



Sally Kristen Ride

May 26, 1951 - July 23, 2012

La Jolla, California

Sally Kristen Ride died in La Jolla, California, on July 23, 2012, of pancreatic cancer. She was sixty-one. Born in Los Angeles on May 26, 1951, she became, in 1983, the first American woman in space, a physicist who treated Challenger's flight as work and the press conference as something to get through without becoming a mascot for other people's sentences.

She flew twice. After NASA she taught, ran Sally Ride Science so girls would see themselves in laboratories, and served on the panels that investigated two shuttle disasters - including the one that destroyed the orbiter she had flown. She kept her private life private until the obituary her partner, Tam O'Shaughnessy, wrote; the silence had been a choice in a profession that punished candor.

La Jolla was home. Stanford was the campus of the public goodbye. There is no cemetery plot this page can send a visitor to. The classrooms she built are the continuing flight. She asked to be remembered as a scientist who had also happened to fly.

She trained as an astrophysicist before she trained as an astronaut, a sequence she corrected whenever a headline reversed it. The education company outlasted the flights. La Jolla was a working town for her, not a retirement poster. Stanford said the public goodbye. The partner's obituary said the private one. She corrected headlines that called her an astronaut first and a physicist second. The shuttle investigations were unpaid public work she treated as part of having flown. There is no stone to visit, which she would have preferred to a bronze that got the job title wrong.

Services

Died in La Jolla on July 23, 2012. Cremated. A celebration of life was held at Stanford University.

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