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**Tuesday, August 23, 2011**  
 Hoopeston's only locally-owned daily news publication  
 P.O. Box 441, Hoopeston, IL. 60942 [www.justthefacts.net](http://www.justthefacts.net)

## Former resident turning tragedy to benefit for student

CLEARWATER, FLA—A former resident is turning a tragedy into a blessing for students at a Florida school.

Liz (Knight) Colston, formerly of Hoopeston, lost her husband, Terry, and son, 11-year-old Robert, in an accident on July 28 in Clearwater, Fla.

The accident happened at about 1:30 p.m. on Interstate 4 when Mr. Colston, 55, was driving a 2006 Ford expedition. The right rear tire blew out, causing the car to spin, go on the shoulder and overturn.

Mr. Colston was pronounced dead at Lakeland Regional Medical Center, where Robert, the front seat passenger, later died. Three other children, Robert's twin,

Sarah, brother Jake, 10, and a Maxwell Watson, 10, who were also in the car, were treated for minor injuries and released.



To honor her husband and son, Mrs. Colston is asking people to contribute to the "Send a 5th Grader to Washington DC Memorial Fund," a fund to send fifth grade students at Belcher Elementary School to Washington, DC. Robert's trip to Washington was a highlight of his fifth grade year.

Those who wish to contribute may send donations to Robert Colston Memorial Fund, 1858 Sunrise Blvd., Clearwater, FL 33760.

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**Appointments also accepted, call 217.283.5644**



Thank you for birthday wishes

I want to thank my family, neighbors and friends for the pretty cards and gifts for my 90th birthday. I had a wonderful and happy day! Thank you everyone again.

Cora Denton

An Open Letter to President Obama

Dear President Obama,

Do you remember where you were on January 28, 1986? To refresh your memory, that is the day the space shuttle Challenger exploded off the coast of Florida and took the lives of the seven astronauts aboard. Within an hour of the tragedy, eighty five percent of Americans knew about the loss of Challenger. Up until that moment of tragedy, only three astronauts had been lost in the space program, but this was the first time any person had been killed in actual space flight. Since flying in space had seemingly become routine, and the fact that seven people were lost in an instant, this accident was especially tragic for us as a country.

President Reagan was scheduled to deliver the State of the Union address that very evening. Reagan's response to the loss of Challenger was to cancel the State of the Union Address and instead, speak to the American people directly from the Oval Office. He spoke of the astronauts and the tragedy that had taken their lives; he told us of their sacrifice for their country, and he reminded us that space exploration would continue. To do less, he inferred, would have diminished the great and tremendous sacrifice of those we had lost that day. Reagan reminded us that "They had a hunger to explore the universe and discover its truths. They wished to serve, and they did. They served all of us." Reagan's words served to comfort and console Americans whose spirits were confused and in need of consolation. And console us he did with these words: "We will never forget them, nor the last time we saw them, this morning, as they prepared for their journey and waved goodbye and 'slipped the surly bonds of Earth' to 'touch the face of God.'" Reagan was, for the moment, the nation's pastor, counselor, and comforter. He found the words to passionately console a nation of citizens to find true meaning in a time of loss.

I relate that story to tell you this, Mr. President. Last week 30 Americans lost their lives in Afghanistan. Thirty American soldiers and Navy Seals were gone in an in-

stant. Instead of comforting a nation of about this loss, you went on TV to remind us that we are still a nation that deserves a AAA rating from the S&P. The day after the loss of 30 Americans in a far away country where we have been at war for 10 years, you failed to explain how or why this tragedy happened or what our country should do about it. You had an opportunity to become the comforter in chief and instead became the chief defender and spokesman for flawed economic policy. You missed the chance to relate to Americans who suffer loss, who feel pain, and who care deeply about this country. You failed to help us find meaning in our time of loss. In the text of your speech, this is what you said about the decision of Standard and Poors to maintain the AAA credit rating we have always enjoyed:

*The reason I have faith in these United States of America is because of the American people. It's because of their perseverance, and their courage, and their willingness to shoulder the burdens we face — together, as one nation.*

*One last thing. There is no one who embodies the qualities I mentioned more than the men and women of the United States Armed Forces. And this weekend, we lost 30 of them when their helicopter crashed during a mission in Afghanistan. And their loss is a stark reminder of the risks that our men and women in uniform take every single day on behalf of their county.*

"One last thing." What does that mean Mr. President? I watched that speech. I felt as if you were saying, "Oh by the way..." as if you had forgotten to mention some just recalled trivial matter. Maureen Dowd called your change of subject "the most inept oratorical segue of his presidency." I have to say that I agree with her in her column of August 9 that "His inability to grab a microphone and spontaneously assuage Americans' fears is strange." Compare your awkward shift in focus with the words of President Lincoln who wrote to Mrs. Lydia Bixby of Boston to comfort her on what was believed at the time to be the loss of her five sons during the civil war. He wrote:

Dear Madam,

*I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died glori-*

*ously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any word of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.*

Lincoln didn't have a microphone, but he had the power of the pen and he knew the words to write to provide comfort and consolation. You have the power of cable news, the media, and social media—you just didn't have the words, Mr. President.

I have learned to expect more from you. During your presidential campaign, I stood in line with my wife and son for eight hours in Denver to hear you speak to a crowd of just under a million people. We stood for another five hours to hear you speak in Pueblo, Colo., just weeks later. Your words inspired me. Your message of change we can believe in moved my spirit to believe in the possibilities of who we could be as a nation. I believed you were going to lead us into new potential and new possibilities. I know what you are capable of in terms of both word and deed. But please understand, this isn't just a failure to do the right thing—or say the right thing—it is a failure to lead. If the leader doesn't lead,

Court Dispositions



August 4

**David LaBounty**, Batesville, Ark., failed to appear for general nuisance, found guilty by default; sentencing September 1.

**William Fulton**, Westville, failed to appear for general nuisance, found guilty by default; sentencing September 1.

Weather



Mostly sunny today. High 88. Tonight, chance of storms. Low 68. Tomorrow, chance of storms. High 90, low 67.

For current weather conditions, call Hoopston Weather Service, (217) 283-6221.

how are the followers supposed to feel led? If the comforter doesn't console, then how do the bereaved and hurting feel comforted? My guess is that most Americans did not understand what the S&P credit rating was before all the debt ceiling debate started. But most Americans are familiar with loss and suffering. So did we need a lecture on economics, or to have our fears acknowledged and our sense of loss assuaged?

I believe that the American people have great confidence in you; your poll numbers seem to indicate that this is true. And in terms of alleviating our fears and providing us any degree of comfort, what the Republicans and Tea Partiers have to offer are terrifying propositions. So, it is necessary that you must face the reality that you are all we have. You must stand up to those who would seek to destroy you. You have to stare down people who would seek to do harm to this country for their own political gain—or that of their party. You cannot compromise with people who obstruct and obfuscate the normal process of government for their own political profit. But you must also be the nation's comforter, counselor, and confidant. You must listen to not only what the American people want, but also how they feel. Mr. President, please don't ever miss another opportunity to help the American people to find meaning in a time of national loss.

Michael Norris  
Colorado Springs, Colo.

Classifieds

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