

Re: Space Shuttle story on 60 Minutes Wed. tonight

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.space.shuttle/2005-04/msg00551.html>

- *From:* tdadamemd-spamblock-@xxxxxxxxxxx
 - *Date:* 28 Apr 2005 22:03:32 -0700
-

>>From John:

- > Maybe I shouldn't start this . . . but as for "that
- > Failure-Is-Not-An-Option machismo", it is an invention of Hollywood.
- > Gene Krantz never said it (or at least, that's what he says). It
- > sounds cool perhaps but apparently it just never happened.

?

Here are some facts you might want to take into account:

Title Gene chose for his book: "Failure Is Not An Option". On page 12 Gene writes: "These three astronauts were beyond our physical reach.a creed we all lived by: "Failure is not an option." "

Chris Kraft's book, p337: "Gene Kranz likes to say that failure is not an option. But it was more than that. Failure was not possible in their minds. It was never a question of if. The only question was how. That confidence affected us all."

- > See the
- > recent postings about the IEEE Spectrum article entitled "Houston, We
- > Have a Solution". The article is linked and the subsequent postings
- > are very good. What the people on the ground were thinking and
- > saying
- > makes for good reading. As a number of posters noted, the article
- > also
- > disputes the film's image of the Grumman tech-rep as a useless suit.
- >
- > But if it were so, rather than machismo, I suspect the comment is an
- > artistic reflection of an ethic that controllers felt and still feel
- > regarding their responsibility towards the crew and the spacecraft.
- You
- > cannot precisely explain an ethic like that in a 2 hour movie, so you
- > try to capture a sense of it. Seeing how that little sound bite has
- > endured in our culture, I think the screenwriters succeeded.

The screenwriters succeeded in preserving the myth of invulnerability that has been carefully built around MOD and protected by the NASA

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culture throughout the decades.

Had Hollywood succeeded in capturing an accurate portrayal of the Apollo 13 mission, your average viewer could walk out of the theater and tell you the critical mistakes that the folks in Mission Control made during that flight.

The candy coated stories published by Kranz, Kraft and others perpetuate the myth. Over three decades after Apollo 13, NASA gets chastised for needing to break away from destructive aspects of its culture. I see this MOD walk-on-water attitude as one of the most harmful aspects of that. Those who work in Building 30 had opportunities to prevent the loss of the lives of the Columbia astronauts. They had opportunities to prevent the loss of the lives of the Challenger astronauts. They had opportunities to preserve the Apollo 13 mission so that Lovell and his crew could have had a shot at landing on the Moon...

But MOD blew it. They blew it spectacularly on a number of occasions.

I have a huge problem when I see these key people sidestep accountability for their mistakes. Because this sets us up for the next catastrophe.

Paul Hill's comments came as a breath of fresh air. He communicated the sentiment that "We weren't good enough that day."

His words give me hope that they *will* be good enough tomorrow.

- > For those
- > who are interested enough in such things to follow news groups like
- > this, perhaps what Admiral Rickover said about responsibility more
- > accurately reflects that ethic:
- >
- > "Responsibility is a unique concept. It can only reside in a single
- > individual. You may share it with others, but your portion is not
- > diminished. You may delegate it, but it is still with you. If
- > responsibility is rightfully yours, no evasion or ignorance or
- > passing
- > the blame can shift the burden to someone else. Unless you can point
- > your finger at the one who is responsible when something goes wrong,
- > then you never had anyone really responsible."
- >
- >
- > Admiral Hyman Rickover

Excellent quote.

- > It doesn't make for a nearly as good of a sound-bite, but this is
- > closer summary of what I trying to say and perhaps it is another way
- > of
- > looking at what the people involved in living the reality felt.

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>
> I have never admired 60 Minutes for anything else than entertainment,
> but I am looking forward to seeing a tape of this particular segment.
>
> Blue skies

The skies will be a richer hue of blue when we can all stand up and account for our mistakes. I'm sad to see that the current bookshelf of NASA books cast a thick fog that is blocking the Sun as well as the Moon.

The fact of the matter is that failure **is** an option. Eileen's daughter found out the hard way several weeks after mommy tried to blow sunshine up that overcast.

~ CT

• *Follow-Ups:*

- ◆ ***Re: Space Shuttle story on 60 Minutes Wed. tonight***
◇ *From:* Jim Oberg

• *References:*

- ◆ ***Space Shuttle story on 60 Minutes Wed. tonight***
◇ *From:* robin88th
- ◆ ***Re: Space Shuttle story on 60 Minutes Wed. tonight***
◇ *From:* hallerb
- ◆ ***Re: Space Shuttle story on 60 Minutes Wed. tonight***
◇ *From:* tdadamemd-spamblock-
- ◆ ***Re: Space Shuttle story on 60 Minutes Wed. tonight***
◇ *From:* John

- Prev by Date: ***Re: Shuttle Rocket Booster Foam***
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