

# TAKE HEART

## A Conversation in Poetry

*Edited & Introduced by Wesley McNair,  
Maine Poet Laureate*

This week is the 26th anniversary of NASA's Challenger disaster, which took the lives of the New Hampshire teacher Christa McAuliffe and her astronaut companions. Today's haunting poem describes their ill-fated journey and the technological culture that failed them.

### What Positions Do They and We Assume In the Encapsulated Stillness?

*By John Tagliabue*

While  
somewhere in a capsule deep in the sea  
    off the Florida coast  
seven visitors to the earth who planned to  
    visit outer space  
lie dead with their advanced technological gadgets  
    and once active  
mysterious eyes, all kinds of scientists and many  
    argumentative committees  
discuss in details the possible causes of the Challenger's  
    explosion, flaming  
demise into fish-wandering seas. Octopus nearby,  
    and dead sea captains,  
ships like old cultures gone to the bottom. The many  
    slightly alive  
statisticians argue and probe and computers they think  
    are at their advanced  
command. How silent they are, the sky dreamers, those  
    children in the womb  
of the metal.

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