

Dan Rather Reports

Episode Number: 216

Episode Title: Toxic Trailers

Description: Some of the thousands of people along the Gulf Coast still living in travel trailers say formaldehyde used to build the campers is making them sick. Also, take a ride on the straight talk express as Dan Rather sits down with Republican presidential hopeful John Mc Cain.

TEASE:

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)
TONIGHT. NO PLACE TO CALL HOME.

MELODY STEWART, LIVED IN FEMA TRAILER
I've never been woken up by a smell before in my life. And I woke up gasping for air. There was a window right next to the bed 'cause it's so small. And I was literally-literally trying to breathe out of that window.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)
SOME OF THE GOVERNMENT PROVIDED CAMPERS FOR GULF COAST HURRICANE VICTIMS ARE CONTAMINATED WITH A TOXIC CHEMICAL.

PAUL STEWART, LIVED IN FEMA TRAILER
What was inside that camper is deadly. I can't put it any plainer than that.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)
ALSO ON THE ROAD AGAIN.

RATHER
Senator, straight talk. Your campaign is off to a slow start - is this the start of a comeback, is that the way you view it?

RATHER (VOICE OVER)
WILL THE LAST STOP FOR THE STRAIGHT TALK EXPRESS BE THE WHITE HOUSE?

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN (ON CAMPAIGN TRAIL)
That's not good enough for America, and when I'm president it won't be good enough for me.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

A LOOK AT JOHN MCCAIN'S COMEBACK CAMPAIGN AND ARE THE VOTERS BUYING IT.

RATHER

In John McCain's phrase, "straight talk," is your vote gettable for McCain?

JENNIFER HORN, MOTHER AND HOMEMAKER WHO HAS A NEW HAMPSHIRE RADIO SHOW

It's absolutely gettable, yes.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

TONIGHT ON DAN RATHER REPORTS

TOXIC TRAILERS:

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

GOOD EVENING. TONIGHT WE TAKE YOU BACK TO THE GULF COAST, WHERE THE DEVASTATING HURRICANES OF 2005, KATRINA AND RITA, ARE ANYTHING BUT A DISTANT MEMORY. NEARLY 90,000 FAMILIES WHO LOST THEIR HOMES IN THESE STORMS STILL LIVE IN WHAT WERE MEANT TO BE TEMPORARY SHELTERS- TRAILERS PROVIDED BY FEMA, THE FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY. IT'S BEEN HARD FOR THE PEOPLE DISPLACED BY THE HURRICANES- PEOPLE FOR WHOM THE TRAILERS WERE SUPPOSED TO PROVIDE A SAFE PLACE TO STAY WHILE THEY REBUILT THEIR LIVES. BUT NOW WE'RE LEARNING THAT SOME OF THESE TRAILERS APPEAR TO BE TOXIC. AND SOME OF THE PEOPLE WHO MOVED INTO THESE TEMPORARY SHELTERS SAY THE TRAILERS HAVE BEEN MAKING THEM SICK- AND THAT FEMA HASN'T BEEN LISTENING.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BAY ST. LOUIS, MISSISSIPPI HAS A SLOGAN: "A PLACE APART." TODAY THAT MAY BE MORE TRUE THAN EVER. THIS GULF COAST TOWN LOST MUCH OF ITS ONCE THRIVING ARTS COMMUNITY, WHITE SAND BEACHES AND SMALL TOWN CHARM. IT SAW 90% OF ITS HOMES DESTROYED BY THE HURRICANES.

MELODY STEWART

Our house was there, but it was so slanted it looked like something out of a fairy tale, like the old woman and the shoe.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

LIKE MANY ALONG THE GULF, PAUL AND MELODY STEWART LOST EVERYTHING IN THE STORM. AFTER SLEEPING ON A FRIEND'S COUCH FOR

SEVERAL WEEKS, THEY WERE RELIEVED WHEN FEMA DELIVERED A BRAND NEW TRAILER THEY COULD CALL HOME. BUT THE STEWART'S ENTHUSIASM QUICKLY FADED ONCE THEY WALKED INSIDE.

MELODY STEWART

When you went in there and started inspecting it, you can start immediately smelling the chemical.

PAUL STEWART

It hits you in the face when you walk in the door. So it's enough of an irritant that your nose, I mean, it feels like you have a really bad cold.

MELODY STEWART

I've never been woken up by a smell before in my life. And I woke up gasping for air. There was a window right next to the bed 'cause it's so small. And I was literally-literally trying to breathe out of that window.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

FEMA PAID BILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO BUY AND DELIVER MORE THAN 100,000 TRAILERS AND MOBILE HOMES TO DISASTER VICTIMS ALL ALONG THE GULF COAST, 48,000 IN MISSISSIPPI ALONE. MOST WERE SMALL CAMPER-LIKE UNITS, DESIGNED FOR SHORT STAYS. PAUL AND MELODY STEWART REPORTED A SUSPICIOUS ODOR IN THEIR TRAILER TO FEMA, JUST DAYS AFTER RECEIVING IT. THEY GOT NO RESPONSE.

PAUL STEWART

We told them from the very beginning, there is an odor in this camper, I'm not sure what it is but from the research we're looking at, it appears to be formaldehyde.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE STEWARTS DISCOVERED THAT THE MATERIALS USED TO MAKE THE WALLS AND CABINETS IN THEIR TRAILER WERE TREATED WITH FORMALDEHYDE - A COMMON, BUT AT HIGH LEVELS, TOXIC CHEMICAL.

DR. PHIL LANDRIGAN, DIRECTOR OF NEW YORK'S MT. SINAI CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Formaldehyde in my opinion is a serious threat. It's a threat to workers who are around it every day, and in respect to trailers, it's a threat to citizens and especially to young children.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DR. PHIL LANDRIGAN IS THE DIRECTOR OF NEW YORK'S MT. SINAI CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT. WHILE THERE ARE MANY SHORT TERM EFFECTS OF FORMALDEHYDE, DR. LANDRIGAN SAYS LONG TERM EXPOSURE CAN BE DEADLY.

LANDRIGAN

It causes nasal irritation, it causes tearing of the eyes, it causes people to cough, it provokes asthma attacks in children and in people who have long continued exposure to formaldehyde, epidemiologic studies have established quite clearly that there's an increased risk of cancer, especially cancer of the nasal sinuses.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

FORMALDEHYDE IS A COLORLESS GAS THAT CAN BE ESPECIALLY PUNGENT IN NEW PRODUCTS OR WHEN EXPOSED TO HIGH HEAT AND HUMIDITY. EXACTLY THE RECIPE ON THE GULF COAST.

LANDRIGAN

If formaldehyde is released in substantial quantities from rugs and particle board inside of a small, closed trailer in southern Mississippi in July, then concentrations of formaldehyde gas in the trailer can build up to some pretty substantial levels.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

FORMALDEHYDE IN BUILDING MATERIALS IS SUPPOSED TO BE CLOSELY REGULATED BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT; HOWEVER, THERE IS NO FEDERAL STANDARD FOR FORMALDEHYDE IN TRAVEL TRAILERS.

LANDRIGAN

The standards that have been established for formaldehyde are standards that were established a number of years ago to protect industrial workers. These standards were not set at levels that protect children. Children's vulnerability becomes even greater because pound for pound they inhale a lot more air each day and it increases the risk of future respiratory cancer in these children, perhaps many decades from now.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

APRIL BROCK, A SINGLE MOTHER OF TWO, GAVE BIRTH TO HER YOUNGEST WHILE LIVING IN A FEMA PROVIDED TRAILER.

APRIL BROCK, FEMA TRAILER RESIDENT

The first time he got sick was at about 2 months, and then it's been pretty much every couple weeks. We've had tubes in his ears.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

APRIL HAS FREQUENT MIGRAINES HERSELF AND HER FOUR-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER, KIRSTEN, NOW HAS SINUS INFECTIONS AND ALLERGIES SHE NEVER HAD BEFORE MOVING INTO THE TRAILER. BUT ITS 11 MONTH OLD CAMERON THAT HAS THE DOCTOR'S MOST CONCERNED.

BROCK

When we go, he's usually running a high fever, coughing, uncontrollably, so now they have him on a medicine for his wheezing, and they said on our next visit they're going to

put him on a breathing machine. It's pretty rough.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

PEDIATRICIAN SCOTT NEEDLE OF BAY ST. LOUIS, HAS WITNESSED THE EFFECTS OF FORMALDEHYDE EXPOSURE FIRST HAND. MANY OF HIS YOUNG PATIENTS RETURN AGAIN AND AGAIN WITH SYMPTOMS THAT WON'T GO AWAY.

DR. SCOTT NEEDLE, PEDIATRICIAN IN BAY ST. LOUIS

And they were having not just the colds but they were having sinus infections, and pneumonias and ear infections. Either things would get worse or the sinus infection wouldn't clear up. Or it would clear up and then it would come right back again.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DR. NEEDLE NOTICED AN EERIE CONNECTION BETWEEN HIS PATIENTS AND THEIR CAMPER HOMES.

NEEDLE

Every one of them told me, "we are living in a FEMA trailer." And what was even more interesting is that almost all of them said, "you know, these symptoms didn't start until we were in the FEMA trailer."

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

APRIL BROCK COMPLAINED TO FEMA ABOUT HER CHILDREN'S HEALTH PROBLEMS, WHICH SHE SUSPECTED WERE CAUSED BY SOMETHING IN HER TRAILER, BUT SHE SAYS THE AGENCY DISMISSED HER CONCERNS.

BROCK

I think it's the smell 'cause the smell is so strong, when the trailer is sealed, so I think it's something in the trailer. I told them that he's been sick, but they just said it's something in the air.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IT WAS COMPLAINTS LIKE THOSE OF APRIL BROCK THAT CAUGHT THE ATTENTION OF BECKY GILLETTE, CO-CHAIR OF THE MISSISSIPPI SIERRA CLUB. A YEAR AGO, SHE BEGAN TESTING TRAILERS THROUGHOUT THE GULF, TO SEE HOW WIDE SPREAD THE PROBLEM WAS.

BECKY GILLETTE, CO-CHAIR OF THE MISSISSIPPI SIERRA CLUB

Initially we found like almost all of the trailers had a problem. Nine out of 10 were testing in over the limit.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN ALL, SHE TESTED FIFTY-TWO FEMA TRAILERS. SOME CAME IN AS HIGH AS FOUR TIMES THE LIMIT RECOMMENDED BY THE GOVERNMENT. SHE IMMEDIATELY CONTACTED FEMA.

GILLETTE

We sent them the test results. We say "we think this is an important problem." We've never heard a response. There was never any response from FEMA at all on that issue.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

INITIALLY FEMA RESPONDED WITH SIMPLE INSTRUCTIONS ON WHAT RESIDENTS COULD DO TO REDUCE EXPOSURE TO FORMALDEHYDE. BUT INCREASING PRESSURE FINALLY LED FEMA, WITH THE AID OF THE EPA, TO DO SOME TESTING ON THEIR OWN THEY TESTED 96 TRAILERS THAT HAD NEVER BEEN LIVED IN.

GILLETTE

That, we felt, was a flaw because if you test trailers that people are livin' in, they're takin' showers, they are cooking in them -- and the excessive humidity makes more formaldehyde outgas. So, it just creates what actually one of the trailer manufacturers calls a perfect storm for release of formaldehyde.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

NEARLY SIX MONTHS AFTER THE TESTS WERE DONE, FEMA STATES THEY ARE STILL ANALYZING THE RESULTS.

GILLETTE

If there's a problem, they need to put it out there and they need to deal with it. And they needed to immediately provide either safer housing for these people, some kind of filter system, or at least you know, provide these people with free medical care if you're not gonna do anything else.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

JUST LAST WEEK APRIL BROCK'S TRAILER TESTED NEARLY TWO TIMES THE GOVERNMENT'S LIMIT FOR FORMALDEHYDE.

GILLETTE

We started another round of testing here recently, because it's been nearly a year since we did the initial testing. And we thought that the problem would have abated quite a bit by now but unfortunately, what we're seeing is some still some very high numbers in these campers that we're testing.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT FEMA MAY HAVE KNOWN ABOUT FORMALDEHYDE PROBLEMS AS EARLY AS OCTOBER 2005—JUST A COUPLE OF MONTHS AFTER THE STORM. THAT'S WHEN OSHA, THE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ADMINISTRATION, DID ROUTINE AIR SAMPLING AT TRAILER HOLDING STATIONS IN MISSISSIPPI. THE TESTS WERE DONE FOR GOVERNMENT WORKERS AND THEY SHOWED FORMALDEHYDE IN THE AIR OUTSIDE THE TRAILERS, WAS MORE THAN 20 TIMES THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD.

JESSE JOHN FINERAN, FORMER FEMA MOBILE HOME OPERATIONS
WORKER

FEMA should have totally been aware of issues with the trailers once OSHA did the testing in the staging areas that they did in Harrison, Jackson, and Hancock County.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

UNTIL RECENTLY JESSE JOHN FINERAN WORKED IN FEMA'S MOBILE HOME OPERATIONS. ACCORDING TO FINERAN, STAFF MEETINGS WERE HELD IN THOSE EARLY MONTHS WHERE OSHA PRESENTED ITS FINDINGS TO FEMA, THE EPA AND THE MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.

FINERAN

FEMA actually stated in several points that yes, they were aware that there may be some problems, but they were in charge of this operation, and that they would look into it.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

FINERAN SAYS THAT FEMA SHOULD HAVE BEEN AWARE OF THESE PROBLEMS EVEN BEFORE OSHA RELEASED ITS REPORT.

FINERAN

We would go out and go into certain units, and you'd come out and you had trouble breathing when you got out of the units. You'd get teary-eyed. Some people would break out with welts. And that was for an exposure of less than 15 minutes 'cause we were having to go into these trailers while they were locked up with no air on and hot.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

FINERAN SAYS THAT HE BEGAN COMPLAINING ABOUT THE AIR QUALITY IN THE TRAILERS JUST THREE WEEKS AFTER THE STORM.

FINERAN

And I was told to leave the formaldehyde issue alone and stop discussing it, or there may be repercussions.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

TO DATE, FEMA CLAIMS THEY HAVE RECEIVED JUST 70 COMPLAINTS OF FORMALDEHYDE BUT MANY IN MISSISSIPPI SUGGEST A MUCH HIGHER NUMBER.

GILLETTE

Well, I remember originally they were sayin' that they only had 16 people complain. And I said, "You know, we've tested more people than that. We've, you know, 45 out of the 50 tests that we did were excessive formaldehyde levels."

FINERAN

During my tenure with the mobile home operations I know that more than 70 reports of air quality issues in FEMA trailers was reviewed.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

FINERAN ALSO HAS A PERSONAL STAKE IN THE STORM RECOVERY. HIS SON AND DAUGHTER IN LAW, JOEY AND MICHELLE, LIVE IN A TRAILER THEY SAY IS CONTAMINATED WITH FORMALDEHYDE. THEY HAVE LIVED FOR MONTHS WITH THE FUMES WAITING FOR A FEMA INSPECTOR.

MICHELLE

Can I ask you one or two questions?

MENTON MATHEW, FEMA INSPECTOR

We have conference calls every Tuesday and Thursday mornings and they ask us not to-- to talk to-- anybody, so. We have to be careful of what we say.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

FEMA REPRESENTATIVES IN WASHINGTON AND MISSISSIPPI HAVE REFUSED OUR REPEATED REQUESTS FOR INTERVIEWS, BUT OUR CAMERAS WERE THERE WHEN MENTON MATHEWS, A FEMA INSPECTOR, GOT A FIRST HAND WHIFF OF THE FINERANS TRAILER.

JOEY

You did smell formaldehyde in there, right? I'm not hallucinating?

MATHEWS

Yeah, my eyes are still bothering me.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS LIKE THESE, FEMA EMPLOYEES SIMPLY RELY ON A SNIFF TEST.

MATHEWS

We don't do a test-- it's just a smell. We don't have the equipment to actually test them.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

A CONSUMER TEST KIT CAN BE PURCHASED FOR JUST 34 DOLLARS. JOEY AND MICHELLE TESTED THEIR TRAILER TWICE FOR FORMALDEHYDE. THE LATEST TEST, DONE JUST LAST MONTH, CAME OUT WITH CLOSE TO FOUR TIMES MORE THAN THE GOVERNMENT LIMIT.

MATHEWS

I was very surprised that this trailers been here as long as it has been and still has it in it. 'Cause I-- when I walked around the-- the house I thought it would be a newer-- but it-- it's-- you know, it's been here a while so the smell has been there.

MICHELLE

It's been here since December after the storm.

MATHEWS

And that's-- that's unusual for the formaldehyde.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

MICHELLE'S REACTION TO THE FORMALDEHYDE IS STILL SO BAD, SHE SLEEPS ON FRIENDS COUCHES AND OUTDOORS WHEN THE WEATHER PERMITS. THE FINERANS HAVE BEEN ASKING FEMA FOR A NEW TRAILER SINCE 2005.

MATHEWS

They put in a request a long time ago.

MICHELLE

A year ago.

MATHEWS

To have it swapped out because of the formaldehyde. And it's just taken time for it to go through the red tape to get back to us right.

MICHELLE

A year. That's a really long time, though.

MATHEWS

It does seem to yeah. And where it went during that period of time I have no idea. When you've got 36,000 trailers, it's hard to do a lot with, you know? The magnitude of it all is just unbelievable to me, so. But we're getting there. We're growing every day. Every day I -- every day I come in I see more things that are back to normal and getting back straight and so, we're doing good.

FINERAN

People have not been informed. FEMA's public relations is horrible. They apparently do not respect the people who are living in these units. Had they, they would have been listening to the air quality issues or the health issues that have been coming forth from the from the citizens or from the residents of these units.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ATTORNEY SEAN TRUNDY FILED A LAWSUIT AGAINST FEMA AND SEVERAL MANUFACTURERS OF THE TRAVEL TRAILERS ON BEHALF OF RESIDENTS IN THE GULF.

SEAN TRUNDY, ATTORNEY FOR RESIDENTS IN TOXIC TRAILERS

The basis of the lawsuit is that those very trailers have made a lot of the people down in the gulf coast states sick. And the reason that they are making people sick is because there is an excess amount and concentration of formaldehyde gas inside the trailers. This didn't have to happen. The manufacturers could have done things to not let this happen.

RATHER

Why did your clients take so long to bring a lawsuit?

TRUNDY

These folks, having lost their homes, jobs, everything. They did not look a gift horse in the mouth. They were in no position to make these complaints. So it's only after some time of being sick, and not getting unsick, that they were that it occurred to them something might really be wrong here. And maybe I should do something about it.

RATHER

You've named FEMA as a defendant.

TRUNDY

Yes.

RATHER

Why?

TRUNDY

When the government chooses to be a landlord, it needs to do so in a reasonable and a careful way. And just as any apartment complex owner can expect to be called to account if his unit is moldy, if it has ozone gas problems, formaldehyde problems, so it is with FEMA. FEMA has chosen to become these folk's landlord. And it provided them with dangerous dangerous dwellings. We're now a year and a half out. The smell is not quite as bad but you still can get a little whiff of it. When they were brand new, powerful, powerful odor. Nasty odor.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

MONTHS AFTER PAUL AND MELODY STEWART RECEIVED THEIR BRAND NEW TRAILER, THE AIR WAS STILL SO TOXIC THAT IT NEARLY KILLED THEIR PET BIRD.

PAUL STEWART

We get up one morning and our pet cockatiel was not moving,. I called the vet and said, "Look. We have an emergency. I think the bird's dying." Took the bird to the vet. The vet said, "You need to get him out of the that environment or he's gonna die. He cannot take that chemical. It's gonna kill him." And so, that's when I said to myself, "If it's gonna kill a bird, what is it doing to us long term?" Ya know, really the-- the canary in the coal mine.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE STEWARTS DECIDED TO TAKE ACTION. THEY BOUGHT A TESTING KIT FOR FORMALDEHYDE. THE RESULTS WERE MORE THAN TWO TIMES THE GOVERNMENT'S SAFE LEVEL. STILL FEMA REFUSED TO REPLACE THE TRAILER.

PAUL STEWART

We called FEMA with the test results and, again, we essentially got laughed at. You have what you have and just be glad you have it. And that wasn't a good answer to me.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SO PAUL CALLED A LOCAL TV STATION.

PAUL STEWART ON BROADCAST NEWS

We're doing everything we can to protect ourselves and we're really trying to make the decision, do we sleep on our slap in a tent or do we risk our lives inside the camper.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND THE VERY NEXT MORNING FEMA SHOWED UP WITH A NEW TRAILER. BUT, ACCORDING TO PAUL, THIS ONE WAS EQUALLY TOXIC.

PAUL STEWART

Before you even grab the door handle, the pungent smell of formaldehyde about knocked you over. In fact, the guys who delivered it went to walk inside. They wouldn't even stay in it. I mean, they actually told me, "Look, this is horrible in here. I don't think you can even stay in this." I said, "No, I can't. You need to take it out of here."

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ANOTHER WAS DELIVERED. THIS ONE WITH A FAULTY SEPTIC TANK AND BUGS THROUGHOUT. THE STEWARTS MOVED INTO THEIR TRUCK UNTIL THEY TOOK THE INSURANCE MONEY THEY RECEIVED FROM THEIR DESTROYED HOME TO BUY A NEW TRAILER OFF OF A COMMERCIAL LOT, ONE THEY HOPE WILL NOT ENDANGER THEIR HEALTH.

MELODY STEWART

I mean, we were sick. We were getting sicker and sicker from our FEMA camper.

PAUL STEWART

We were lucky enough to be able to remove ourselves from that situation. But there are literally tens, hundreds of thousands of people that can't do that. They're stuck right where they are. And they get the same reaction from FEMA that we got, "Tough, you have what you have. Have a nice day."

FINERAN

My experience with FEMA has basically been a profound disappointment. Because people have forgotten what the mission was. And that was to help the people. The impact of the federal agencies down here, is referred to as, hurricane FEMA.

PAUL STEWART

What was inside that camper is deadly. I can't put it any plainer than that. It is not something that a person should live in 24 hours a day. Lay down in, have children in,

have pets in, and we are condemning them to a life of illness. And that's not right. It's not right to do that to people, ya know, especially not when someone's in need. At their greatest time of you need, you hit them again and that's just not, no one should do that. No one should have to accept that.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT RESIDENTS ARE ACCEPTING IT BECAUSE FOR PEOPLE LIKE APRIL BROCK THE ONLY CHOICE IS THE TRAILER.

BROCK

I went from a condo, plenty of room to this, that there's no room in. And rent's so expensive, because I have a boy and a girl it's 900 a month for a two bedroom and there's like a year, year and half, waiting list on everything. If you get a house, it's 12-1500 dollars a month and no one can afford that.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

AGAIN, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT WE MADE REPEATED REQUESTS TO FEMA FOR AN ON CAMERA INTERVIEW. ALL WERE TURNED DOWN. WE DID RECEIVE A WRITTEN STATEMENT WHICH READS "FEMA IS TAKING STEPS TO ADDRESS CONCERNS THAT MAY BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE PRESENCE OF FORMALDEHYDE IN TRAVEL TRAILERS ON THE GULF COAST... WHILE THE NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS RECORDED BY FEMA HAS THUS FAR BEEN MINIMAL, FEMA LEADERSHIP TAKES THE ISSUE SERIOUSLY." FEMA ALSO STATES THAT THE AGENCY NOW APPLIES STANDARDS ISSUED BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT FOR FORMALDEHYDE EMISSION LEVELS FOR WOOD PRODUCTS USED IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF MANUFACTURED HOMES FOR BOTH TRAVEL TRAILERS AND PARK MODELS. BUT THE STORY DOESN'T STOP THERE. SOME OF THE WORKERS WHO BUILT THE CAMPERS AND TRAILERS HAVE BEEN SICKENED AS WELL. WE'LL HAVE MORE ON THIS STORY IN THE COMING WEEKS. AND FINALLY THIS FOOTNOTE—FEMA IS TURNING OVER HOUSING OPERATIONS OF THE TRAILERS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT THIS SEPTEMBER. THE DIRECTOR OF FEMA, DAVID PAULSON SAID QUOTE "THE FACT IS WE'RE NOT IN THE LONG- TERM HOUSING BUSINESS" UNQUOTE. COMING UP NEXT JOHN MCCAIN TRIES FOR A COME BACK.

JOHN MCCAIN RIDES AGAIN:

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE ON THE ATLANTIC COAST CAN BE A COLD AND BITTER PLACE, EVEN IN SPRING. ON A GRAY AND RAINY NEW ENGLAND DAY LAST WEEK, 19 MONTHS BEFORE THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, JOHN MCCAIN CAME HERE TO MAKE A CRITICAL SPEECH. THIS

IS A SEAPORT TOWN AND HOME TO ONE OF THE FEW REMAINING NAVY SHIPYARDS IN THE NATION THE SENATOR FROM ARIZONA HAS BEEN HERE BEFORE.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

AS TODD PURDUM OF VANITY FAIR MAGAZINE RECENTLY WROTE, "GIVEN HIS STATUS AS A POPULAR, MAVERICK WAR HERO, JOHN MCCAIN STANDS A PRETTY GOOD CHANCE AT GETTING ELECTED PRESIDENT IN 2008 IF HE COULD GET HIS PARTIES NOMINATION." RIGHT NOW, THAT LOOKS TO BE A VERY BIG IF. METAPHORICALLY, AS A CANDIDATE JOHN MCCAIN HAS HIS BACK TO THE WALL, HIS SHIRTTAILS ON FIRE AND THE BILL COLLECTORS AT THE DOOR. HE TRAILS FORMER NEW YORK MAYOR RUDOLPH GIULIANI AND FORMER MASSACHUSETTS GOVERNOR MITT ROMNEY IN THE BATTLE FOR CAMPAIGN FUNDS. HE REGULARLY TRAILS GIULIANI IN ALMOST EVERY POLL. SO MCCAIN IS HAVING TO RETOOL, REMAKE HIS CAMPAIGN. QUESTION, CAN HE GET OFF THE DECK? CAN HE BRING IT BACK? CAN HE GET THE PARTY'S NOMINATION?

REPORTER

Senator, are you ready for today?

SENATOR MCCAIN, PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

No. (LAUGHS)

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WHEN SENATOR MCCAIN ARRIVED IN NEW HAMPSHIRE THIS YEAR THERE WERE OVERCAST SKIES AND CLOUDY OPINIONS ABOUT HIS STRONG SUPPORT OF THE WAR IN IRAQ. MCCAIN HAS LOST WHAT WAS ONCE A GOOD SIZED LEAD IN THE POLLS, HE HAS BEEN LABORING LATELY UNDER PERCEPTIONS IN THE PRESS AND POLITICAL CIRCLES THAT HIS EARLY UNOFFICIAL CAMPAIGN WAS SPATTERING, THAT IT HAD LOST MOMENTUM AND TRAILED IN MONEY RAISING. SO, MCCAIN CAME HERE THIS DAY TO ESSENTIALLY JUMP-START A NEW DRIVE FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION.

MCCAIN (IN SPEECH)

And today I announce my candidacy for president of the United States.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN CONTRAST TO THE ANNOUNCEMENT CROWDS OF OTHER CANDIDATES.

SENATOR BARACK OBAMA (IN SPEECH) I stand before you today to announce, my candidacy for president of the United States of America.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

MCCAIN'S WAS A SMALL, COMPARATIVELY LACK LUSTER AUDIENCE, BUT MCCAIN DELIVERED WITH PASSION HIS CORE MESSAGE. THAT HE IS THE BEST, MOST QUALIFIED CANDIDATE IN THE RACE.

MCCAIN (IN SPEECH)

My friends, we face formidable challenges, but I'm not afraid of them. I'm prepared for them. I'm not the youngest candidate. But I am the most experienced.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

LATER, STANDING IN FRONT OF HIS BUS, CALLED THE "STRAIGHT TALK EXPRESS," THE SOFT-SPOKEN SENATOR DIDN'T BACK DOWN WHEN ASKED IF HIS STRONG STANCE IN FAVOR OF THE IRAQ WAR WOULD HURT HIS CHANCES WITH AN AMERICAN PUBLIC INCREASINGLY AGAINST IT.

MCCAIN

I don't know and I don't care, this conflict is far more important than any political ambitions I might have. I've said on many occasions, I'd rather lose the campaign than lose the war.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SO QUESTIONS LINGER ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT SENATOR MCCAIN, WHO WON THE NEW HAMPSHIRE PRIMARY IN 2000, CAN DO IT AGAIN. I TALKED WITH HIM ABOUT THAT, THE WAR, AND OTHER ISSUES THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO HIM AS WE RODE FROM THE RALLY, THE FIRST OF MANY STOPS THAT DAY.

RATHER

What's the message today senator? You've got many stops before you go. Cindy is smiling there, she knows how many stops. What's the basic message?

MCCAIN

I'm ready to serve, my life has prepared me for it. I'm qualified. I have the vision, the experience and I believe the ability to address the challenges of our time, but I'm also very optimistic about the ability of America to prevail in this century as we did in the last.

RATHER

If you had to pick one and only one most important issue and topic of the campaign, what would it be?

MCCAIN

It would have to be the war against radical Islamic extremism, which is a great threat to the west, America, everything we value, everything we treasure. This is a great force for evil--of evil and they've got their tentacles everywhere on earth.

RATHER

What's the plan for dealing with radical Islamic extremism? What is the strategy? You're a military person.

MCCAIN

Well, as I tried to point out in my comments, in my announcement speech, we have to have diplomatic, intelligence, military, propaganda. When I say propaganda I mean that in the best sense of the word. Right now some would argue that Al Jazeera and others are doing a better job of making the case for radical Islam than we are for our values and standards. So I think it has to be a package of many elements and recognizing the complexities and the nature of the challenge.

RATHER

I know you've been traveling a lot. No doubt you've seen former Mayor Giuliani's comments that if a Democrat is elected a terrorist attack is more likely. You agree, disagree?

MCCAIN

I think that if I'm elected that I can make America safer. I think I'm most qualified to lead in that challenge. Now whether a quote " Democrat" would lead to a greater attack, I can't say that. I know that I can make America safer and I know that I'm the best one to do it.

RATHER

You said yourself, there are a lot of good people running in both parties, I'm quoting John McCain. Why you instead of ruddy Giuliani or Mitt Romney?

MCCAIN

I think I have the qualifications. I've served in peace and in war. I know good from evil, I know how to address the military, the congress and the American people and I believe I know how to motivate and lead.

RATHER

Senator the New York Times, among others, used the phrase, I'm going to put this in quotation marks, that you've been on a Panderthon." Saying that in an effort to get the nomination so you can actually get one on one with the Democrats that you've changed positions, you've been pandering. I wanna give you a chance to respond to it directly.

MCCAIN

I think if you look at my voting record and my positions on issues, that I really haven't. Whether it be immigration reform or stem cell research or - a broad variety of issues - they're the same. I know that some people say that but the fact is that my voting records are the same my positions are the same and I'm proud of my record. I guess maybe some people may be surprised to find out that I'm a conservative, but I've got a 24 year record of that.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SURPRISED BECAUSE AS A LONGTIME SELF-DESCRIBED CONSERVATIVE, MCCAIN WALKS THE BI-PARTISAN TIGHTROPE MASTERFULLY; SIDING WITH DEMOCRATS ON ISSUES SUCH AS CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM, GLOBAL WARMING, AND STEM CELL RESEARCH, AMONG OTHERS. AND STAUNCHLY REPUBLICAN ON SUCH HOT BUTTON ISSUES AS ABORTION, SAME-SEX MARRIAGE AND GUN CONTROL. HE VIEWS HIS BI-PARTISANSHIP AS ONE OF HIS STRENGTHS. BUT HE KNOWS MANY REPUBLICANS DON'T SEE IT THAT WAY, AT LEAST NOT YET.

RATHER

Senator, straight talk. Your campaign is off to a slow start - is this the start of a comeback is that the way you view it? Tell me how you view it.

MCCAIN

I view it as, as campaigns always have ups and downs. People win primaries, people lose primaries, people have failings. The key to success in any campaign in my view is a steady strain. When you get bad news don't get down, when you get good news don't get up. Just it's an old navy saying as you know Dan, a steady strain and recognize if you're going to be able to carry out your message and emphasize your qualifications, you're going to win. If you don't the greatest opportunity that a guy who stood fifth from the bottom of his class in the naval academy ever had, was the chance to run for the nomination for my party and leadership of this nation.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN MANY WAYS, JOHN MCCAIN IS JUST THE KIND OF GUY PEOPLE LIKE TO SEE WIN. HE WAS BORN INTO A MILITARY FAMILY, WHERE HIS FATHER AND GRANDFATHER WERE NAVY ADMIRALS. MCCAIN, WITH BAD BEHAVIOR AND GHASTLY GRADES, BARELY SQUEAKED BY AT THE NAVAL ACADEMY. AS A YOUNG NAVAL AVIATOR TRAINEE HE CRASHED HIS PLANE, NARROWLY ESCAPING DEATH. HE AVOIDED DEATH AGAIN IN 1967, WHEN ABOARD THE USS FORESTALL, ON ITS WAY TO VIETNAM, A MISSILE ACCIDENTALLY FIRED ON BOARD, CAUSING AN EXPLOSION KILLING 134 CREWMEN AND INJURING SCORES MORE. JUST THREE MONTHS LATER, WHILE ON AN OPERATION OVER VIETNAM, MCCAIN'S PLANE WAS HIT BY ENEMY FIRE. HE WAS BADLY INJURED AND TAKEN HOSTAGE BY THE NORTH VIETNAMESE, WHO TORTURED HIM. HE REFUSED AN EARLY RELEASE BECAUSE OTHER POW'S HAD BEEN HELD LONGER. MCCAIN REMAINED A PRISONER OF WAR FOR FIVE AND HALF YEARS. HE EMERGED A WAR HERO. PEOPLE RESPECT HIM FOR THAT AND IT HAS HELPED HIM POLITICALLY. MCCAIN WAS ELECTED TO THE ARIZONA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES IN 1982, SERVING TWO TERMS WITHOUT MUCH CONTROVERSY. IN 1986, HE WAS ELECTED TO THE U.S. SENATE WHERE HE TURNED HEADS BY SIDING WITH DEMOCRATIC SENATOR JOHN KERRY ON THE ISSUE OF VETERAN'S RIGHTS AND

RELATIONS WITH VIETNAM. OVER THE YEARS HE'S GAINED A REPUTATION FOR BEING BLUNT AND HAVING A TEMPER. HE'S BEEN DUBBED A MAVERICK AND HIS REFUSAL TO TOE THE FULL PARTY LINE HAS OFTEN ANGERED HIS FELLOW REPUBLICANS. AT THE SAME TIME, HIS STYLE AND WHAT HE STANDS FOR HAS WON MANY PEOPLE OVER. HE SOUGHT THE REPUBLICAN NOMINATION FOR PRESIDENT IN 2000; AND BECAME THE DARK HORSE FAVORITE AFTER TROUNCING THEN GOVERNOR GEORGE BUSH HERE IN NEW HAMPSHIRE. AFTER THAT THE BUSH FORCES POUNDED HIM MERCILESSLY AND HE BASICALLY LOST THE 2000 RACE FOR THE NOMINATION IN SOUTH CAROLINA; WHERE NEGATIVE CAMPAIGNS AGAINST HIM AND HIS COMMENTS ABOUT THE CONFEDERATE FLAG AND RELIGIOUS RIGHT COST HIM VALUABLE SUPPORT IN THE SOUTH. STILL, DESPITE THAT LOST PRESIDENTIAL BID, MOST HIS POPULARITY HAS LINGERED. MOST PEOPLE AROUND HIM ARE USED TO HIS TAUNTING.

MCCAIN (ON CAMPAIGN TRAIL)

Hey, what are you doing back here you little jerk?

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND GOOD-NATURED SARCASM.

MCCAIN (ON CAMPAIGN TRAIL)

Cindy, what a traitorous comment I'm stunned.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WHICH IS WHY HE'S HAD A MADE FOR TV MOVIE BASED ON HIS VIETNAM EXPERIENCES, AND HE'S A FREQUENT GUEST ON THE TALK SHOW CIRCUIT.

JON STEWART ON "THE DAILY SHOW WITH JON STEWART"

You've been here more than any other guest, I think 9 or 10 times. You're our most frequent contributor.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT LATELY THE TIDE HAS BEEN TURNING AGAINST HIM AND EVEN SOME OF HIS LONG TIME ADMIRERS, LIKE THE DAILY SHOW'S JON STEWART, AREN'T PULLING ANY PUNCHES.

JON STEWART ON "THE DAILY SHOW WITH JON STEWART"

All I'm saying is you cannot look a soldier in the eye and say questioning the president is less supportive to you than extending your tour three months when you should be coming home to your family.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN 2000, THE JOHN MCCAIN MOST OF US SAW WAS CANDID, UNSCRIPTED AND FUNNY. THIS TIME, AS HIS "STRAIGHT TALK EXPRESS" TRAVELED THROUGH NEW HAMPSHIRE FROM RALLY TO INTERVIEWS THERE WEREN'T MANY GLIMPSES OF THE CLASSIC MCCAIN. MOSTLY, HE STUCK CAREFULLY TO THE TELEPROMPTER AND FIELDED REPORTERS QUESTIONS CASUALLY BUT CAUTIOUSLY.

MCCAIN (ON CAMPAIGN TRAIL)

Things are tough, this is very tough. I'm not saying a few dead enders, I'm not saying last throws, I'm not saying mission accomplished, I am saying that it is possible succeed to establish an environment of economic and political stability so that the Maliki government can govern and the Iraqi military can take over our responsibilities. I don't think it's easy, I can't guarantee it but I can guarantee the consequences of failure.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THERE IS A SENSE, THIS TIME AROUND THAT MCCAIN IS HUNKERING DOWN FOR A LONG SERIOUS BATTLE AND THAT NEW HAMPSHIRE WON'T BE THE EASY WIN THAT IT WAS IN 2000.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

JOURNALISTS ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL HERE IN NEW HAMPSHIRE HAVE BEEN SAYING THINGS LIKE "WELL MCCAIN'S CAMPAIGN HAS COLLAPSED" OR "MCCAIN IS IN THE DISTINCT DESCENDENCY." THAT'S NOT THE KIND OF THING THAT THE ARIZONA SENATOR WANTS TO HEAR. SO HE'S IN NEW HAMPSHIRE TRYING TO MOUNT A COMEBACK. AND LET'S REMEMBER THIS, IN POLITICS OVERNIGHT IS A LONG TIME, A WEEK IS FOREVER AND AT THIS POINT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION THAT DOESN'T HAPPEN FOR WELL OVER A YEAR FROM NOW. AND EVEN THE IMPORTANT NOMINATING CAUCUSES AND PRIMARIES DON'T HAPPEN FOR MANY MONTHS. MCCAIN HAS TIME TO MAKE THE COMEBACK. THE QUESTION IS HOW DOES HE DO IT?

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BY THE TIME HE ARRIVED AT HIS FINAL STOP IN MANCHESTER, A CHILL WAS IN THE AIR, AND IT HAD BEEN RAINING STEADILY FOR OVER AN HOUR. MCCAIN, STANDING UNDER A BOSTON RED-SOX UMBRELLA AND HOPING FOR A POLITICAL WORLD SERIES REBIRTH, PRESSED ON.

MCCAIN (IN SPEECH)

In this campaign we shouldn't lose sight that much more defines us than our partisanship, much more unites us than divides us.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BREAKING ONCE FROM HIS MESSAGE WHEN PRODDED BY ANTI-WAR PROTESTERS.

MCCAIN (IN SPEECH)

It guides me to meet the challenges of our time. Thank you my friends and (laughs) this is what free speech is all about, live free or die. Thank you. Thank you.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

FOR MCCAIN, WAR HAS ALWAYS BEEN HIS BURDEN- WHETHER VIETNAM, IRAQ, OR THE BATTLE HE'S CURRENTLY WAGING IN NEW HAMPSHIRE AND ACROSS THE COUNTRY. HE MADE THAT CLEAR WHEN HE SHARED A LITTLE MORE STRAIGHT TALK WITH SEVERAL REPORTERS AT THE END OF HIS DAY. WE SAW A BIT OF THAT CLASSIC MCCAIN - STANDING HIS GROUND, SPEAKING HIS MIND, DEFIANT AGAINST THE ODDS AND THE WAY THE WINDS OF WAR SEEM TO BE BLOWING JUST NOW.

MCCAIN (ON CAMPAIGN TRAIL)

As I mentioned to you before, wars aren't static. They either go and get worse or things get better. And I'm hoping that they'll get better, but I think also, having said that, that there's very deep-seated feeling about the war that no matter how well it went that people will still feel very strongly. I walked over to shake hands with those protestors today and they were polite enough to shake hands, but this one guy I saw real anger in his face and you know people are, I understand the frustration. So I don't know if there would be more or less protestors, but I know the situation won't be the same on the ground in Iraq just as it's different from what it was just a few weeks ago.

REPORTER

How do you think this day went?

MCCAIN (ON CAMPAIGN TRAIL)

Fine. I feel badly when people have to stand out in the rain. I was flattered that so many would stay. But I think it went fine, I think it went fine. These are the things that you go through. And I'm pleased at the way things are going. And again we've got South Carolina. We're going to three places in South Carolina as you know. Iowa. As you know back in Phoenix we're doing an event there.

RATHER

I started to say if you win, from your viewpoint when you win, you'll be 72 when you're sworn in. People such as Senator Barack Obama say it's time for a new page, time for change, time for new people.

SENATOR MCCAIN

Well I understand that discussion if I were his age (laughter). Look, I think it's time for a steady hand at the tiller. I think if there's ever a time we need experience and we need the ability to hit the ground running it's now. This challenge of radical Islamic extremism is a

transcendent challenge of our time. And we cannot afford any on the job training. I respect the credentials of others, the ambitions and the intellect. I'm the one with the experience.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

SO, IS IT WORKING? IS THE MCCAIN COMEBACK STARTING TO CLICK OR NOT? YOU WILL SEE AND HEAR WHAT SOME VOTERS THINK, NEXT.

FIRESIDE CHAT:

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AFTER SENATOR MCCAIN'S OFFICIAL PRESIDENTIAL RACE ANNOUNCEMENT IN NEW HAMPSHIRE, WE WANTED TO ASK SOME NEW ENGLAND VOTERS WHO ATTENDED HIS RALLIES THEIR THOUGHTS ABOUT THE CANDIDATES. AT OUT FIRESIDE CHAT WE INVITED: LISA BRUNELL, A MARRIED MOTHER OF FOUR AND A REGISTERED NURSE; CARL ZON, A MARRIED FATHER OF FIVE AND A SELF-EMPLOYED TRUCK DRIVER; JENNIFER HORN, A MOTHER AND HOMEMAKER WHO HAS A LOCAL RADIO SHOW; LILLY FRAMBACK, A MARRIED MOTHER OF THREE AND A SMALL BUSINESS OWNER; AND OUR YOUNGEST GUEST, DAVID ANDERSON, WHO IS A POLITICAL SCIENCE GRADUATE STUDENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE.

RATHER

Jennifer, let's start with you. Did you like what you saw today and heard?

JENNIFER HORN

I did like what I saw today and what I heard, but I was particularly impressed by Senator McCain in the second half of his speech when he was speaking about looking to the future and about hopefulness in America and a very positive forward tone to what he had to say. I like his bold stand on the war in Iraq, which I know is probably one of the things that most people dislike about him at this point in the game.

RATHER

Well, in John McCain's phrase, straight talk, is your vote gettable for McCain?

HORN

It is absolutely gettable, yes. At this stage of the game my vote is gettable for anybody who is forward looking, positive, proud of America's record and willing to continue to stand strong to defend America and to put, you know, our best foot forward on the international stage.

CARL ZON

I don't agree with him on everything and I find myself you know covering my head with a pillow from time to time when he puts his foot in his mouth which he seems apt to do lately. But I like what I saw today.

RATHER

And Lisa what about you?

LISA BRUNELL

I did like what I saw and heard. I particularly like his support of the veterans and the fact that he wants them to receive better care and treatment healthcare and I think our veterans get the shaft a lot of times. I think it's a disgrace when our veterans aren't supported and given the care and treatment they need and deserve.

RATHER

And so you really responded to that?

BRUNELL

Yes, I did.

RATHER

Lilly?

LILLY FRAMBACK

Well I did like what I saw, particularly in the second half of the speech. I liked, you know, the specifics that he had about hopefulness, about America being strong, about going forward. Those are things I think that you don't hear enough of these days from folks.

RATHER

David, what did you think?

DAVID ANDERSON

I appreciated the fact that he has a lot of passion about the issues and seems pretty genuine. You could tell at times that he kind of abandoned the script. I felt and was speaking from the heart. But at the same time I disagree with him about the war in Iraq especially, so I found it difficult to come out of it with an entirely positive viewpoint.

RATHER

Straight talk, is your vote gettable for John McCain this time?

BRUNELL

It is gettable. I haven't made any decisions yet. I want to see what they all have to say, not just about the war, about all the views.

RATHER

Carl, let's move on something, how important is the war in Iraq in making your decision for whom you're going to vote?

ZON

I think the outcome of the war in Iraq is important. I almost get a feeling that McCain is getting blamed for the war in Iraq. I don't take John McCain as a war monger and I think had he been president before that we would not be in Iraq.

MCCAIN (IN SPEECH)

We're fighting a war in two countries.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

MCCAIN'S SUPPORT OF THE WAR CAN BE BOTH A BLESSING AND A CURSE TO HIS CAMPAIGN. THESE VOTERS LIKE THAT HE STANDS UP FOR HIS CONVICTIONS, BUT ON THE OTHER HAND, THEN DON'T ALWAYS AGREE WITH HIM ON ALL THE ISSUES.

BRUNELL

I don't like the you know changes just to get the vote type attitude that I feel some candidates have, it's like they'll change with the wind if they know that is what will give them support and votes and I don't appreciate that. I think it's an insult to our intelligence. I like someone who stands by what they say and I'm not saying that they can't change their mind on things, but I do like someone who stands firm in their convictions and not someone who is going to go with the wind just to get the support of voters.

FRAMBACK

George Bush is one of those Republicans I could never bring myself to vote for.

RATHER

I thought you told me that you were Republican or leaned toward Republican?

FRAMBACK

I do lean but I never did vote for George Bush, I didn't like him right from the get go. And the reason I didn't like him was because he didn't have it seemed like the will or the desire to explain his positions in a full way to people and when people will not do that, they're just not going to get my vote. Which is probably one of the big reasons why I like McCain so much. Is that he will stand there and absolutely tell you what he thinks and why he thinks it. As I say, I'm not sure I'm going to vote for McCain, but on that particular item, that is his strength for me.

MCCAIN (IN SPEECH)

And remember that our security in the global progress of our ideals are inextricably linked.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WHILE THE WAR IN IRAQ SEEMS TO BE THE BAROMETER OF THE KIND OF LEADERSHIP JOHN MCCAIN WOULD PROVIDE, TO THESE VOTERS IT IS NOT THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE THEY CARE ABOUT IN THIS ELECTION.

RATHER

What's the #1 issue that you want to hear about?

HORN

I think the #1 issue is going to be illegal immigration. I recall Senator McCain making the comment in Iowa that he was surprised what a big deal illegal immigration was to the folks in Iowa and I think that anyone in his position has no excuse for not understanding what a big deal that has become across the country.

RATHER

Lilly?

FRAMBACK

I think the crushing of the middle class. I think parents are just having a devil of a time trying to figure out how to take care of their kids, how to educate their kids. It is really quite a struggle and I talk to lots of families and that's their major concern, so I think that should be the biggest issue, if its not.

RATHER

David, your #1 issue?

ANDERSON

I'm going to show that I'm the youngest one here by saying that it's the cost of higher education for me personally.

RATHER

David, you're a political science graduate student at the University of New Hampshire.

ANDERSON

Correct.

RATHER

You're working on some research. Research about voters, what are New Hampshire voters saying now?

ANDERSON

I think that the general statement that I have gotten the most when I'm interviewing voters is that they're not quite sure yet about who they are going to vote for. One of the questions that I usually ask them is what are the issues you care about the most. And almost universally they answer that the war in Iraq is important. Some say global warming, quite a few say social security and virtually everyone I talked to mentions healthcare, regardless of their age.

RATHER

And Lisa, your in healthcare, are you not?

BRUNELL

Yes. I'm a nurse at a local hospital here. I do think we need to address it and make it more affordable for people so that they can have healthcare without having to worry that they're going to lose everything if they have to have a hospitalization.

RATHER

Should he get the Republican nomination, should he be elected president, John McCain would be at age 72 the oldest first term president inaugurated in our history. With all of that, he runs the risk of being yesterday's man and a president from yesterday at a time when the country needs a president for tomorrow.

HORN

If the election were today, I don't think I'd vote for John McCain, let me say that up front. But, when it comes to his age and comparing him to other candidates and worrying about having a world view, I think that his age reflects very favorably on him on this particular candidate, because of the experience that he brings to the table, so I think that his age is probably a bonus if I compare him to a first term senator for example from Illinois or if I compare him to a lot of other people in the race who don't bring that kind of experience to the table.

ZON

If I could just inject on that, I respect his service to the country and that he didn't leave his men behind early when offered that opportunity. I respect the fact, as you know, that he went back to Vietnam several years after being released and tried to patch up relations with that country. Worked very closely with them. I think that takes a very big man to do that and all his heroic deeds, one must remember were done long before he was famous or expected any fame or even knew that he would get into politics and that's why I'm still loyal to him. I don't know how many more versions of bomb, bomb Iran I can take before I might start looking around but for now, his past makes me want to remain loyal to him.

FRAMBACK

How can you not think that John McCain has great character? But in terms of electability that's my worry with him, so I'm still looking around.

RATHER

Let me go down the list, what do you think of this. You said your inclined to like McCain, you voted for him before, like him better than Giuliani at this stage?

ZON

I have a lot of respect for Giuliani. I wouldn't be disappointed if Giuliani ended up president.

RATHER

Alright, former governor Mitt Romney from the neighboring state of Massachusetts?

ZON

Also a lot of respect for him. Listen, I think the field as it stands right now there is a lot, I mean everyone in the field is bright. To get back to McCain and what your talking about it does bother me that he is compromising himself, but I also think that as a culture we almost all own a piece of that bastardization, if I may, of the presidential political process.

HORN

I think that your trying to excuse McCain a little bit..

ZON

I'm not.

HORN

I think that his pandering does bother me, it's one of the big issues I have with Senator McCain right now. Because like other people have said here I'm looking for somebody who is willing to stand up and show a little character and stand by that regardless of whether I agree with that person on every single issue, but I think that pandering has just become a part of American politics, certainly a part of American presidential politics.

RATHER

Giuliani versus McCain in New Hampshire. For the Republican presidential nomination should it come down to that, based on what you know today, who gets it?

HORN

McCain.

RATHER

What do you think?

ZON

McCain.

BRUNELL

Oooo that's tough.

RATHER

You're not so sure McCain wins it in a shootout with Giuliani?

BRUNELL

I'm not so sure. No, not at all.

FRAMBACK

I'd say 60/40 Giuliani.

RATHER

60/40?

ZON

Lilly's laying odds (laughs).

RATHER

As you know it's against federal law to gamble.

FRAMBACK

I apologize. (laughs)

RATHER

David?

ANDERSON

I think that if McCain remains in the race throughout that he would win in New Hampshire over Giuliani.

RATHER

You were saying that you like all the republican candidates right now could you see yourself voting democrat or it's pretty much going to be republican?

ZON

No. Absolutely, in fact John McCain was the first and only time I've ever voted Republican.

RATHER

And Jennifer what about you? Could you vote for a Democrat?

HORN

In theory, yes. In this race, I don't see it. There is not a Democrat in the race today that I would vote for in this election.

RATHER

Taking that into account, on your personal preference, Senator Clinton, former Senator Edwards, Senator Obama, you must be thinking I'm going to vote Republican, I need to know who the toughest Democrat is to beat.

HORN

I think at the moment, if the election was today that just because of the momentum behind his campaign Barack Obama would be very difficult to beat today. I don't think that is going to last through till next November though.

RATHER

Carl, strongest Democrat?

ZON

John McCain. (laughs) most of the people I talk to who don't favor him and who are staunch Republicans they're complaint is that he's a Democrat.

RATHER

Well for those who are registered as Democrats and running for president, who would run best in New Hampshire and who would be the hardest for McCain to beat?

ZON

I think Obama for early on had a very strong showing up here as you know and a lot of support from people I talked to.

BRUNELL

I think as it stands now, probably Obama, I think he's got the momentum in our area.

ZON

Even if Gore got back in?

BRUNELL

I don't think so.

HORN

Senator Clinton has gotten a tremendous amount of support on the Democratic side in New Hampshire, tremendous in a broad spectrum of support. So I hate to talk about it and count her out because she's not.

RATHER

Lilly what do you think?

FRAMBACK

I think her organization is just so so well done that I think—

RATHER

Senator Clinton?

FRAMBACK

Senator Clinton's, that I think it would be hard to count her out.

RATHER

Well David, whom would be the toughest democrat to beat in your judgment?

ANDERSON

I think that my answer would include Edwards but also Barack Obama. I think that Senator McCain is a pretty dynamic speaker but at the same time his age might play into it because I think America is looking for a fresh new approach, kind of someone with energy and a dynamic idea.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

WE HEARD A LOT ABOUT FEMA IN THE DAYS, WEEKS, AND MONTHS FOLLOWING HURRICANE KATRINA. IT WAS THE GOVERNMENT AGENCY THAT BECAME THE BUTT OF ALL JOKES, FOR GULF COAST SURVIVORS AND FOR THOSE WHO WATCHED THE DEATH AND DEVASTATION FROM AFAR. FEMA WAS THE "HECKUVA JOB" ORGANIZATION THAT CAME TO SYMBOLIZE WHAT WAS, IN TRUTH, A FAILED EMERGENCY RESPONSE THAT HAD MANY AUTHORS, IN ALL LAYERS AND LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT. WITH ALL THE NEGATIVE ATTENTION, WITH THE CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS AND CHANGES OF PERSONNEL, ONE MIGHT HAVE ASSUMED THAT FEMA HAD BECOME MORE RESPONSIVE TO THE VICTIMS OF 2005'S STORMS- THAT IMPORTANT LESSONS HAD BEEN LEARNED FROM THE NATURAL DISASTER THAT BECAME A HUMAN DISASTER. BUT NOW COMES EVIDENCE THAT, EVEN IN PROVIDING SHELTER FROM THE STORM FOR THE TENS OF THOUSANDS DISPLACED BY KATRINA AND RITA FEMA'S RESPONSE CONTINUES TO BE NOT ONLY INADEQUATE BUT ALSO POSSIBLY HARMFUL. USING YOUR TAXPAYER MONEY TO DELIVER TOXIC TRAILERS TO THOSE DISPLACED BY THE STORMS SEEMS THE VERY ESSENCE OF ADDING INSULT TO INJURY- PARTICULARLY GIVEN WHAT SOME HAVE SAID ABOUT FEMA ALL BUT IGNORING THEIR COMPLAINTS. AND IF THE STORIES WE HEARD TONIGHT FROM THOSE WHO SAY FEMA'S TRAILERS MADE THEM SICK ARE TRUE, AN AGENCY THAT PROMISED TO IMPROVE, STILL HAS A LONG WAY TO GO— IN DISASTER RELIEF, AND IN RESPONSIVENESS TO THE PEOPLE IT IS CHARGED TO HELP.

FOR HDNET, DAN RATHER REPORTING. GOOD NIGHT.