

# Journal Register



★★

\$1.50

SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

THE OLDEST NEWSPAPER IN ILLINOIS™

SUNDAY

FEBRUARY 2, 2003



Pilot William McCool



Payload Commander Michael Anderson



Mission Specialist David Brown



Commander Rick Husband



Mission Specialist Kalpana Chawla



Mission Specialist Laurel Clark



Payload Specialist Ilan Ramon

# 'COLUMBIA IS LOST'



Debris from the space shuttle Columbia streaks across the sky Saturday over Tyler, Texas. Amateur photographer Dr. Scott Lieberman shot a series of photos showing the breakup of the space shuttle from his back yard in Tyler. Columbia broke apart in flames 200,000 feet over Texas, killing all seven astronauts just minutes before they were to glide to a landing in Florida.

Dr. Scott Lieberman/Tyler Morning Telegraph

## Altman family reacts to tragedy

By PAT GUINANE and OMAR SOFRADZIJA  
COPLEY NEWS SERVICE

Fred Altman was shaving Saturday morning when he heard the first news bulletin about the shuttle Columbia's explosion.

"I immediately felt for the people there in Florida," said Altman, of Pekin, whose son, astronaut Scott Altman, served as Columbia's commander on its previous mission in March. "We know how it is waiting out there, anticipating, figuring in a few minutes we'll be celebrating their return. I'm sure they were looking forward to seeing their loved ones again."

"By the grace of God, this wasn't the previous mission. We've all gotten a little blasé

See **ALTMAN** on page 10



Greg Fight/The Tampa Tribune

**Brickford Lero and his 11-year-old son, Hank, visit the Astronauts Memorial in Titusville, Fla., on Saturday to pay their respects to the crew of the Columbia.**

## Crew of seven killed

By MARCIA DUNN and PAM EASTON  
THE 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

- President Bush's comments on the tragedy / Page 4
- Bios of the crew / Page 5
- What went wrong? / Page 7

seven souls we mourn today," Bush said, his eyes glistening. "The crew of the shuttle Columbia did not return safely to Earth. Yet we can pray that all 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, William McCool and Ilan Ramon — brought a new round of grief to a nation still in

mourning after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

And again, Americans were forced to confront the risks of space, along with the glories.

"The reality of what these people do has often escaped me," said Charlie Dillon, 52, of Denver. "But they are frontiersmen, they're out there making my life better and creating endless possibilities for my children."

NASA appointed an independent commission to investigate. The agency said the first indication of trouble Saturday was the loss of temperature sensors in the left wing's hydraulic system.

The spacecraft had just re-entered the atmosphere and had reached the point at which it was subjected to the highest temperatures.

NASA officials said they suspected the wing was damaged on liftoff, but

See **COLUMBIA** on page 6

## Distinction humbles and troubles officer

By SARAH ANTONACCI  
STAFF WRITER

Robert Williams is the highest-ranking black officer at the Springfield Police Department.

Williams, who heads the force's internal affairs division, isn't completely comfortable with that distinction.

"I'm not going to say it bothers me, but it humbles me and troubles me at the same time. If I'm the highest-ranking member that's an African-American, it just suggests there's a problem," he said.

"I've been around other African-American police officers who have retired and never received any tangible rank, such as sergeant, but they are held in higher esteem — and probably a lot higher — than I am right now.

"There were a lot of pioneers before there was Rob Williams. A lot of them."

Williams' wife, Sherry, describes her husband as an "old soul," a man who listens more than he talks.

"Robert doesn't rely on anything but hard work," she said. "He's dedicated to his job. Once he's started something, he's committed to fulfilling it. There are a multitude of obstacles that have presented themselves to him, and he's continued to persevere."

Williams, 39, doesn't discuss the obstacles. "They are not going to stop me," he said. "It's just going to make me work harder to get around them. I always have and I always will."

Sherry Williams sometimes has had difficulty seeing things the same way.

In the late 1980s, when the two were dating, Williams was working the midnight shift and would

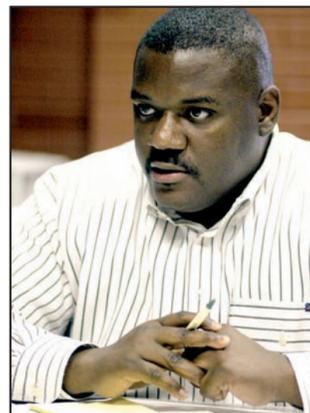
come by her apartment to use the bathroom. She found his police radio disturbing, so she asked him why he didn't just use the bathroom at the police department (then housed on Jefferson Street).

"What I found out was that he didn't like using the bathrooms at work because there would be all kinds of racial slurs and derogatory words — things written toward black officers or words that were derogatory and inflammatory," she recalled.

The graffiti eventually was painted over, she said. But it appeared again.

"When it became too much to paint over, they put a chalkboard in the bathroom," she said.

About the same time, Robert Williams was playing



Nina Greipel/SJ-R

**As head of the internal affairs division, Robert Williams is the highest-ranking black officer at the Springfield Police Department.**

See **WILLIAMS** on page 8

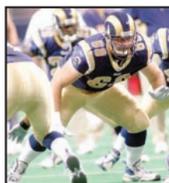
© 2003, The State Journal-Register, a division of Copley Press, Inc. All rights reserved. Our 172nd year, No. 85



**WEATHER**  
Mostly cloudy and mild; high 58. Cloudy with periods of rain; low 43.  
More on page 52

WEB SITE [www.sj-r.com](http://www.sj-r.com)

**INSIDE BOTH SIDES**  
Columnists from The SJ-R and Halifax, Nova Scotia, comment on the bombing incident that killed four Canadians.  
Page 19



**LOCAL PRO**  
Lincoln High graduate Andy King reflects on his rookie year with the St. Louis Rams.  
Page 53

Delivery questions? Call 788-1440

<b>INDEX</b>			
ADVICE	12	HOROSCOPE	38
BOOKS	43	MARKETPLACE	47
CITY/STATE	17	OBITUARIES	39
CLASSIFIED	23	OPINION	20
CROSSWORDS	38, 43	POLICE BEAT	18
ENGAGEMENTS	14, 15	SPORTS	53
FOR THE RECORD	18	SUNDAY A.M.	11
FORUM	19	TIME OUT	41
HOME & DESIGN	40	TV LISTINGS	44
		WEDDINGS	16