

Hello everybody and welcome to another episode of Presidential Archives Uncovered-- the podcast that brings to you cool clips from the collections of the Presidential Libraries of the U.S. National Archives. Today's clip from the Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, as well as others from the Libraries, can be found on the Presidential Timeline, [www.presidentialtimeline.org](http://www.presidentialtimeline.org).

The morning of January 28, 1986, children in classrooms across the nation watched the Space Shuttle Challenger lift-off, and 73 seconds later, explode in a ball of fire and gaseous vapor. With information trickling in, the news media continuously replayed the launch. Americans were glued to their televisions. That evening, instead of delivering his planned State of the Union Address, President Reagan spoke to the nation – especially to the children – about the tragedy.

Presidential Speechwriter Peggy Noonan talks about writing the Challenger speech in the clip that follows.

The Challenger speech was a good speech. You know it was a very simple speech, but I really felt it said the right things. And I really felt it made people better – feel better. There were two things I wanted to do. One was comfort people who were confused – you know how frightened people get when they see things blow up, or when they see ... you've seen an auto accident, it's very frightening, and you need somebody to sort of calm you down. So I was very much ... I kind of figured the entire nation had seen an auto accident, you know? And I also ... you know it's always very important to put these things in context again, and say terrible things happen to pioneers, but the trek does not stop here.