

Sent: Monday, July 23, 2012 4:47 PM

Subject: Sally Ride, first American woman in space, has died

1. Here's an unexpected loss of a beloved symbol and a real nice person I knew pretty well.
2. Ride was 61.
3. My office was down the hall from hers in bldg 4, 3rd floor, at NASA's Johnson Space Center. The 'Astronaut Office' had one end of the floor, and flight controllers involved with activities scheduling on orbit were at the other end; my specialty was scheduling orbital rendezvous.
4. In the 1979-1983 years, before new astronaut selections overpopulated the floor and pushed us non-astronauts off, we all socialized and visited all the time.
5. A few months before her flight in June 1983, I popped my head around her office door and remarked, 'I've got another 'space first' for you.' She smiled and sighed -- I was the unofficial 'space statistician' for the astronauts and kept a running log of 'statistical significance' of their flights -- and asked, resignedly, "What is it?"
6. "You're gonna be the first person to fly in space who's younger than me," I replied [I was 38 at the time, she was 31].
7. Her face brightened into a grin. "I'm good for that," she laughed, and returned to her studies.
8. She made a second flight later, again with commander Bob Crippen [rumors had them romantically involved although he was married]. She later married fellow astronaut Steve Hawley for a comfortable alliance for convenience, but they separated after she eventually left Houston.
9. Dozens of American women followed her into space. Three died on space flights, another in training. She was a good symbol of the start, and those who followed paid for their paths in labor, tears, and in blood.
10. She used her fame, and the power it gave her, for good. She preserved the symbolism.
11. She was the right woman in the right place at the right time -- attagirl.