



S81-29212

Columbia, the world's first space shuttle, was unlike anything that had been seen before.

From a technical standpoint, *Columbia* would do what no other flying machine had done before: Take off like a rocket, explore space and return to Earth as a glider to be used again.

She was an example of the ingenuity and expertise of America's best and brightest who designed, built and tested her.

But what most people probably noticed first was how beautiful she was. *Columbia*, named for the first American ship to sail around the world, was said to be the female embodiment of the United States.

She was graceful, proud and daring, and she inspired all who saw her leap into the sky for the first time to follow her.

Columbia's first launch took place on April 12, 1981. She carried a crew of Capt. John Young, Commander, and Pilot Robert Crippen, and brought them home two days later.

The matriarch of the shuttle fleet performed 28 launches over 22 years, landing safely every time but one.

Her last mission before STS-107 was 2002's STS-109, a successful mission to service the Hubble Space Telescope.

Other notable missions for the orbiter include 1992's STS-50, the first extended-duration shuttle mission, and 1999's STS-93, when *Columbia* helped place the Chandra X-ray Observatory into orbit.

The orbiter was given numerous upgrades over the years, including a "glass cockpit" in 2001.

America's first orbiter will be greatly missed by her NASA family.

Hail *Columbia!*



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