

# Celebrity Lecture Series

## The Glass Spaceship

October 15, 2022

11 AM Lecture



**Gerald Blackburn**

Director, Columbia  
Memorial Space Center  
Foundation



As technological achievements in space exploration grew in magnitude and frequency, it became clear that the ability to operate outside of Earth's atmosphere and gravity had much more value than merely overcoming scientific challenges. Clearly, the space environment offered myriad practical benefits. But those benefits had to be economically - as well as technologically - feasible. That reality gave birth to the Space Shuttle concept. A system that could carry people and payloads into low-earth orbit, and bring them back again, with a vehicle that could be re-used, again and again, would provide that kind of practical capability. The scientific and technological challenges inherent in development of such a system were enormous. Thousands of talented scientists, engineers, and other specialists had to stretch their capabilities to the limit. They succeeded spectacularly. One of these exceptional individuals was Gerald Blackburn, a veteran engineer, who had honed his skills on the Apollo program. Gerald specialized in Materials and Process engineering, developing new applications of the most advanced materials in the industry, and then inventing new ones. His story is a fascinating one, and his insights from past achievements offer exciting hints for future success in space exploration.

Remembering  
Space Shuttle Columbia Crew

• Michael P. Anderson • Rick D. Husband • Laurel Clark • William C. McCool •  
• Ilan Ramon • Kalpana Chawla • David M. Brown •

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