing how a subtle engineering failure coupled with a culture of profit-driven scheduling evolved into one of the worst disasters in NASA's history.

We recently made a trip to the Kennedy Space Center. Seeing the retired shuttle Atlantis reminded me of the terrible Challenger disaster. I purchased Truth, Lies, AND O Rings to learn the truth about what really happened on that very cold day in January. I learned that plus a whole lot of interesting history about the space program. Allan McDonald showed what a brave engineer can do when he fights for his principles and tells the truth. A wonderful book that I would recommend to anyone!

A testament to one of the greatest case studies on existential risk, Al McDonald's text is one of the most exceptionally documented, detailed and insightful works on the emergence of catastrophic risk produced. As one who manages enterprise and operational risk in global financial processing, Al's work provides an invaluable illustration into the encroachment of the political into the realm of technical risk. I've yet to encounter a similar work that is so well documented and objective, yet makes you stop on every other page and realize how intentionally blind our governance systems are that they could willfully condemn the crew of the Challenger to a fiery end due to the obstinate career advancing/protecting interests of NASA and Morton Thiokol management. Whether you're in risk, human resource management, operations, or engineering, this is a book written with exceptional humility that merits significant attention in our professional and educational circles.

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