



What a Ride it's Been!

by Brian Basset



The Space Shuttle

NASA's space shuttle fleet began setting records with its first launch on April 12, 1981, and continues to set high marks of achievement and endurance 30 years later. Starting with Columbia and continuing with Challenger, Discovery, Atlantis and Endeavour, the spacecraft repeatedly have carried people into orbit, conducted cutting-edge research, and built the largest structure ever assembled in space, the International Space Station. As humanity's first reusable spacecraft, the space shuttle pushed the boundaries of discovery, requiring not only advanced technology but the tremendous effort of a dedicated workforce. Thousands of civil servants and contractors throughout NASA's field centers and across the nation have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to mission success and the larger goal of space exploration.

Unlike any spacecraft before it, the shuttle launched as a rocket, served as a space habitat, science lab and workstation in orbit, and landed like an airplane. The shuttle has been a workhorse, launching, retrieving and repairing satellites. Without the shuttle and its highly skilled spacewalkers, the Hubble Space Telescope could not have been serviced and the observatory's revolutionary science discoveries would not have been possible. Laboratories in the shuttle's payload bay provided opportunities to study human health, physical and material sciences, and biology in microgravity. Shuttle research advanced our understanding of Earth, our atmosphere, the oceans and the sun. Shuttle astronauts collected hundreds of thousands of Earth observation photographs and mapped 90 percent of our planet's land surface. The International Space Station could not have been built without the unique capabilities of the shuttle, which hauled massive laboratories to orbit in its cargo bay and provided a platform for the astronauts who assembled the outpost with robotic arms and spacewalks. The space shuttle is a complex vehicle with unrivaled capability that will not soon be duplicated in any other spacecraft. The shuttle will remain a timeless icon and national treasure.

About the Artist

Brian Basset is an American comic strip artist. His feature, Red and Rover, is about the unconditional love between a dog and his boy. A retro-feel strip, Red and Rover is syndicated by Universal Uclick. Previously, Basset worked as an editorial cartoonist for The Seattle Times. A lifelong supporter of the space program, Basset resides in Seattle, Washington.

Space Shuttle Program Patch

To commemorate the 30th anniversary of the space shuttle and its retirement, the design of this patch captures the visual essence and spirit of the program in an iconic and triumphant manner. As the space shuttle program has been an innovative jewel in the history of American spaceflight, the overall shape of the patch and its faceted panels are reminiscent of a diamond or other fine gem. The shape of the patch fans out from a fine point at the bottom to a wide array across the top to evoke the vastness of space and our mandate to explore it, as the shuttle has done successfully for decades. The patch was designed by Aerospace Engineer Blake Dumesnil, who has supported the space shuttle program with his work in the Avionics and Energy Systems Divisions of the NASA Johnson Space Center's Engineering Directorate in Houston. The design was the winning entry in a commemorative patch contest for workers sponsored by the space shuttle program.

