

Dan Rather Reports

Episode Number: 804

Episode Title: Grounded

Description: The latest on the Boeing 787 Dreamliner. It's an aircraft we have investigated after engineers told us of design problems. Now the plane has been grounded due to mechanical issues.

ACT 1: TEASE

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

TONIGHT...FOLLOWING UP ON YEARS OF INVESTIGATIONS...UP FIRST, THE DREAMLINER. ONCE IT WAS QUESTIONS ABOUT COMPOSITES, NOW BATTERIES HAVE GROUNDED THE BIG JETS.

RATHER

How embarrassing has this been for Boeing?

STEPHEN TRIMBLE, AMERICAS BUREAU CHIEF, FLIGHT GLOBAL

Well, we've never seen anything like this. You know the grounding-- the worldwide grounding of an aircraft has not happened-- in more than 30 years.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ALSO, CLEARING THE AIR...THE NUMBER OF SICK VETERANS GROWS AND LAWSUITS MOUNT OVER TOXIC AIR IN A WARZONE.

SETH MILLER, TECHNOLOGY CONSULTANT

I think this is a permanent lung condition. I don't think they're gonna get better. I hope that they're not gonna get much worse

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND...IT'S NOW OPEN SEASON ON THE PYTHONS. AN UPDATE TO OUR INVESTIGATION ON SUPER-SIZED SNAKES ACROSS SOUTH FLORIDA.

JUSTIN MATTHEWS, PYTHON HUNTER

We're not here to rescue pythons, we're here to kill pythons.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

OUR REPORTING NEVER STOPS. WE'LL BRING YOU THE LATEST...TONIGHT, ON DAN RATHER REPORTS.

ACT 2: GROUNDED

DAN RATHER (ON CAMERA)

GOOD EVENING. WITH HUMILITY, BUT YES, ALSO SOME PRIDE, I'M HAPPY TO SAY THAT WE RECENTLY PUT ON THE AIR 250TH EPISODE OF DAN RATHER REPORTS HERE ON AXS TV. OVER THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS WE HAVE BROUGHT YOU DOZENS OF INVESTIGATIONS FROM AROUND THE WORLD AND TONIGHT...WHY OUR REPORTING NEVER STOPS.

OVER THE NEXT HOUR, WE WILL BRING YOU UP TO DATE ON HOW SOME OF OUR STORIES CONTINUE TO MAKE NEWS. WE BEGIN WITH ONE OF THE BIGGEST AIRPLANE MANUFACTURERS IN THE WORLD...AMERICA'S OWN BOEING.

BOEING ANNOUNCER

I am really proud to premiere the Boeing 787 Dreamliner.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BACK IN 2007, LONG BEFORE THE NEW PLANE EVER TOOK TO THE SKIES, WE BROUGHT YOU THE STORY OF THE DREAMLINER...BOEING'S BRAND NEW 787. AT THE TIME, SOME WITH INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF THE PLANE'S DESIGN WERE WORRIED ABOUT HOW IT WAS MADE....A NEW MATERIAL FOR AIRLINERS CALLED COMPOSITES...OR PLASTICS...WAS USED TO MAKE THE ENTIRE FUSELAGE AS OPPOSED TO THE TRADITIONAL ALUMINUM....BUT THIS WAS UNTESTED FOR A PASSENGER AIRCRAFT AND A VETERAN OF BOEING'S AEROSPACE DESIGN TEAM, VINCE WELDON, WENT ON THE RECORD WITH HIS CONCERNS.

VINCE WELDON

The biggest problem with composites of the type Boeing is using on the 787, is the lack of toughness. Toughness means resilience. Toughness means plastic deformation that absorbs shock, if you have the negative event of a crash-landing.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WELDON WAS WORRIED THAT THE PLANES WOULD SHATTER INTO SMALL PIECES... IF ONE EVER CRASHED...MAKING SURVIVABILITY UNLIKELY. BOEING SAID WELDON'S CONCERNS WERE UNFOUNDED. SO FAR THERE HAVE BEEN NO CRASHES AND NO SERIOUS PROBLEMS WITH THE CARBON COMPOSITE SKIN.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

BUT THERE HAVE BEEN A RASH OF OTHER ISSUES ON THE DREAMLINER... MOST RECENTLY, BATTERY FAILURES INSIDE TWO 787S, THOSE TROUBLES LED THE FAA TO DO SOMETHING IT HASN'T DONE IN 30 YEARS. IT GROUNDED THE PLANE. THAT HAS BEEN WIDELY REPORTED. BUT WHY AND HOW DID THIS HAPPEN? DID OR DID NOT THE FAA DO ITS JOB PROPERLY IN ORIGINALLY APPROVING THE PLANES FOR FLIGHT? AND WHAT ABOUT BOEING'S MANAGEMENT'S BEHAVIOR? AND HOW DOES BOEING RECOVER? ALL OF THAT'S A MUCH DEEPER STORY ABOUT ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY AND SAVING MONEY.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THIS IS THE LAST PLACE BOEING WANTS ITS NEW JETLINERS TO BE PARKED. HERE ON THE TARMAC NEAR CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA, SIT A HANDFUL OF DREAMLINERS. ENGINEERS FROM THE NEARBY BOEING PLANT ARE WORKING DAY AND NIGHT TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT WENT WRONG.

IN WASHINGTON, INVESTIGATORS FROM THE NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD ARE LOOKING FOR CLUES FROM WHAT'S LEFT OF ONE BATTERY ON A DREAMLINER THAT WAS SO HOT IT MELTED THE CASE THAT WAS DESIGNED TO KEEP IT SECURE.

BOEING PROMOTIONAL VIDEO

It's pressurized to 6,000 feet so there's more oxygen in the air so you'll feel better.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THIS IS THE PROMOTIONAL VIDEO THAT BOEING PRODUCED TO SHOW OFF THE DREAMLINER. THERE ARE A LOT OF WHISTLES AND BELLS INSIDE THE CABIN FOR THE PASSENGERS...NEW MULTI-COLORED LIGHTING DESIGNED TO EASE JET-LAGMUCH LARGER WINDOWS THAT CAN BE INSTANTLY TINTED TO TURN DAY INTO NIGHT... HIGHER HUMIDITY DURING FLIGHTS...TO MAKE IT MORE COMFORTABLE IN THE CABIN....

ALL THE NEW TECHNOLOGY DESIGN FOR PASSENGER COMFORT WAS A BIG DRAW FOR SETH MILLER, A TECHNOLOGY CONSULTANT FROM NEW YORK WHO'S AN AIRPLANE

JUNKIE....HE COULDN'T WAIT TO RIDE ON THE 787...AND WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO BOOK IT...TWICE.

SETH MILLER, TECHNOLOGY CONSULTANT

In both of these cases I actually planned my trip specifically around getting to fly on the Dreamliner. It was I'll say not the only reason completely, but it was a very significant factor in both of them.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND, HE SAYS THE FLIGHTS WERE WELL WORTH THE WAIT.

SETH MILLER

So it's supposed to be more comfortable and more-- more-- you arrive feeling more refreshed and higher humidity, things like that. Honestly, for me the coolest thing is the windows are bigger. I love sitting in the window seat and looking out at the world-- as I fly around. It also is ridiculously quiet onboard, which is a wonderful thing. I found myself being able to take a nap without having to put my earplugs in. So that's quite lovely.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

LOVELY IN TERMS OF PASSENGER COMFORT BUT YOU WON'T NOTICE THE THINGS THAT MAKE THE PLANE SPECIAL FOR THE AIRLINES....THEY'RE MUCH CHEAPER TO FLY.

STEPHEN TRIMBLE, AMERICAS BUREAU CHIEF, FLIGHT GLOBAL

What the airlines want-- they didn't want something that was particularly faster or bigger than what they already had. They wanted something that would burn less fuel.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

STEPHEN TRIMBLE IS THE US BUREAU CHIEF FOR THE AVIATION NEWS AND TRADE MAGAZINE "FLIGHT GLOBAL." HE HAS BEEN REPORTING ON THE 787 SINCE BOEING FIRST ANNOUNCED PLANS TO BUILD IT.

TRIMBLE

Really with-- with airplanes, I mean they're-- they're pretty efficient already. You know there's not much you can do. So-- the biggest thing they could do was change the engine, and they did that. So-- and their goal was a 20% fuel reduction. And by changing the engine you get about 10%. So-- but they still had a long way to go. And so then they had to look at some other things-- some more radical things.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ONE OF THOSE RADICAL THINGS WAS A WHOLE NEW ELECTRICAL SYSTEM ...A SYSTEM THAT IS SUSPECTED OF BEING AT THE HEART OF BOEING'S CURRENT PROBLEMS. THE 787 HAS TWO VERY POWERFUL LITHIUM-ION BATTERY PACKS. IT TAKES A LOT OF POWER TO RUN ALL THE NEW CABIN COMFORTS PLUS--FOR THE FIRST TIME--SOME OF THE PLANES MECHANICAL SYSTEMS.

TRIMBLE

So instead of using pneumatics or hydraulics-- they switched to an electric system for most of those systems. You know things like raising and lowering-- lowering the landing gear. That used to be a hydraulic system. Now it's powered by electricity.

DAN RATHER

And so by powering it by electricity, all this was part of a combined effort to meet the goal, make the aircraft more fuel efficient?

TRIMBLE

Right. Right, that takes-- it takes less of a load off the engines, 'cause the engines used to supply the power for those kinds of things. Now it doesn't have to do it, and the electricity does it.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT EARLIER THIS MONTH, TWO NEAR DISASTERS. THE REAR BATTERY CAUGHT FIRE ON A JAPAN AIRLINE'S 787 PARKED AT THE GATE AT BOSTON'S LOGAN AIRPORT. JUST NINE DAYS LATER, ANOTHER 787'S FRONT BATTERY FAILED-- THIS TIME IN FLIGHT-- RELEASING A BURNING SMELL INTO THE COCKPIT AND CABIN AND FORCING AN EMERGENCY LANDING IN JAPAN. EVERYONE ON BOARD WAS SAFELY EVACUATED. BUT AFTER YEARS OF DELAYS, SUPPOSEDLY RIGOROUS TESTING, AND FINALLY FLIGHT...PASSENGERS JUMPING ON ESCAPE SLIDES TO AVOID SMOKE AND FUMES IS THE NOT THE IMAGE BOEING ENGINEERS EVER WANTED TO SEE.

MARY SCHIAVO, FORMER NTSB INVESTIGATOR

There's an old saying in aviation, you know, one event is an anomaly. Two is a trend. So when they had the second battery event, they had to act and right away.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

MARY SCHIAVO IS A FORMER INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION. SHE SAYS THE FAA FINALLY BECAME SO CONCERNED ABOUT THE

BATTERIES THAT THEY DECIDED TO DO SOMETHING ALMOST UNPRECEDENTED - THE AGENCY GROUNDED 787S IN THE U.S. AND AVIATION AUTHORITIES AROUND THE GLOBE QUICKLY FOLLOWED, PULLING ALL 50 DREAMLINERS OUT OF SERVICE.

SCHIAVO

What made this different in this case was the fire. Whenever you have a flame or fume event on a plane, it's deadly. It's even deadly on the ground. But when there's a possibility of any kind of fire or-- or any kind of-- chemical, smoke, or fume, that could kill people, that's what gets your plane grounded.

RATHER

How embarrassing has this been for Boeing?

TRIMBLE

We've never seen anything like this. You know the grounding-- the worldwide grounding of an aircraft-- has not happened-- in more than 30 years. I mean that is never supposed to happen. That is a huge black eye.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND IT'S ALSO SEEN BY OTHERS AS A BLACK EYE FOR THE FAA...WHICH HAS JUST ORDERED A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE 787'S ENTIRE ELECTRICAL SYSTEM....A SYSTEM THE AGENCY SAID JUST MONTHS AGO WAS SAFE.

SCHIAVO

They're scrambling. Inside the FAA, they're really scrambling because-- I mean, they look bad. They look like they didn't do their job on certification. it's-- it's a serious blow.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND THE F-A-A WILL HAVE THE FINAL SAY ON WHEN THE DREAMLINER FLIES AGAIN. BUT INVESTIGATORS WITH THE N-T-S-B HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO TO DETERMINE WHAT CAUSED THE BATTERY FAILURES...AND THEN, WHETHER THE BATTERY...OR THE AIRPLANE...NEEDS TO BE RE-ENGINEERED. IN THE MEANTIME BOEING WON'T BE ABLE TO DELIVER ANY OF THE 800 ORDERS IT HAS FOR THE DREAMLINER WORLDWIDE.

RATHER

Well, with the FAA-- the Federal Aviation Administration, has it been able to keep up with these new technologies? Let's face it-- This is breakthrough stuff. Is the FAA equipped to keep up with that?

TRIMBLE

There is a process that the FAA has for-- examining the safety and scrutinizing the safety of these new technologies. And they-- they call it a "special conditions." So-- a-- any kind of new technology that is introduced, they come up with a special way of proving that it is safe and it is airworthy.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND ON THE 787 THERE WERE 14 SO-CALLED "SPECIAL CONDITIONS"...INDICATING NEW TECHNOLOGY THAT NEEDS TO BE CLOSELY WATCHED.

ONE OF THOSE SPECIAL CONDITIONS WAS FOR THOSE POWERFUL BATTERIES - AND WITH GOOD REASON, IT TURNS OUT LITHIUM ION BATTERIES - WHICH ARE ALL AROUND US IN CELL PHONES, LAPTOPS AND OTHER ELECTRONICS - HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO CATCH FIRE.

IN 2006, A MISHAP IN TUCSON ARIZONA ENDED IN CATASTROPHIC FIRE WHEN SOMETHING WENT WRONG DURING A TEST WITH THE 787 BATTERY.

TRIMBLE

It blew up. These kinds of fires, lithium ion fires, are very intense, and they're very difficult to extinguish. You can't use water, you have to use a non-reactive agent. And even then it was very difficult.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE FIRE FROM THE LITHIUM ION BATTERY WAS SO INTENSE, IT QUICKLY BURNED THE BUILDING TO THE GROUND AND TOOK 50 FIREFIGHTERS SEVERAL HOURS TO PUT OUT....WHICH SOUNDS A LOT LIKE WHAT HAPPENED EARLIER THIS MONTH IN BOSTON.

TRIMBLE

The-- the 787 fire-- in Boston-- on Japan Airlines-- those fire fighters in Boston were trained specifically to extinguish that fire on that aircraft. That's part of how airports plan for these things. And it still took 'em 40 minutes to do it.

RATHER

You are scaring me here.

TRIMBLE

(LAUGH) I'm sorry.

RATHER

Should I be scared?

TRIMBLE

Well, not now, because the planes are grounded. So-- yeah, but if they weren't-- a lot of people would be.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT IT'S MORE THAN THE BATTERY...THE CASES THAT WERE DESIGNED TO PROTECT THE POWER SUPPLIES...ARE ALSO SUPPOSED TO PROTECT THE PASSENGERS...FROM SMOKE AND FUMES.

SCHIAVO

Obviously Boeing will say that the batteries were shielded and they were shielded in a very strong containment box and that that box was supposed to contain any-- g-- sparks, fire, fumes, leakage, that proved not to be the case when you see the pictures of the battery that they took off the plane from Boston because it burned through.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN FACT, BOEING'S CHIEF 787 ENGINEER MIKE SINNETT RECENTLY ACKNOWLEDGED IN A CONFERENCE CALL WITH REPORTERS THAT BATTERY FIRES ARE VERY DIFFICULT TO EXTINGUISH BECAUSE THE BURNING CHEMICALS CREATE OXYGEN THAT KEEP FEEDING THE FLAMES....

MIKE SINNETT, CHIEF 787 ENGINEER
CONFERENCE CALL JANUARY 10, 2013

You have to assume it's not going to go out, you have to assume that it's gonna go and that it's going to expend all of its energy and you have to be good with the amount of heat and smoke that's generated from that event.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT IT'S NOT JUST BOEING....THIS IS A PRIVATE JET CALLED THE CITATION...BUILT BY CESSNA. IT TOO WAS POWERED BY A LITHIUM ION BATTERY UNTIL AN INCIDENT IN 2011 WHEN A POWER SUPPLY ON ONE OF THE JETS - SIMILAR TO THIS ONE - SUDDENLY BEGAN TO BURN...FORTUNATELY THE PLANE WAS ON THE GROUND. CESSNA QUICKLY TOLD THEIR CUSTOMERS TO SWAP THE BATTERIES FOR OLDER, SAFER VARIETIES. THE FAA THEN FOLLOWED UP MAKING THE SWITCH OUT MANDATORY.

RATHER

So that raises the question, if they FAA says, "Listen, take them out of these smaller aircraft-- the Cessnas." Why allow them in the 787?

TRIMBLE

Yeah, the-- well, you know-- in-- in fairness, I mean, lithium ion batteries are not all alike. Different chemistries, different manufacturers can have a huge effect on their quality and their safety. There's gonna be a lot of oversight about why the FAA missed this-- because in retrospect, it's starting to look pretty obvious that this was a big red flag.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT CESSNA SEEMS COMMITTED TO LITHIUM ION BATTERIES - ITS NEWEST JETS SCHEDULED FOR ROLL OUT THIS SPRING WILL HAVE THEM. AND ALTHOUGH BOEING DID NOT WANT TO BE INTERVIEWED FOR THIS REPORT, IN A LETTER TO EMPLOYEES, COMPANY CEO JIM MCNERNEY SAID QUOTE "WE HAVE HIGH CONFIDENCE IN THE SAFETY OF THE 787...."

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT MARY SCHIAVO THINKS IT WILL BE AWHILE BEFORE YOU SEE DREAMLINERS AT AN AIRPORT NEAR YOU.

SCHIAVO

I suspect that before they let them go flying again-- if they let them go flying again with these batteries, there'll be additional shielding, perhaps some additional fire suppression, and they will maybe require additional venting so if there is a fume release it doesn't go into the plane, into the cabin. It will go outside. But that would require some re-engineering.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT IF PART OF THE DREAMLINER NEEDS TO BE RE-DESIGNED...IT WON'T BE EASY. THE 787 WAS THE FIRST BOEING PASSENGER PLANE THAT WAS ALMOST COMPLETELY OUTSOURCED...MAJOR PARTS WERE NOT ONLY BUILT...BUT DESIGNED BY 300 COMPANIES IN 15 COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD...THE CONTROVERSIAL BATTERIES ARE MADE IN ASIA.

TRIMBLE

That's right. They're actually-- they're manufactured in Japan. The battery charger unit-- which is also part of this investigation is made out of Arizona. And there-- actually-- Boeing isn't contracted with

either of those companies. They're contracted with a company in France called Thales, who selected those suppliers for this.

RATHER

If you're running an airline, why wouldn't you say, "You know, the Boeing 777-- the Trip-7 is a very good aircraft. And it's been proven over all these flight years. I think what I wanna do is fly the proven aircraft. Forget about this Dreamliner thing." What's the argument against doing that?

TRIMBLE

There's just no question the 787 will-- is gonna burn a whole lot less fuel. You know, millions of dollars' worth of fuel less-- per year. And that-- main-- make-- makes a huge difference to an airline's bottom line, these days.

RATHER

Okay, made a huge difference to the airlines bottom line, but forgive me. What about me? What about the passenger?

TRIMBLE

Right, the point is to deliver an aircraft that doesn't have an impact on the safety of the passenger. You know at the same time, you have to-- you do have to allow manufacturers to innovate, to develop new technologies, to take some risks.

And the FAA has to be able to handle that appropriately. And, you know, at the same time not go too far. And where you draw that boundary-- is always a debate. And always-- you know -- a matter of significant concern for public safety. And-- clearly in this case-- they didn't get that right.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT BOEING IS CONTINUING PRODUCTION OF THE 787S DESPITE THE FACT THAT IT IS UNLIKELY THAT ANY OF THEM WILL BE FLYING ANYTIME SOON. AND DEMOCRATIC SENATOR JAY ROCKEFELLER, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND TRANSPORTATION HAS INDICATED HE IS LIKELY TO CALL FOR HEARINGS ON THE 787'S RECENT PROBLEMS INCLUDING THE BATTERY FAILURES. NOW THIS IS PERSONAL. I'VE SAID IT BEFORE AND I SAY IT AGAIN NOW. BOEING IS A GREAT AMERICAN COMPANY WITH AN ADMIRABLE SAFETY RECORD AND A LARGE FORCE OF SOME OF THE MOST DEDICATED AND SKILLED WORKERS IN THE WORLD. BUT BOEING'S MANAGEMENT ALSO HAS A BIG TIME LOBBYING OPERATION THAT CONTRIBUTES GENEROUSLY TO POLITICIANS... WAS THAT A FACTOR IN WHAT'S HAPPENED? WAS QUALITY CONTROL SACRIFICED BY TOO MUCH OUTSOURCING? AND WAS THE PLANE RUSHED TO MARKET WITHOUT ENOUGH FAA

OVERSIGHT? THESE ARE LEGITIMATE QUESTIONS. WHEN WE FIRST RAISED SOME OF THEM IN OUR ORIGINAL INVESTIGATION, BOEING AND ITS APOLOGISTS WERE DISMISSIVE, SOMETIMES EVEN HOSTILE IN SAYING THERE WAS NO REASON TO WORRY. THOSE ASSURANCES TODAY SEEM, AT THE VERY LEAST, QUESTIONABLE. NOW ... UP NEXT...THERE WAS SOMETHING IN THE AIR...THE AFTER EFFECTS OF WAR. SO STAY WITH US.

ACT 3: BURN PITS

DAN RATHER (ON CAMERA)

WELCOME BACK. WE NOW BRING YOU AN UPDATE ON AN INVESTIGATION INTO SOLDIERS SICKENED IN THE WAR ZONES OF IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN.

PRESIDENT OBAMA, IN HIS RECENT INAUGURAL ADDRESS, SAID THAT A DECADE OF WAR IS NOW ENDING, BUT THE SAD TRUTH IS THAT THE LEGACY AND THE PERSONAL COST OF THESE CONFLICTS WILL CONTINUE FOR DECADES TO COME. AND SOME OF THESE COSTS ARE ONLY NOW BECOMING APPARENT.

THREE YEARS AGO WE WERE ONE OF THE FIRST NEWS ORGANIZATIONS TO EXPOSE A HIDDEN THREAT TO SOLDIERS' HEALTH THAT THE PENTAGON WAS BUSY DOWNPLAYING. IT DID NOT INVOLVE BULLETS OR BOMBS FROM THE ENEMY. IT WAS SELF-INFLICTED. AND NOW THE SCOPE OF THAT HARM ONLY SEEMS TO HAVE INCREASED.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

FOR YEARS IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN, THIS WAS A COMMON SIGHT ON U.S. MILITARY BASES. BILLOWING CLOUDS OF SMOKE EMANATING FROM MOUNTAINS OF BURNING TRASH. THEY'RE CALLED BURN PITS, AND AT ONE POINT THERE WERE ESTIMATED TO BE HUNDREDS OF THEM IN BOTH COUNTRIES -- SOME SMALL, SOME ENORMOUS. IN THESE WARS, HUNDREDS OF TONS OF TRASH WERE PRODUCED EACH DAY.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WAR ZONES ARE TOUGH PLACES. MILITARY REGULATIONS RECOGNIZE THAT FOR COMMANDERS IN BATTLE, DISPOSING OF TRASH IS NOT THE FIRST PRIORITY. NOR SHOULD IT BE.

SOLDIER

Yup, we are burning shit.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT WHEN POSSIBLE, THE MILITARY IS REQUIRED TO AVOID THE OPEN BURNING OF SOLID WASTE AND TO USE INCINERATORS. STILL FOR YEARS IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN THE MILITARY HAD REPORTEDLY BEEN OPENLY BURNING EVERYTHING FROM POISONOUS PAINTS...

UNIDENTIFIED MALE

That's a round.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

...TO LIVE AMMUNITION, OFTEN ADDING JET FUEL AS AN ACCELERANT.

IN OUR ORIGINAL REPORT WE INVESTIGATED WHAT HAD TAKEN PLACE OVER A SIX-YEAR PERIOD AT THE U.S. MILITARY BASE IN BALAD, IRAQ - AN IMPORTANT TRANSIT ZONE FOR U.S. SOLDIERS AND MATERIALS ENTERING THE IRAQ THEATER. BUT FOR MANY OF THE U.S. SERVICEMEN AND WOMEN WHO PASSED THROUGH HERE, BALAD BECAME INFAMOUS FOR THE ACRID SMOKE THAT OFTEN HUNG OVER IT.

UNIDENTIFIED SOLDIER

Balad Iraq June 12, 2006 and uh a particularly bad burn day.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WE WERE PROVIDED WITH FOOTAGE OF THE BURN PIT AT BALAD BY A SOLDIER WHO INSISTED WE CONCEAL HIS IDENTITY BECAUSE HE FEARED LOSING HIS MILITARY BENEFITS AND HIS JOB.

UNIDENTIFIED SOLDIER

This is our lovely burn pit; they're burning plastic, metal, batteries. Anything you think of that gets discarded. They burn it and we breathe it.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

RETIRED LT. COL. DARRIN CURTIS, A U.S. AIR FORCE BIOENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEER, WAS SENT TO BALAD IN 2006 WITH THE TASK OF PROTECTING THE HEALTH OF HIS FELLOW AIRMEN.

RATHER

What were they burning in the pits?

CURTIS

Every piece of trash that was generated on Balad.

RATHER

Rubber tires?

CURTIS

Yes, sir.

RATHER

Plastic?

CURTIS

Yes, sir.

RATHER

I wrote a list here. Styrofoam?

CURTIS

Yes, sir.

RATHER

Paint?

CURTIS

Yes, sir.

RATHER

Chemicals?

CURTIS

Yes, sir.

RATHER

And were any of the soldiers complaining about the smoke and the toxic plume?

CURTIS

I had constant emails. And if anybody knew what my job was, the-- the first conversation was always, "What are you doin' about the burn pit?"

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

CURTIS WROTE A MEMORANDUM ABOUT THE PIT IN BALAD AND SENT IT UP HIS CHAIN OF COMMAND. IN IT HE SAID THAT IT'S "...AMAZING THAT THE BURN PIT HAS BEEN ABLE TO OPERATE WITHOUT RESTRICTIONS OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS..." AND HE CALLED THE PIT AN "...ACUTE HEALTH HAZARD..." AND WARNED OF THE POSSIBILITY OF "...CHRONIC HEALTH HAZARDS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SMOKE..." HE LISTED AS POSSIBLE CONTAMINANTS: ARSENIC, HYDROGEN CYANIDE, BENZENE, SULFUR DIOXIDE, AND FORMALDEHYDE -- JUST TO NAME A FEW.

AS CURTIS'S MEMO WAS CIRCULATING IN 2006-- DOCTORS STATESIDE WERE PUZZLING OVER A STREAM OF SERVICE MEMBERS WHO HAD BEEN COMING INTO THEIR OFFICES FOR TWO YEARS COMPLAINING OF BREATHING PROBLEMS. DR ANTHONY SZEMA IS A RESPIRATORY SPECIALIST AT THE VETERANS' AFFAIRS HOSPITAL IN NORTHPORT, LONG ISLAND.

DR. ANTHONY SZEMA

Most of my patients were 80-year-old white men. And all of a sudden around 2004, we noticed that there were young women and young men coming into our clinic. These were soldiers who were athletes, and all of a sudden, they're coming in for asthma-like symptoms, for lung injury type of symptoms.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DR SZEMA DECIDED TO RUN A STUDY COMPARING THE MEDICAL RECORDS OF RETURNING SOLDIERS, WITH THOSE WHO HAD REMAINED STATESIDE. HE FOUND THAT THOSE WHO'D BEEN DEPLOYED HAD NEARLY DOUBLE THE RATE OF RESPIRATORY PROBLEMS.

RATHER

Did you have any idea what was causing these respiratory problems?

SZEMA

I actually did not know. What we speculated initially was it must have been the sandstorms.

RATHER

So this is what you thought at first.

SZEMA

That's-- that's what we do. I didn't know what a burn pit was. Nobody had told me what a burn pit was. That-- that was our original premise. Yeah.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AT THE SAME TIME SZEMA WAS DOING HIS RESEARCH, PULMONOLOGIST ROBERT MILLER, AT VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY IN TENNESSEE, WAS ALSO SEEING A NUMBER OF SERVICE MEMBERS WHO COULD NO LONGER PASS THEIR PHYSICAL FITNESS TESTS.

ROBERT MILLER, PULMONOLOGIST

Almost every one of these guys that I saw initially should have been considered an elite athlete. They could run two miles in 13 minutes. And when they came home, they couldn't run two miles. They are short of breath with running. They're short of breath walking up inclines. They're short of breath walking up a flight of stairs.

JENNIFER BLAIR

A half a mile, a quarter mile and I'd be incredibly winded like I'd just run a marathon so.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN OUR ORIGINAL INVESTIGATION, WE MET THEN-29 YEAR OLD CAPTAIN JENNIFER BLAIR - A WEST POINT GRADUATE WHO HAD SERVED AS A PLATOON LEADER AT BALAD FROM JANUARY 2005 TO JANUARY 2006. DURING HER SECOND DEPLOYMENT TO IRAQ, SHE STARTED HAVING BREATHING PROBLEMS-- PROBLEMS THAT BECAME DEBILITATING BY THE TIME SHE GOT HOME.

BLAIR

I'm walking up the stairs, I'm walking to meetings, and I'm out of breath. And I'm not talking, like, out of breath. I'm talking, like, catch your breath, like, I can't walk and talk at the same time. I go to the doctor and I was like, "I can't breathe. I don't know what's going on. I feel like I'm having a heart attack or something's going on."

RATHER

You went to West Point.

BLAIR

Yes.

RATHER

You don't get through there without intense physical training.

BLAIR

No.

RATHER

You were a runner.

BLAIR

Yes.

RATHER

Had you had any breathing problems before?

BLAIR

Absolutely not. I-- I don't smoke. I had run, you know, six miles a day.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BLAIR EVENTUALLY FOUND HER WAY TO DR. MILLER. AT THE TIME, MILLER WAS EVALUATING DOZENS OF SOLDIERS WITH SIMILAR SYMPTOMS, AND THE SAME CLEAN X-RAYS. MILLER DECIDED THE ONLY WAY TO DIAGNOSE THEM WAS TO SURGICALLY REMOVE A PIECE OF LUNG AND RUN A BIOPSY. HE SAYS HE WAS STARTLED BY WHAT HE FOUND.

MILLER

It's-- it's a very significant lung injury. You-- you don't see this in normal people. These are the kind of changes you see in patients that have-- either toxic exposure or they have complications from organ transplantations.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DR. MILLER FOUND THAT MANY OF HIS PATIENTS HAD BEEN EXPOSED TO BURN PITS.

MILLER

I don't think that there's any doubt that if a soldier lived next to a burn pit or lived next to burning human waste, for months on end, and then they come home with lung injury, that the two are not related.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HE SAYS THAT PATIENTS LIKE JENNIFER BLAIR ARE ESSENTIALLY BREATHING THROUGH A STRAW, MAKING SIMPLE DAILY TASKS A CHORE.

BLAIR

Before I would have jogged up 'em with a little bit more pace, but like now, you know I'm out of breath and it feels like I just ran or did an extreme amount of physical exertion.

MILLER

I think this is a permanent lung condition. I don't think they're gonna get better. I hope that they're not gonna get much worse.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE

The wind shifted -- it's blowing right into us. I want to show that were breathing toxic fumes. In case there's ever breathing problems or lung issues or anything like that.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

IN THE YEARS SINCE OUR REPORT FIRST RAN, HUNDREDS OF SOLDIERS HAVE COME FORWARD CLAIMING ILLNESSES DUE TO BURN PITS - AND SOME HAVE DIED. MANY EXPECT THOSE NUMBERS WILL ONLY GO UP.

BUT IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT PROVING A DIRECT CAUSE AND EFFECT BETWEEN THE BURN PITS AND HEALTH AILMENTS IS COMPLICATED. IN 2011, THE INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE ISSUED A REPORT THAT SAID MORE STUDY IS NEEDED TO BE DONE. JUST EARLIER THIS MONTH, PRESIDENT OBAMA SIGNED A LAW CREATING A REGISTRY TO TRACK THE HEALTH OF SOLDIERS WHO WERE DEPLOYED NEAR BURN PITS.

MEANWHILE, HUNDREDS OF SICKENED SOLDIERS HAVE FILED LAWSUITS AGAINST THE MILITARY CONTRACTOR KELLOGG BROWN AND ROOT, OR KBR. ALTHOUGH IT SEEMS THAT KBR WAS NOT INVOLVED WITH THE BURN PIT AT BALAD, THE COMPANY WAS

CONTRACTED TO DISPOSE OF WASTE ON MANY MILITARY BASES AND USED BURN PITS EXTENSIVELY. BUT THESE LAWSUITS HAVE STALLED BECAUSE OF A UNRESOLVED LEGAL ISSUE AT THE VERY HEART OF HOW OUR MILITARY WORKS.

CHARLES TIEFER

KBR is raising what's called the government contractor defense.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

CHARLES TIEFER IS A LAW PROFESSOR SPECIALIZING IN THE STUDY OF GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BALTIMORE LAW SCHOOL. HE SAYS THE BURN PITS CASE AGAINST KBR DEALS WITH A STILL EVOLVING SET OF CASE LAW INVOLVING THE ROLE OF CONTRACTORS IN A WAR ZONE.

TIEFER

We have never had to deal before with the issue of whether contractors are above the law, the way we are having to deal with it now, because in previous years the military did for themselves a lot of what they're telling the contractors to do for them.

TIEFER

(Speaking during a Commission on Wartime Contracting Hearing)

I'm beginning to get the picture that bad performance can be good business.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

PROFESSOR TIEFER KNOWS A LOT ABOUT MILITARY CONTRACTORS. HE WAS A MEMBER OF A SPECIAL COMMISSION ON WARTIME CONTRACTING AND TRAVELED TO WAR ZONES IN BOTH IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN. THE COMMISSION'S FINDINGS MADE HEADLINES.

TIEFER

The commission estimated that 30 to \$60 billion had occurred of contractor fraud, waste or abuse, \$60 billion.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT BEYOND THOSE EYE-POPPING NUMBERS, THE COMMISSION'S REPORT PAINTED A PICTURE OF CONTRACTORS INGRAINED IN THE VERY FABRIC OF MODERN MILITARY OPERATIONS - FROM LOGISTICS TO BUILDING BASES - AND, AS WE'VE SEEN TONIGHT, DISPOSING OF TRASH.

THE QUESTION IS HOW INDEPENDENT ARE THE CONTRACTORS FROM WHAT THE REST OF THE MILITARY IS DOING. THE SUPREME COURT RULED IN 1950 THAT THE MILITARY IS LARGELY NOT LIABLE FOR INJURIES SERVICEMEN AND WOMEN SUSTAIN ON ACTIVE DUTY. KBR CLAIMS THEY WERE JUST FOLLOWING ORDERS FROM THE GOVERNMENT AND SHOULD BE PROTECTED WITH AN ARGUMENT THAT PROFESSOR TIEFER SAYS GOES SOMETHING LIKE THIS...

TIEFER

They were so precisely and minutely directed by the government that they have no liability, even assuming that they-- their-- their waste caused the respiratory diseases, the government was telling what-- them what to do, they're not liable for it.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT PROFESSOR TIEFER SAYS THAT'S NOT WHAT HE SAW.

TIEFER

From my experience-- in the commission, contractors aren't told, in detail, what to burn and when to burn it and precisely this and precisely that. Contractors are pretty much told "Take care of the-- food. Take care of the laundry. Take care of the garbage."

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

QUESTIONS OF KBR'S LIABILITY ARE NOW BEING DEBATED IN COURTROOMS ACROSS THE COUNTRY. AND IT MIGHT TAKE YEARS BEFORE THIS LEGAL ISSUE IS RESOLVED. PROFESSOR TIEFER SAYS THAT MIGHT BE TOO LONG FOR SOME OF THE SOLDIERS LOOKING FOR ANSWERS.

TIEFER

Unfortunately, it is-- the rule more than the exception that a contractor with the kind of defenses that KBR has can outlast some of the plaintiff's who are suing it, can outlast some of the people who have respiratory problems. They-- they-- they fall out of the lawsuit before there's a real, final decision.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

BURN PITS AREN'T THE ONLY CASE LIKE THIS THAT KBR IS FACING. A JURY JUST RECENTLY AWARDED 12 SOLDIERS WHO HAD BEEN STATIONED IN IRAQ MORE THAN 80 MILLION DOLLARS IN THEIR LAWSUIT AGAINST THE MILITARY'S LARGEST CONTRACTOR. THE SOLDIERS HAD BEEN STATIONED AT A WATER TREATMENT PLANT

IN IRAQ RUN BY KBR WHEN THEY WERE EXPOSED TO A TOXIC CHEMICAL. KBR IS APPEALING.

WHEN WE RETURN... IT'S BACK TO THE EVERGLADES WHERE THE SNAKES ARE STILL WINNING. AN UPDATE ON THAT INVESTIGATION IS NEXT.

ACT 4: PYTHON UPDATE

DAN RATHER (ON CAMERA)

AND NOW AN UPDATE FROM SOUTH FLORIDA ON THE EVER GROWING SNAKE POPULATION IN THE EVERGLADES. LAST YEAR WE REPORTED ON HOW WILDLIFE WAS QUICKLY DISAPPEARING IN AND AROUND EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK...THE REASON WAS THE PREPONDERANCE OF PYTHONS...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN THE SWAMPLAND OF SOUTH FLORIDA...LOOKS CAN BE DECEIVING. FOR AS LONG AS ANYONE CAN REMEMBER, THIS PART OF THE STATE WAS TEEMING WITH WILDLIFE...EVERYWHERE WERE RABBITS, BIRDS, DEER. BUT NOW, IT'S QUIET HERE. MOST OF THAT WILDLIFE IS GONE.

THERE ARE SO MANY SNAKES HIDING UNDER THIS BRUSH THAT PYTHON HUNTING IS NOT ONLY ALLOWED...IT'S ENCOURAGED. AND THAT'S WHERE EDWARD MERCER COMES IN...HE'S A LICENSED HUNTER...AND HE GOES AFTER THE GIANT SNAKES....BY HAND. BUT FIRST, HE HAS TO FIND THEM.

MERCER IS A WEBSITE DESIGNER WHO LIVES IN FT. LAUDERDALE BUT HE'S SPENT A LOT OF SPARE TIME IN THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS SCOURING THIS COUNTRYSIDE LOOKING FOR PYTHONS.

EDWARD MERCER

We're going to the C-110 canal. This is one of the canals located in the southern Glades wildlife environmental area.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE FIRST PYTHON WAS SPOTTED IN THE WILD DOWN HERE IN THE EARLY 1980's...AND TODAY, ALTHOUGH IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO COUNT WITH ACCURACY, IT'S ESTIMATED THAT HIDING OUT THERE IN THE UNDERBRUSH COULD BE AS MANY AS 100 THOUSAND BURMESE PYTHONS.

MERCER

Most of the time, you won't see the whole python sitting out. You'll just see a small, little coil, the rest of it will be buried in the brush.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

MERCER IS NOT ALWAYS FORTUNATE TO RETURN HOME WITH A CATCH...

MERCER

Okay, there's a python sitting right over here. Sunning itself.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT TODAY HE'S IN LUCK.

MERCER

It's right along there, pulling itself toward the canal. Okay, so its tail is towards me. Its head is actually over into the canal. Alright I'm going to grab it and yank it out. Alright here we go.

Wow! This is a beautiful colored one! Real tan!

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

MERCER HAS CAUGHT 40-PYTHONS SINCE HE FIRST BEGAN HUNTING. BUT HIS PYTHON TALLY MAY TAKE A HIT IN 2013, NOT BECAUSE OF A LACK OF SNAKES, BUT BECAUSE OF AN INCREASE IN COMPETITION.

JUSTIN MATTHEWS, PYTHON HUNTER

We're not here to rescue pythons. We're here to kill pythons.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN JANUARY THE FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION KICKED-OFF THE FIRST EVER 'PYTHON CHALLENGE,' A ONE-MONTH LONG SNAKE-HUNTING COMPETITION. CASH PRIZES, UP TO \$1,500, WILL BE AWARDED TO THOSE WHO DELIVER THE MOST AND THE LONGEST PYTHONS KILLED DURING THE CHALLENGE.

JORGE PINO,
FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

This is a python challenge, we put this thing together just to give the average hunter and the average citizen the opportunity to go out there and participate in an actual python hunt.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

FOR \$25 ANYONE 16-OR-OLDER CAN REGISTER...AND PLENTY HAVE - - MORE THAN 1,400 PEOPLE HAVE SIGNED-UP, FROM 32 STATES ACROSS THE COUNTRY, TO CATCH A SNAKE.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

SO, HOW'S IT GOING? IT'S SAFE TO SAY AT THIS POINT, THE SNAKES ARE WINNING. THOSE 1,400 HUNTERS HAVE TURNED IN A GRAND TOTAL OF ...30 SNAKES.

NOW WHEN WE RETURN, MY REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK ON THE RECENT INAUGURATION OF A PRESIDENT.

ACT 5 - REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

DAN RATHER (ON CAMERA)

FOUR YEARS AGO, WHEN BARACK OBAMA WAS SWORN IN AS THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, MUCH WAS RIGHTLY MADE OF THE HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MOMENT. BUT DESPITE ALL THE EXCITEMENT AROUND THAT INAUGURATION, THERE WAS A LINGERING QUESTION OF WHETHER WE WERE TRULY ENTERING A NEW ERA IN OUR NATION'S HISTORY.

AND THAT'S WHY I FOUND THE PRESIDENT'S SECOND INAUGURATION SO REMARKABLE. SURE, THE CROWDS WERE SMALLER THAN LAST TIME AND THE PRESS COVERAGE A BIT MORE SUBDUED, BUT I BELIEVE THAT WHEN HISTORIANS LOOK BACK AT THE 21ST CENTURY, THEY WILL FOCUS ON THE PRESIDENT'S SECOND ELECTION AND INAUGURATION AS A DEFINING MOMENT - AND YOU GET THE SENSE THAT THE PRESIDENT KNOWS IT.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

PRESIDENT OBAMA'S ROAD TO REELECTION WAS BUILT ON A BROAD, MULTI-ETHNIC COALITION OF VOTERS AND DEMOGRAPHERS TELL US THAT THE UNITED STATES IS ONLY GOING TO BECOME MORE DIVERSE. THAT DIVERSITY WAS ON GRAND DISPLAY IN THE INAUGURAL CROWDS -- AND ON ITS STAGE.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

Through blood drawn by lash and blood drawn by sword, we learned that no Union founded on the principles of liberty and equality could survive half slave and half free.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH ITSELF SEEMED IN STYLE AND SUBSTANCE A DEPARTURE FROM HIS FIRST TERM.

OBAMA

You and I as citizens have the power to set this country's course...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IT WAS MUSCULAR, AMBITIOUS, AND CLEARLY WRITTEN WITH AN EYE TOWARDS FRAMING AMERICA'S HISTORICAL NARRATIVE TO SERVE AS A FOUNDATION FOR A PARTICULARLY PROGRESSIVE VISION OF THE COUNTRY'S FUTURE.

OBAMA

The commitments we make to each other – through Medicare, and Medicaid, and Social Security – these things do not sap our initiative; they strengthen us. They do not make us a nation of takers; they free us to take the risks that make this country great.

PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY, INAUGURATION 1961

I, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, do solemnly swear...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE FIRST INAUGURATION I COVERED WAS PRESIDENT KENNEDY'S IN 1961, WHICH ALREADY SEEMED AT THE TIME DESTINED FOR THE HISTORY BOOKS.

PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN

I, Ronald Reagan, do solemnly swear...

CHIEF JUSTICE WARREN E. BURGER

...that I will faithfully execute the office...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND OVER THE YEARS, COVERING SUBSEQUENT INAUGURATIONS, I HAVE ALWAYS MARVELED AT THESE DAYS WHEN, NO MATTER WHO YOU SUPPORTED IN THE PREVIOUS ELECTION, YOU CAN'T HELP BUT BE MOVED BY THE RITUAL CELEBRATION OF OUR FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY. IT IS A TIME, WHEN AT LEAST FOR A DAY, IT

SEEMS THAT THE COUNTRY COMES TOGETHER AS ONE. YET THERE ARE SOME INAUGURATIONS THAT STAND OUT WITH A SENSE THAT THE NATION HAS TAKEN A NEW DIRECTION...

KENNEDY

And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN 1961 WITH JOHN F. KENNEDY.

REAGAN

Government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN 1981 WITH RONALD REAGAN, AND FOUR YEARS AGO WITH BARACK OBAMA. YET PRESIDENT OBAMA'S FIRST INAUGURAL ADDRESS IS LARGELY FORGOTTEN.

OBAMA

My fellow citizens...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IT WAS FOCUSED ON THE FINANCIAL CRISIS AND UNCERTAINTY GRIPPING THE UNITED STATES - AND THE WORLD.

OBAMA

Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the nation for a new age.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN RETROSPECT, MOST SPEECH WRITERS AND HISTORIANS CONSIDERED THIS FIRST ADDRESS BLAND AND UNDERWHELMING - ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING THE HISTORICAL STAGE UPON WHICH IT WAS DELIVERED. WHAT WAS ALMOST COMPLETELY MISSING WAS ANY SENSE THAT THE ELECTION OF 2008 REPRESENTED THE DAWN OF A NEW AMERICA. NOW FOUR YEARS LATER, THE PRESIDENT SPOKE DIRECTLY TO PARTS OF

AMERICAN SOCIETY WHO HAVE LARGELY BEEN MARGINALIZED - WOMEN, AFRICAN AMERICANS, AND GAYS - HE DID IT IN A LINE THAT HAS GOTTEN A LOT OF ATTENTION.

OBAMA

We, the people, declare today that the most evident of truths – that all of us are created equal – is the star that guides us still; just as it guided our forebears through Seneca Falls, and Selma, and Stonewall; just as it guided all those men and women, sung and unsung, who left footprints along this great Mall, to hear a preacher say that we cannot walk alone; to hear a King proclaim that our individual freedom is inextricably bound to the freedom of every soul on Earth.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

PRESIDENT OBAMA’S FULL-THROATED INVOCATION OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING WAS UNDERSTANDABLE, CONSIDERING THE INAUGURATION OCCURRED ON MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY. FOR MOST IN THE CROWD, THIS WAS AN HISTORICAL REFERENCE, BUT FOR ME, WHO SAW THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT UP CLOSE AND KNEW DR. KING, IT WAS DEEPLY PERSONAL.

LARGELY LOST IN ALL THE INAUGURAL CELEBRATIONS WAS THE PASSING OF JAMES HOOD AT THE AGE OF 70.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER

The University of Alabama campus at Tuscaloosa is under a tight security guard of state police as Governor George Wallace appeals for calm...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IN 1963, 50 YEARS AGO, MR. HOOD WAS ONE OF TWO AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS ENROLLING, AND THUS DESEGREGATING THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA. I WAS THERE..

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

Tuesday, over there, at Foster Auditorium, two Negroes will come to enroll...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE COUNTRY WAS RIVETED. AND AS A YOUNG REPORTER I KNEW THAT THIS WAS ONE THE MOST IMPORTANT STORIES I’D EVER COVER.

ALABAMA GOVERNOR GEORGE WALLACE

I stand here today as governor of this sovereign state and refuse to willingly submit to illegal use...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AFTER A BITTER SPEECH BY GOVERNOR GEORGE WALLACE, JAMES HOOD ENROLLED.

JAMES TAYLOR (SINGING AT INAUGURATION)

O beautiful, for spacious skies ... For amber waves of grain.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IT'S IMPORTANT THAT FUTURE GENERATIONS KNOW THE DIFFICULT AND OFTEN BLOODY HISTORY THAT HAS LED US TO A MORE FAIR AND EQUAL SOCIETY.

TAYLOR

Above the fruited plain...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT IN LOOKING AT THE CROWDS OF ALL AGES AT THIS SECOND INAUGURATION, I ALSO GOT A SENSE THAT MUCH OF THE BITTERNESS OF THAT HISTORY WILL NOT BE CARRIED FORTH AS AMERICA LOOKS TO PREPARE ITSELF FOR THE CHALLENGES AHEAD.

TAYLOR

And crown thy good with brotherhood...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND THAT IS THE ULTIMATE SIGN OF HOPE THAT WE HAVE ENTERED A NEW CHAPTER IN THE AMERICAN STORY.

TAYLOR

From sea to shining sea... from sea to shining sea

ACT 6: GROUNDED

DAN RATHER (ON CAMERA)

AND FINALLY TONIGHT, ONE OF THE THINGS WE TRY TO DO ON THIS PROGRAM IS BRING YOU STORIES YOU WON'T SEE ANYWHERE ELSE. AND WE FEEL WE HAVE ONE OF THOSE FOR YOU ON NEXT WEEK'S PROGRAM.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WE'RE GOING TO BE LOOKING AT A SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION THAT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO CHANGE THE WORLD MORE THAN ANYTHING SINCE THE DAWN OF THE COMPUTER AGE. IT ALL CENTERS AROUND MANIPULATING THE VERY BUILDING BLOCKS OF LIFE. YOU'LL WANT TO SEE IT.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

AND THAT'S OUR PROGRAM FOR TONIGHT. WE ALWAYS LIKE HEARING WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY, SO PLEASE JOIN IN THE DISCUSSION ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE OR SEND YOUR COMMENTS TO VIEWER@AXS.TV. FROM NEW YORK, FOR AXS TV, DAN RATHER REPORTING. GOODNIGHT.