PATTY HILLIARD
In Loving Memory

Memories of our Friend,

Patty Hilliard Robertson

The following is a collection of
remembrances and photographs
of our memories of Patty.

Compiled by her friends
& co-workers from
Johnson Space Center
Houston, Texas

June, 2001

From Cheri Armstrong, Biomedical Engineer and medical trainer for flight crews

The first is to somehow express our gratitude for Patty's help during all of our procedure validation sessions. She was always so positive and helpful, and extremely patient (even when the procedures and/or hardware didn't work as they should have and even when we needed her support at the last minute to get something uplinked to the crew). She was so fun to work with, and professional at the same time.

I saw my first (and only) shuttle launch with Patty. She attended one of the SOMSTC courses at Patrick AFB, while I was still coordinating those courses. The launch was originally scheduled to occur the last day of the course, but slipped a few days. Patty and I decided to stay in Florida for the launch. We split a hotel room and went to the launch together. We met Phil and Joe Dervay to watch the early morning launch of STS-77. It was awesome, she was the perfect person to share it with.

I knew Patty through her work on the KC-135. On several occasions, she served as the "Flight Doc" for life science experiments I had manifested to fly. When she became an astronaut, she was a frequent flyer, helping scientist and engineers evaluate experiment hardware and procedures that some day would fly in space. She flew most recently on April 17, 2001.

We corresponded with each other via e-mail with regard to images from her recent KC flights being made available on a JSC web site. Her e-mails would always have some funny quip.

Patty was such a pleasant and delightful person. She was very capable and competent. It was truly a privilege to know and work with her. We will all miss her dearly and we'll hold fond memories of her close to our hearts.

Noel C. Skinner
KC-135 Coordinator
Wyle Life Sciences

From Pat McGinnis, fellow Flight Surgeon

Here is a memory of Patty that will stick with me for years.

This was always funny to us. Perhaps the rest of the crowd won't see the humor, but this was our own inside joke. Here is the background.

Patty sent her resume and application to UTMB for the NASA/UTMB Space Medicine Fellowship (now Residency). Naturally, she looked great on paper, so we wanted to invite her for an interview. Well, by the time our interviews came around in December, she had pretty much committed to go to the Wright State Aerospace Medicine Residency in Dayton, Ohio---- and she declined the invitation. Also, our program was an upstart, and we were pretty late in the year for interviewing. So this was bad news because she was a great candidate.

Well, Terry Pattinson (another NASA flight surgeon) and I were in my office one day talking about this. I was a new Flight Doc and had that tiny office in the clinic. We called her at her Family Practice office and personally asked her to come for the interview. She graciously declined because she had already made a commitment to Wright State. Terry and I passed the phone back and forth several times, and we whispered to each other some things to say in order to change her mind. . My line was something like,
"Patty, I've been through the Wright State program and found it doesn't focus enough on SPACE medicine. That is why NASA set up this new program with UTMB. And if your goal is SPACE medicine, you need to come to Houston!" Terry, as you know, can be more forceful and direct when he is engaged in such conversations. Yet he is also skillful and tactful. He related his experience of 12 years as an ER doc and his 2 years in the Fellowship. He pleasantly managed to convey something like, "Hey, if you don't come down here your crazy!"

It seemed like it took about 20 minute of us doing our best sales-pitches, but it worked. She agreed to come down strictly to do the interview and the "look over" the program.

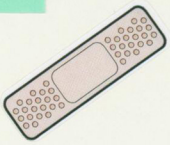
Well, as the years rolled on, and as Patty advanced through the Residency, then as a NASA Flight Surgeon, then as an astronaut, we would have the following conversation. I'd run into her somewhere and she'd tell me what was going on in her life. And I'd say something like, "See Patty, I saved you from living in Dayton, Ohio for at least 2 years. You could have been stuck there wondering how to get to NASA." She would say something like, "Yes, and I was so impressed to receive a call from a NASA Flight Surgeon, that I absolutely HAD to come for the interview." And I'd say something like, " Yeah-- that was the first and last time you've been impressed by the title of NASA Flight Surgeon-- isn't it??!!"

We had that conversation a dozen times I bet. And we would laugh and laugh at that story, and make fun of ourselves that way.

Now, I know that sounds silly, but it was our inside joke and I'm smiling even as I write this email. I'll miss her.

From Brenda Rouse, Flight Medicine Clinic Nurse

Patty took the time to say "thank you."
She took the time to go the second mile.
She took the time to make someone's life just a little brighter
She took the time to care
I will miss her big bright smile (and her freckles!).



From Teena Still, Flight Medicine Clinic Transcriptionist

I caught Patty red handed one day as she buzzed the beach of Galveston, right over my head (not knowing it was me). She laughed and giggled when I told her the story.

I have this friend Tom Grubbs who took us up in his plane one time and we took pictures of Patty in her plane as she did her stunts beside us. I made her a wonderful screen saver for her computer showing her in motion as she did her aerobatics.

We sometimes sat around at outings in restaurants talking about medical circumstances and problems and we would turn heads of other patrons and our husbands would have to call us down.

We went to the Schlitterbahn Water Park one summer and were getting ready to ride tube rides and to watch her as she fit herself to several tubes was a sight to see. She was a very comical lady.

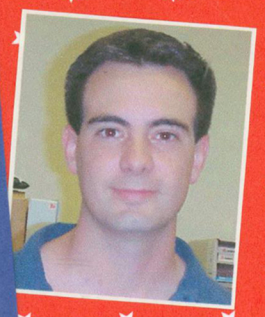
From Mike Barratt, Fellow Flight Surgeon and Fellow Astronaut

There has been no one I have known with such a passion to fly as Patty; she had said many times that she would rather fly than do almost anything else. Whether aerobatics in her Pitts, bag rides in the T-38, or taking a new student for an intro flight, Patty lived on life and airspeed.

I was on the interview committee when Patty came through as an applicant to the Space Medicine Fellowship in 1995. She was a clear top choice, with all the academics, clinical experience, aviation background, and genuine affability and warmth. I was only sorry we could not hold on to her longer; however, Patty took the pride of Medical Operations to the astronaut corps when she was selected to the 1998 class.

Your day was always better for running into Patty, whether in the hall, at the airfield, in Russia, or wherever. Warm words, shared enthusiasm, and a hug were standard fare. She never had bad words about anyone. We cannot honor her memory in any better way than to live like she did, savoring life and all the experiences that come her way.

I first met Patty in the Building 29 Conference Room at NASA. I had just become a biomedical flight controller, and she was in our weekly meeting with the flight surgeons. I had just completed SCUBA certification, and after talking to her at the meeting, it turned out that we had the same dive master. I told her that I was also thinking about taking flying lessons, and she told me to talk with her whenever I wanted, and that she would take me on an aerobatic flight if I wanted.



Not long after, she was selected as an astronaut. A few other flight controllers, myself, and a number of others attended a congratulations lunch for her at Tommy's Cafe. I remember hearing the excitement and anticipation in her voice about what she was about to take on. I was so happy for her. She was doing exactly what she wanted to do.

After I decided to pursue my pilots license, she recommended an instructor to me. From then on I'd run into her at La Porte airport from time to time, and ask how her ASCAN training was going. She'd tell me "I just love the flying!". Flying T-38s was the best part for her. I couldn't blame her. I'd always look around to see if I could find her red bi-plane, to see if maybe I could catch her there.

My last memory of her was during my last day working as a flight controller. We were working on some procedures for some ISS exercise equipment and she had to place electrodes on my chest, and was kind enough not to shave the hair on my chest. She left the removal to me after some painful attempts to remove them... thank you! I remember wishing her the best of luck telling her that hopefully by the time I returned from school in Colorado to work at NASA again, she'd be assigned to a crew. I knew I'd see her again. I was sure that I would see her fly in space.

Patty, it's clear that you've touched so many lives. I'm so glad that I was one of them. Thank you. Goodbye.

- Ken Stroud

My Memory of Patty

I attended meetings where Patty validated procedures for in-flight hardware. It was important for me to see the hardware and how it operated; watching and listening to Patty assess each step of the procedure was interesting as well as informative. She showed great care and wisdom in evaluating that the procedures were clear and understandable. Her kindness and warm personality permeated her professionalism. We all found her comfortable to work with and will always remember her lovely smile.

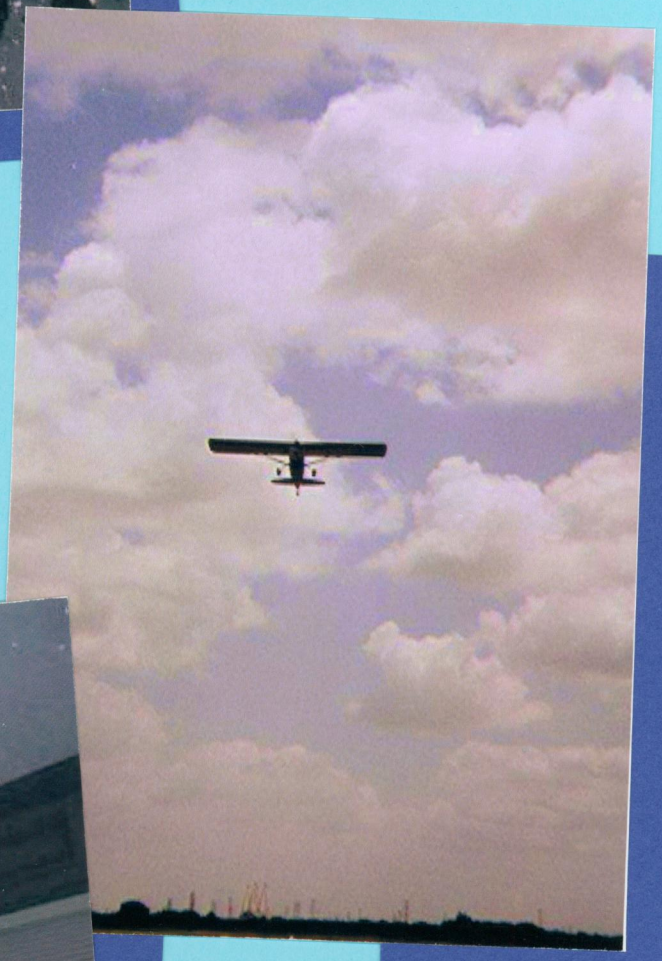
Arlene Leboe
Integration Support Scientist
Wyle Laboratories

Jumpin' Out

Hangin' Out

Piggin' Out

Patty's two loves:
Scott and Flying



From Yuho Hayashi, Visiting Scientist

I met Patty three years ago in the hallway at the Flight Medicine Clinic. A NASA staff, medical doctor, aerobatic pilot, certified flight instructor, and astronaut, Patty was the kind of person who always had one more impressive qualification to reveal. Patty was the kind of person who pursued her life hard, and who, with all the qualifications she had earned for herself, seemed to be immensely enjoying her life. I, too, wished I could pursue my life that way.

Soon after Patty gave me three introductory flights in April 1998, I decided that I would seriously like to pursue flying. I started my private pilot training in 1999, and am now a private pilot myself, preparing to earn my instrument rating this summer. I think very fondly of Patty's lessons in the air, particularly the one she taught me the rules about exchanging airplane controls. When taking the airplane control, she taught me, I was to verbally confirm it, rocking the wings lightly left and right. This was to prevent the situation where we might assume one of us had the control of the airplane, when neither of us actually controlled it. "I have the airplane," I said, feeling as if I was casting a spell; I rocked nervously the wings left and right, feeling as if I was working a puppet. I shyly laughed at the awkwardness of the procedure; Patty returned me an assuring smile.

If this is a farewell, I must let Patty know that I feel so proud to have met her in my life. I must thank her for teaching me how to fly, and for being the kind of person I always had many things to learn from. If this is a farewell, I wish for Patty to rest in peace. But I must also confess that, when I look up to that pretty blue sky, I will miss her just very much.

As we gaze upon the starry night, perhaps we are not observing the stars. Perhaps the beautiful glimmering lights we see are in fact openings in heaven. And we can see the love of our lost one as it pours through the night sky upon us to let us know they are happy.

I once saw a card with this message. I was sorry that I couldn't find the card because it perfectly described how I will be reminded of Patty. I will simply have to look up into the night sky.

Marianne Pettys

When I think of Patty, I cannot help but remember her positive attitude and thoughtfulness.

When she was a Space Medicine resident, I assisted her during her research project by running a scanner to measure the subjects' muscle mass. It was a pleasure working with her; she wore a smile and a positive demeanor *every* day for both coworkers and subjects. I was honored when she invited me to her graduation reception after her residency.

A few months afterwards, she returned from her vacation in Indonesia. She made a point of stopping by my office to deliver a gift she had bought for me there: a set of 5 hand-made, wicker coasters. I was touched by her thoughtfulness. I played only a small part in her study, but she felt that it was more. I really like the coasters, and I have always used them in my house. It is the least I can do in her memory but to donate one of them for this scrapbook.

Thanks Patty.

Chris Miller

Faith Vilas, JSC Astronomer

I had the chance to meet Patty Robertson last summer when Pam Melroy and I hosted a wedding shower for Ann Sanders and Tom Marshburn. Tom had requested a couples' shower. Very few people actually showed up - it was just an odd weekend when lots of people were out of town - and Patty came with her husband, Scott. Both of them had been somewhere sunny (the beach? In a boat?). In any case, they were both sunburned and very hungry. Since we did the shower at Tommy's one afternoon, we had a buffet of hors d'oeuvres and cake at the shower, which we had ordered to feed what we expected would be a much larger party. I spent some time talking them into "Eat! Please eat! Eat more!"

At the time, I had a great, long conversation with her. We talked about flying, the connection between Ann and Pam and me, and the person who made fizzy fruit who was also sitting with us. We talked about the astronaut class of '98, about half of whom I had met in Pensacola, Florida, in the water rescue class in 1998. I really felt as if I had made a connection - never mind that I did not expect to run into her again and never did. And that is a tribute to her being a genuinely friendly person, which is how I remember her.

Boundless

We do not come to this place to say goodbye,
for those words have everlasting meaning.
We have not only come to mourn our great loss and cry,
but also to understand she is happy in her new home.

For I believe she is in a wondrous place,
where she can fly all day and all night.
Where she can fly with her brilliant grace,
every single aircraft she has ever desired.

She now has no limitations as she heads for the stars,
there is no material world to bind her.
And if her wishes take her to the moon or Mars,
there is no long line or bureaucratic mess to slow her down.

For it is only us who mourn so,
since while we are bound to this existence,
no matter where or how far we travel or go,
the glory of her beautiful smile and soul will elude us.

But since our love and friendship will never wane
even as the toils of life try to pull us apart,
I'll just say, until our paths cross again,
see you later and take care my dearest friend.

Steve Swanson

To Patty

Some things we just cannot believe.

The awareness diffuses from the outside shell inwards to the very center of our heart; still the distance is too large to be covered, as large as the lost affection that fills it.

We wander in a world of recollections, deluding ourselves that their intensity has the power to overcome and deny the events; still we cannot break the bonds to our present.

A sense of resignation descends in our souls, still we cannot believe.

So we look far away into the horizon, in a dimension we can only perceive, a distant shore, and bid you good-bye; and suddenly we know that it will not be forever, that our thoughts know no limits, and that in the blink of an eye we can reach you.

Now we can believe.
Farewell, Patty, for the present.

I will never forget you.

With love and respect
Nadine

Nadine Conza received her first flight lesson from Patty. She is now a pilot in her home country, Switzerland, and credits Patty for her inspiration.

When I first met Patty, she had moved into an office across the hall from me in the Medical Sciences building. I felt an instant kinship with her, both of us sharing our memories of growing up in Western Pennsylvania. Every encounter I had with Patty brightened my day. Her infectious smile and her way of conversing made me feel like I was the most important person to her. I can only imagine how wonderful it must have been to be one of her patients.

Patty touched several people in my family. One summer morning in 1998 she took my husband, Stuart Lee, step-daughter Anna, and me for a plane ride. Each of us took turns, Patty graciously agreeing to three separate 30-minute acrobatic experiences. My step-daughter was anxious at first, but once she returned you couldn't see where her smile ended. It was an incredible experience for all of us (and for my stomach in particular).

Patty also offered to fly my dad, Bob Fraser, an old Navy pilot, for his birthday later that year. It was a surprise for him, and boy did we make his year! Scott piloted the plane, with Patty taking off in her Pitts and trailing smoke in front of Scott & Dad for dramatic effect. Scott let Dad take the controls for a while, and you should have heard Dad rave afterwards! Patty flew alongside them for a while, then returned to chat with us while the boys were flying. I can't put into words how much this meant to us. Dad still talks about it every so often, and from his home in PA always asks about Scott and Patty, who 'gave him his best birthday present ever'.

Patty was a real hero to us. She was the kind of person who inspired others to reach for their dreams, both in career and personal endeavors. Her example reminds us to live life to the fullest every day, every moment. And sadly, her passing reminds us all to stop and remember, every day, how very important it is to stay connected with those we love, and to tell them often how very much they mean to us.

Patty, we hope you knew how you are loved, by so many...

Love always,
your friends Lesley and Stuart Lee

From the Exercise Physiology Laboratory:
A small sampling of the type of things Patty would do for us!

KC-135 Flights:
April 17 & 18, 2001

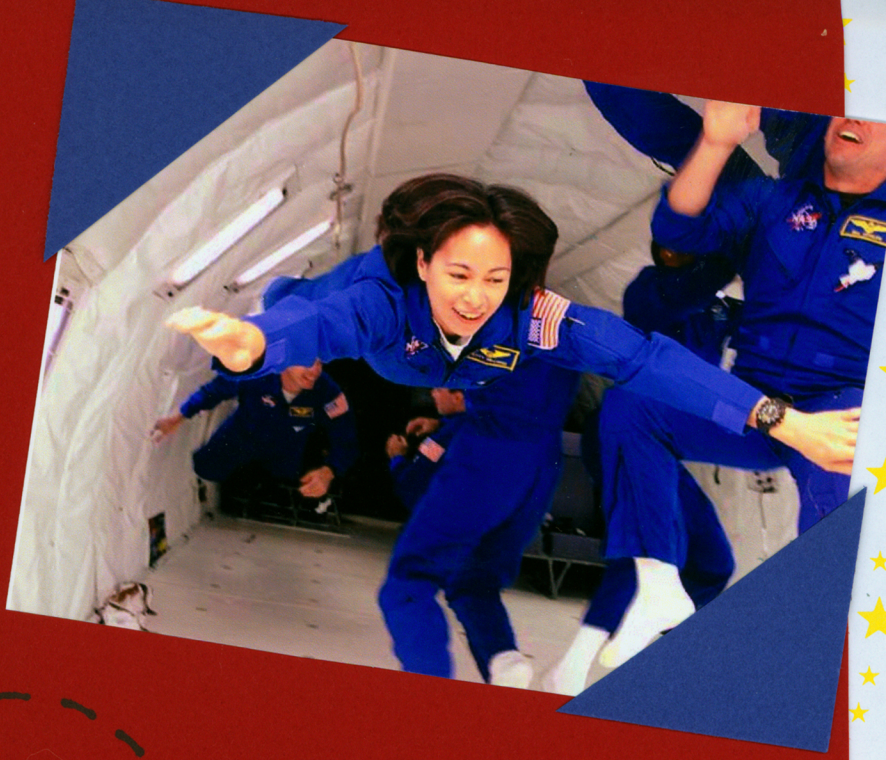
Exercise Hardware Evaluation

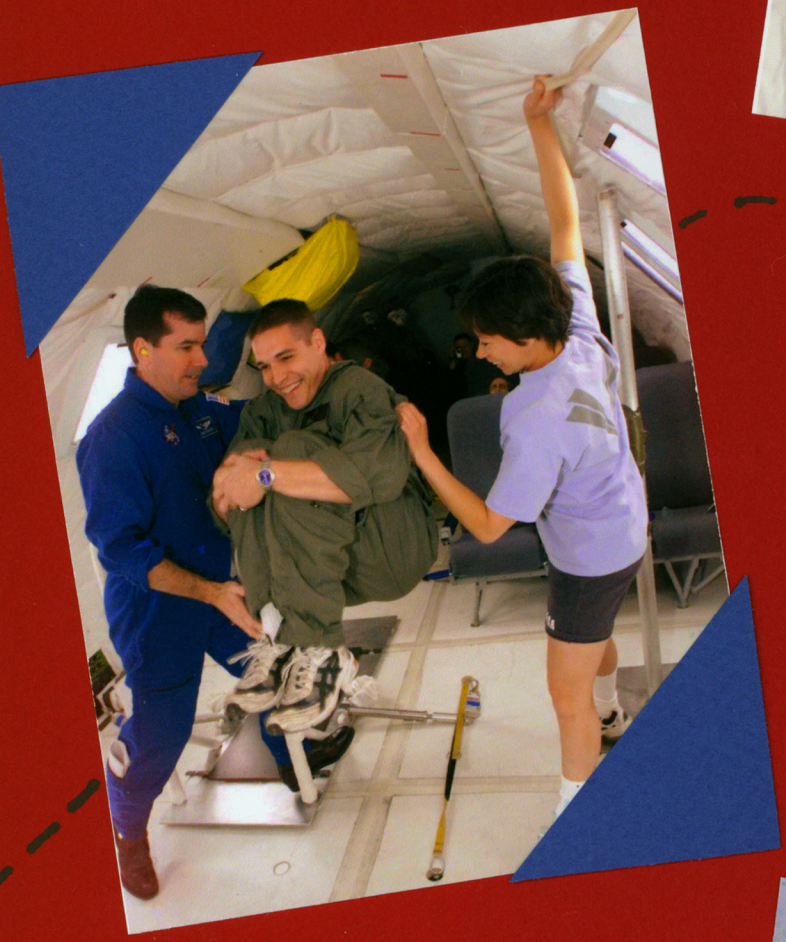
EXERCISE COUNTERMEASURES PROJECT
NASA/JSC

We are grateful and honored to have had the opportunity to work with someone as inspiring as Patty!

FLIGHT VIDEOS

Vomit Comet





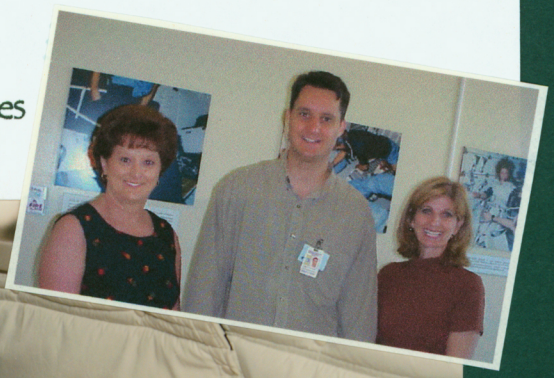
Weightless Wonder

TRIBUTE TO PATTY

The Human Test Subject Facility sends their prayers and sympathy to you and your family and to Scott for your loss of Patty. We first met her when she came through the Human Test Subject Facility to qualify as a test subject for one of our studies. She flew on the KC-135 aircraft for Dr. Todd Schlegel while participating in his study, "Orthostatic Intolerance and Motion Sickness after Parabolic Flight." This picture depicts the KC-135 portion of that study.

Patty was a delightful and thoughtful person – she always had a smile and was so friendly and kind to everyone she met. When she conducted her own study on Eccentric and Concentric Resistive Exercises, we recruited test subjects for her. She was so easy to work with and we enjoyed our interaction with her. She always showed such an interest in learning and sharing that knowledge with others. She will definitely be missed.

Todd T. Schlegel, M.D.
Linda Byrd
Connie Jones
Rori Yager



I remember Patty was not as nervous as most of the test subjects I'd worked with. She was really excited about flying on the KC-135 since she'd be experiencing weightlessness for more than the 5-10 seconds at a time that she was accustomed to in her acrobatic flying. She really liked feeling the zero-g periods and wasnice and cool about it. She was fun to work with.

Edgar Benavides

SPICE

GIRL

POWER

GROUP XVII PENGUINS TOUR KENNEDY SPACE CENTER

The Flying Penguins

Patty and her Expedition 2 Cowpokes

Patty Would

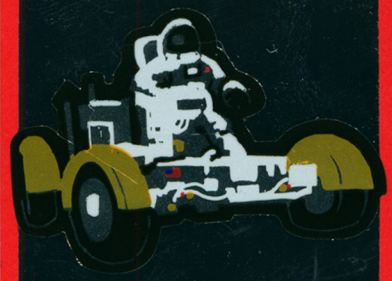
Patty would share and always care
Stand strong to do her part
Unselfishly living and giving,
A friend right from the start

Patty would smile a mile,
Instant shine and full of life
On every heart, leaving her mark
A daughter, a sister, a wife.

Patty would want your light to stay bright
Far and free from your pain..
She'd say "I reached for the sky to fly!
Now I'm higher than any airplane!"

Patty will be remembered by so many. Gone but not forgotten.
Keena Acock

THE GREAT OUTDOORS



TJ CREAMER

Chevy. The official 4X4s of ahhhhhhhhhh, aaiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii, yiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii and Kirkwood,
KIRKWOOD

May 29, 2001

Dear Mr. Douglas Peterson,

Ever since Astronaut, Ken Reightler, visited my school in January the entire school is very supportive of NASA and astronauts. Last Wednesday a student at my school whom I do not know by name because she is in the upper grades walked up to me and said, "Did you hear about the crash?" I told her that I was not aware of a crash, but that when I learned about what she was talking about I'd let her know. I turned on my computer after coming home from school to learn about Astronaut, Dr. Patricia Hilliard Robertson and realized what the student was talking about. I told my students about the accident the following day and they immediately made get well cards and they are enclosed along with a sympathy card and a mass card for her husband, Mr. Scott Robertson. My students and I are so very sorry about what happened to Astronaut, Dr. Patricia Hilliard Robertson and NASA and her family will be in our thoughts and prayers.

Sincerely, Mrs. Linda Casto and Transitional First Graders

Mrs. Linda Casto

Comboni Missionaries

Perpetual Mass Association

ALEX Home

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Linda Casto

Linda Casto was nicknamed "*Astronut*" and voted "most likely to be arrested for stalking an astronaut" by her fellow NASA Educational Workshops (NEW) candidates while attending a workshop at Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama, during July of 2000.

Linda has taught first grade, reading, and transitional first grade in the Mantua Township School District in Mantua, New Jersey, for the past 29 years. When Sharon Christa McAuliffe was assigned to the Crew of STS-51-L as the first teacher in space, Linda began developing an interest in NASA. She then began teaching her students about the Challenger Crew and the impact space exploration might have on their lives.

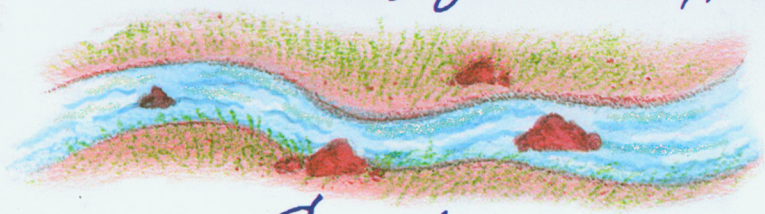
In January 1999, Linda took a 6-week technology course with an instructor who offered her an opportunity of a lifetime. Fortuitously, the instructor had an astronaut friend whose first mission was the upcoming launch, and Linda's students were offered a chance to correspond via e-mail with Pilot Jeff Ashby. After corresponding with Jeff for several months, Linda's class received an autographed photo of the STS-93 crew with the words, "*To Mrs. Casto's First Grade Class—Reach for the stars! From the Crew of Columbia.*" The astronauts had signed their names. Linda then traveled to Florida and experienced her first live launch at Kennedy Space Center, STS-93, when Jeff lifted off on July 23, 1999.

Upon returning from NEW 2000, Linda devised a web page that included links to many space-related sites that she felt very worthwhile for educators. She also presented a 3-day NASA workshop to Cherry Hill Public Schools teachers and conducted two live videoconferences for teachers, students, and parents with Johnson Space Center in Houston and taught about the International Space Station.

In January 2001, Linda was contacted by Lockheed Martin and offered an astronaut visitor for her school. Astronaut Kenneth Reightler presented a slide presentation on "Living in Space" and

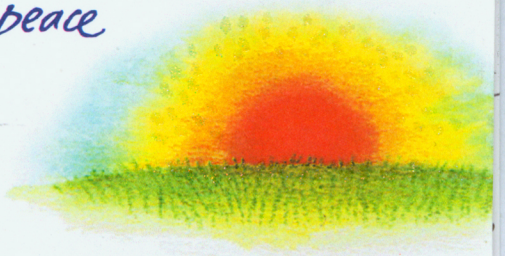
Somewhere a journey begins
at the end
of the worldly existence we know,

Somewhere a path
stretches over the stars,
and rivers of memories flow,



Somewhere a silence
is heard far away
and the brightness of day
fills the night,

Where the trials of life
are resolved into peace
when a soul
finds its way
to the light.



Flyover for Patty at Ellington Field Memorial

May 29,

2001

Keep watch over us, dear friend.