



CHALLENGER REVEALED

An Insider's Account of How
the Reagan Administration
Caused the Greatest Tragedy
of the Space Age

RICHARD C. COOK

1 of 4

INTRODUCTION

THIS IS A book that tells an insider's story of why the space shuttle Challenger blew up just over one minute after launch on January 28, 1986. It took twenty-one years for me to complete the narrative. To ask why it took so long is legitimate, though books are constantly being published on historical events which took place decades or even centuries ago, bringing new perspectives, evidence, and arguments. So a new book on one of the signature events of the 20th century may itself be a contribution to the historical literature.

But the real reason had more to do with my own personal circumstances. I wrote much of the book by 1991 from a massive archive of notes, interviews, documentary sources, and my own published articles on the subject. But at that point, I was still a government employee. I felt I owed it to my family not to jeopardize my position. I put the archive away in boxes and placed them in the attic.

More years passed. My views of the Challenger story developed. By now I had reached the thirty-year mark of my tenure with the federal government, so I was eligible for retirement. I had always known that the book had to be written so that the public could see beyond the official accounts. I also had a personal story to tell. And the Challenger saga sheds light on today's crisis in government, where the honesty of public officials in explaining the true rationale for events and decisions is so much in question.

