

February 2, 2003

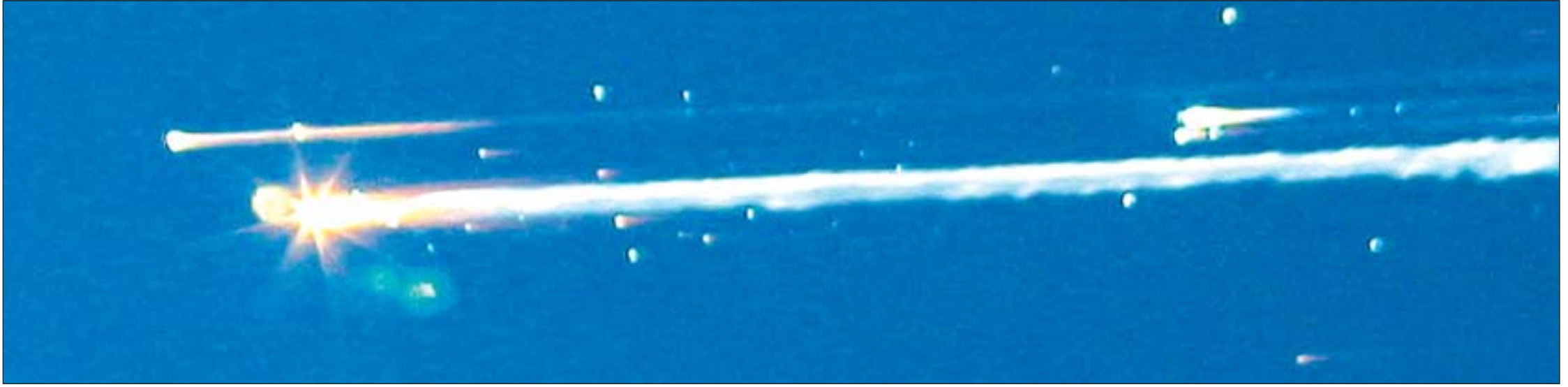
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COLUMBIA CATASTROPHE



DR. SCOTT LIEBERMAN/AP

Debris from the space shuttle streaked across the sky over Tyler, Texas. Amateur photographer Dr. Scott Lieberman shot a series of photos showing the breakup of the spacecraft from his yard.

'The Columbia is lost'

Shuttle explodes; all 7 astronauts on board killed

BY MARCIA DUNN AND PAM EASTON
Associated Press

High over Texas and just short of home, space shuttle Columbia fell to pieces Saturday, raining debris over hundreds of miles of countryside. Seven astronauts perished — a gut-wrenching loss for a country and world already staggered by tragedy.

The catastrophe occurred 39 miles above the Earth, in the last 16 minutes of the 16-day mission, as the spaceship re-entered the atmosphere and glided in for a landing in Florida. In its horror and in its backdrop of a crystal blue sky, the day echoed one almost exactly 17 years before, when the Challenger exploded.

"The Columbia is lost," said President Bush, after he telephoned the families of the astronauts to console them.

"The same creator who names the stars also knows the names of the seven souls we mourn today," Bush said, his eyes glistening. "The crew of the shuttle Columbia did not return safely to Earth, but we can pray they are safely home."

The search for the cause began immediately. One focus: possible damage to Columbia's protective thermal tiles on the left wing from a flying piece of debris during liftoff on Jan. 16.

The loss of seven explorers of space's dark reaches — shuttle commander Rick Husband, Michael Anderson, David Brown, Kalpana Chawla, Laurel Clark

Please see SHUTTLE, 8A



Michael Anderson



David Brown



Kalpana Chawla



Laurel Clark



Rick Husband



William McCool



Ilan Ramon

Damage to tiles may have caused shuttle disaster

BY MARCIA DUNN
Associated Press

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — Investigators trying to figure out what destroyed space shuttle Columbia focused immediately on the possibility that its thermal tiles were damaged far more seriously than NASA realized by a piece of debris during liftoff.

Just a little over a minute into Columbia's launch on Jan. 16, a chunk of insulating foam peeled away from the external fuel tank and smacked into the left wing, which, like the rest of the shuttle, is covered with tiles to protect the ship from the extreme heat of re-entry into the atmosphere.

On Saturday, that same wing started exhibiting sensor failures and other problems 23 minutes before Columbia was scheduled to touch down. With just 16 minutes to go before landing, the shuttle disintegrated over Texas.

"As we look at that now in hindsight ... we can't discount that there might be a connection," shuttle manager Ron Dittmore said on Saturday, hours after the tragedy. "But we have to caution you and ourselves that we can't rush to judgment on it, because there are a lot of things in this business that look like the smoking gun but turn out not even to be close."

Just a day earlier, NASA had given assurances that the launch-day problem was absolutely no reason for concern. The space agency did an exten-

Please see TILES, 8A

Belleville astronaut's mother saddened

BY SCOTT WUERZ
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BELLEVILLE — As she sat at the Kennedy Space Center in October awaiting the landing of the space shuttle that carried her daughter, Rose Hall couldn't help but notice the crew of former astronauts and NASA employees who hovered around.

They had one purpose: to rush the families of astronauts away from the landing site and console them in the event of tragedy.

The memory rushed back to Hall on Saturday when she learned that space shuttle Columbia had exploded on re-entry.

"I was just tearful when I got the news," she said. "I could imagine exactly what the families were going through when they got the news that the space shuttle was lost. We were all aware, when we were there of the people who were waiting to whisk us away if something tragic happened. All I can think of is the grief of the families. It must have been devastating."

Hall's daughter, Sandra



Belleville native Sandra Magnus visited the International Space Station as a member of the Atlantis crew in October 2002.

Magnus, arrived safely home Oct. 19 from a mission aboard space shuttle Atlantis involving construction of the International Space Station.

But she was not spared from the tragedy Saturday.

"All the astronauts are like a big family," Hall said. "Sandra trained with three of the people who were on the Columbia. This must be terrible for her."

Hall said she spoke to her

daughter briefly after the accident. Magnus is in Texas, where she has been doing work in the aftermath of her space mission. While aboard the space station, Magnus conducted an experiment to study the effects of space on saliva.

"She was going to a marathon when she heard about the accident," Hall said. "She said she was going to Johnson Space Center to see if she could do anything to help."

Magnus was not able to talk to the Belleville News-Democrat, Hall said, because NASA on Saturday forbade astronauts from talking to the media about the details of their missions.

But Hall said she and her husband, Richard, discussed their daughter's future with the space program Saturday morning.

"Police and firefighters put their lives on the line every day," Hall said. "They're aware of the danger. But they love what they do, so they keep doing it. If Sandra decides to go up in the shuttle again, we would support her in her decision."

INSIDE:

THE CREW: Profiles of the seven astronauts who died; Israel mourns its first man in space. **PAGE 5A**

REACTION: Metro-east residents talk about the tragedy; Bush leads the nation in mourning. **PAGE 6A**

DEBRIS: Authorities pick up pieces of the shuttle in Texas and other states. **PAGE 7A**

FINAL MOMENTS: Mission Control hears nothing but silence in moments after explosion. **PAGE 7A**

SAD MEMORIES: Columbia tragedy reminds Americans of 1986 Challenger explosion. **PAGE 9A**

FOCUS: There's one thing that's certain about Illinois' malpractice dispute: No one can agree who's at fault.



Dr. Rocco Marrese, a surgeon in Edwardsville, also is a licensed lawyer.

Lawyers, insurers point to each other for malpractice crisis

BY GEORGE PAWLACZYK AND BETH HUNSDORFER
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Dr. Rocco Marrese smiled, leaned forward and delivered his diagnosis of why medical malpractice insurance rates have gotten so high so fast that metro-east doctors are organizing in protest, and a few have even moved to other states.

As both a surgeon in Edwardsville and a lawyer licensed in Illinois who regularly sues doctors in medical malpractice cases, Marrese might seem uniquely qualified to discuss why the rates are so high.

But like most intense malpractice insurance rate arguments, which diverge widely depending on whether a lawyer or a doctor is talking, Marrese's answer puts him

clearly on a particular side — the lawyers' side.

"Doctors do make mistakes," Marrese said, adding that successful malpractice lawsuits "do improve the quality of care. Suing makes them better doctors."

He argues that the blame for higher insurance rates lies with insurance companies' own stock market investment losses and from low-

er Medicaid payments. He said his own biggest malpractice court award was \$1.2 million.

But former 3rd Circuit Judge John DeLaurenti of Pocahtontas lays the blame squarely on high court awards for malpractice cases. Before he retired two years ago, his duties often took him to the Madison County Courthouse, known for its class-action allure. Because he

retired as a judge, DeLaurenti no longer is prohibited from speaking publicly about the court system.

"A 70-year-old who loses his legs probably deserves a million dollars," DeLaurenti said. "But does he deserve \$30 million? What relationship do awards like that have with anything?"

Please see FOCUS, 2A

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- Lotto: **09-11-24-26-43-47**
- Jackpot: **\$2.5 million**

POWERBALL: 2-11-16-21-39 Powerball: **42** Jackpot: **\$101.8 million** Power Play: **5**

FOR MISSOURI

- Daily Pick 3: **3-4-9**
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