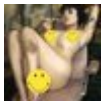
Twitter Thread by SLE Photo



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@SLEPhoto

It was my sophomore year of high school. I was taking a Drama class, it was taught in the auditorium and had 60 or so students in it, so we generally had 2 teachers present. The intercom system didn't function correctly in there, so when we heard an announcement one of the (1/)

@BeschlossDC teachers went out to see why something was coming over the intercom in the middle of the day. I was in the Orlando area, less than an hour from KSC, so launches were normal for us. We'd grown up watching them & many of us had been to KSC to see them in person. So we weren't (2/)

@BeschlossDC really thinking about the launch, it was business as usual. This is where it's important to note I was in a drama class. In the first week of class the teachers had staged an incident where one of them was telling the class a story about a student, and a football player (3/)

@BeschlossDC who was in the class jumped up, screaming "you promised not to tell!" and attacked one of the teachers. It was all staged, and given that this was 1986 so before people thought about school shootings or mass violence it was scary but not something that would be considered (4/)

@BeschlossDC "out of bounds" like it would be today. It did, however, make us HUGELY skeptical of anything the teachers in that class told us because we didn't know if it was another "exercise." So when the teacher who'd gone out to check the announcement came in looking upset and saying (5/)

@BeschlossDC "There was an accident, the shuttle blew up on launch" none of us believed it. We all actually started laughing. It took them a minute or two to settle us down and start believing he was serious, and then he said "everyone outside." The school (public school but in a wealthy (6/)

@BeschlossDC neighborhood, so it had a big open campus) has a large "commons" area just outside the auditorium, & we all trooped out. Like I said, we were less than 40 miles from KSC so we could easily see the launch with the naked eye & we all knew what they looked like. We got outside (7/)

@BeschlossDC and saw the contrails and the "puff" from the explosion and it was obvious the shuttle & its crew was gone. A lot of us knew people involved with operations at KSC. My mom was getting her teaching certificate so a teacher being on the shuttle was important. More to the point (8/)

@BeschlossDC BECAUSE we were so close and it was such a part of "normal" life for us the program seemed like such a normal thing we really thought in terms of "in a few years when we grow up space travel might be a reality for US." That idea took a real hit that day. We all cried. (9/)

@BeschlossDC It was a real hit, a shock to the system. The whipsaw effect of initially not believing it and then the reality of it made it worse. And this was only 5 years after a lot of us watched Hinkley almost assassinate Reagan. Those 2 moments hit our psyches pretty hard. Gen X was (10/)

@BeschlossDC really shaped by both of those events. Hope and dreams can be awfully fragile. (11/end)