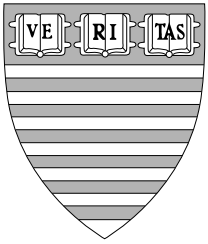
THE THEODORE H. WHITE LECTURE

WITH

TOM BROKAW

Joan Shorenstein Center
PRESS ▪ POLITICS



▪ PUBLIC POLICY ▪

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The Theodore H. White Lecture on Press and Politics commemorates the life of the late reporter and historian who created the style and set the standard for contemporary political journalism and campaign coverage.

White, who began his journalism career delivering the *Boston Post*, entered Harvard College in 1932 on a newsboy's scholarship. He studied Chinese history and Oriental languages. In 1939, he witnessed the bombing of Peking while freelance reporting on a Sheldon Fellowship, and later explained, "Three thousand human beings died; once I'd seen that I knew I wasn't going home to be a professor."

During the war, White covered East Asia for *Time* and returned to write *Thunder Out of China*, a controversial critique of the American-supported Nationalist Chinese government. For the next two decades, he contributed to numerous periodicals and magazines, published two books on the Second World War and even wrote fiction.

A lifelong student of American political leadership, White in 1959 sought support for a 20-year research project, a retrospective of presidential campaigns. After being advised to drop such an academic exercise by fellow reporters, he took to the campaign trail and, relegated to the "zoo plane," changed the course of American political journalism with *The Making of the President 1960.*

White's *Making of the President* editions for 1964 and 1972, and *America in Search of Itself* remain vital historical documents on campaigns and the press.

Before his death in 1986, Theodore White also served on the Kennedy School's Visiting Committee, where he was one of the early architects of what has become the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy. The late Blair Clark, former senior vice president of CBS who chaired the committee to establish this lectureship, asked, "Did Teddy White ever find the history he spent his life searching for? Well, of course not, he would have laughed at such pretension. But he came close, very close, didn't he? And he never quit the strenuous search for the elusive reality, and for its meaning in our lives."

Tom Brokaw, anchor and managing editor of "NBC Nightly News with Tom Brokaw," is equally at ease covering news events from the world's capitals or in small towns across America, whether from his anchor desk at NBC News' world headquarters in New York, or from locations across the country or around the world.

The sole anchor of weekday "NBC Nightly News" since 1983, Brokaw has an impressive history of "firsts." He conducted the first exclusive U.S. one-on-one interview with Mikhail Gorbachev, earning an Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award. Brokaw was the only anchor to report from the scene the night the Berlin Wall fell. He was the first American anchor to report on human-rights abuses in Tibet and to conduct an interview with the Dalai Lama. In 1995, Brokaw was the first network evening news anchor to report from the site of the Oklahoma City bombing. In 1999, Brokaw traveled to Moscow to conduct the first North American television interview with Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, and that spring, he was the first of the network evening news anchors to travel to Tirana, Albania during the NATO airstrikes in Yugoslavia. Last year, Brokaw again returned to Moscow for the first American television interview with Russian President Vladimir Putin and most recently, he served as Master of Ceremonies for the opening of the National D-Day Museum, on the 56th anniversary of the Normandy invasion by the Allies.

In addition to "Nightly News," Brokaw anchored *The Brokaw Report* (1992–93), a series of prime-time specials that examined critical issues facing our nation. He also co-anchored the prime-time news magazine *Now with Tom Brokaw and Katie Couric* (1993–94). In addition, Brokaw has played an active role in many other prime-time NBC news specials and in-depth reports. In June 1997, he anchored the "Dateline NBC" documentary special, *Tom Brokaw Reports: Why Can't We Live Together,* which examined the hidden realities of racial separation in America's suburbs. Brokaw earned an Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award for excellence in broadcast journalism for this special report.

Brokaw has received numerous awards for his work, including a Peabody for his report entitled "To Be an American." He also received an Emmy for his "China in Crisis" special report, and for his reporting on the 1992 floods in the Midwest. In May 1998, Brokaw was honored with the Fred Friendly First

Amendment Award. Brokaw has written articles, essays and commentary for several publications, including the *New York Times,* the *Washington Post,* the *Los Angeles Times, Newsweek, Sports Illustrated, Life, Outside* and *Interview*.

Brokaw is the author of the best-seller, *The Greatest Generation,* an account of the generation of Americans born in the 1920s who came of age during the Great Depression, fought in the Second World War, and went on to build America. A second book followed, "The Greatest Generation Speaks," in which the families now speak for themselves through their poignant letters and Brokaw reflects on why their lives of difficulty and triumph continue to strike such a deep cord in Americans today.

Brokaw joined NBC News in 1966, reporting from California and anchoring for KNBC. From 1973 to 1976 he was NBC's White House correspondent, and from 1976 to 1981, he anchored NBC News' "Today." An acclaimed political reporter, Brokaw has covered every presidential election since 1968. Brokaw began his career in journalism after graduating from the University of South Dakota in 1962 at KMTV, Omaha. In 1965 he anchored the late-evening news on WSB-TV in Atlanta.

Brokaw has received honorary degrees from numerous universities including Notre Dame, Duke University, Washington University in St. Louis, Boston College, the University of Pennsylvania and Fairfield University.

THEODORE H. WHITE LECTURE
FEBRUARY 26, 2001

Dean Nye: I'm Joe Nye, Dean of the Kennedy School and I'd like to welcome you to this year's Theodore White Lecture on Press and Politics. This event was originally scheduled for last December but the speaker informed us that he wanted to go to Florida for some odd reason, or that he might at least be detained there probably longer than he expected and so we reconvened this evening.

The Theodore White Lecture commemorates the life and career of one of America's great journalists, Teddy White, who created the style and set the standard for contemporary political journalism and campaign coverage.

Theodore White studied Chinese history and Asian languages at Harvard in the 1930s and originally planned a career as a scholar. But after witnessing the 1939 bombing of Chungking, he devoted his career to journalism. Over two decades he established a solid career as a reporter and commentator, including working in East Asia for *Time* magazine. But it really was his coverage of the 1960 political campaign and *The Making of the President* that changed the course of American political journalism with the depth and breadth of its perspective. His subsequent *Making of the President* volumes and other works of reportage and analysis were informed by the same combination of passion and erudition.

Before his death in 1986, Theodore White also served on the Kennedy School's visiting committee, where he was one of the early architects of what would become the Shorenstein Center on Press and Politics. Past Theodore White lecturers have included such illustrious figures as William F. Buckley, Cokie Roberts, Walter Cronkite and Rev. Jesse Jackson. This year we're proud to have as our lecturer, Tom Brokaw, one of America's most respected and recognizable figures as the long time anchor and managing editor of "NBC Nightly News," and I might add, a bestselling author. Indeed, he confessed at dinner tonight that for over two years and six weeks he has been on the bestseller list. And all I can say to my fellow faculty members at the Kennedy School is, eat your heart out.

(Laughter)

Dean Nye: To introduce Tom Brokaw, let me present Alex Jones, Director of the Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy. Alex himself is a renowned journalist and media scholar. He has worked for the *New York Times*, National Public Radio and PBS and is a recipient of the Pulitzer Prize, and is director, of course, of our Shorenstein Center.

Alex.

(Applause)

Mr. Jones: Thank you Joe.

I once saw Tom Brokaw doing something that I would characterize as gallant. It had to do with his status as one of the nation's most celebrated broadcast journalists, and the pain that sometimes goes with being a famous anchorman. It was about 15 years ago. Tom Brokaw, Peter Jennings and I were on a panel together, discussing media coverage of the Middle East. Our audience was a huge auditorium packed with journalism students from all over the New York area.

Just before showtime a very attractive young woman—I remember that she had very long, very red hair—she came, the only word I can use accurately, she came undulating up to the table where we were sitting—

(Laughter)

Mr. Jones: —and she had a camera in her hands. Who I wondered was she after? Would it be Brokaw or Jennings? Needless to say, I was not in the running. She made for Brokaw. She stood in front of him, twisted a finger in her hair, and said something that essentially came across as "Would you do something for me?" Tom nodded and gave her that look of his we've all come to know, a kindly, tolerant, slightly bemused grimace. With that, she smiled sweetly and said, "Would you take my picture, with him?"

(Laughter)

Mr. Jones: The gallantry I spoke of was that he took the picture.

(Laughter)

Mr. Jones: I'm deeply honored to have Tom Brokaw here tonight to deliver the eleventh annual Theodore H. White Lecture on Press and Politics, which is one of the most important moments of the year for the Shorenstein Center.

This annual lecture honors Teddy White's distinguished career as a journalist and historian, whose specialty was political and campaign coverage. As Joe said, Teddy's book, *The Making of the President 1960* changed political coverage forever, by taking leaders behind the veil of political campaigns, showing the always messy and even ugly process of struggling to win a presidential election. It was Teddy White, who for the first time told the inside-the-campaign story, the human story, the behind-the-scenes story. He got that story by watching the candidate's every move, by being present at every moment and scribbling down all the little personal details that he used to paint word pictures that brought the scenario of the campaign vividly to life.

What many people don't know, was that years later, Teddy White saw that his reportorial innovation had become not just used, but to his mind terribly abused. By then it was common practice for campaign reporters to give candidates much less room to be off their guard and the candidate's zone of privacy had essentially collapsed. As for having been the man to popularize that method of reporting, Teddy said, and I'm quoting him: "I sincerely regret it." And he said that during those relatively tranquil days when George McGovern was running for president. I shudder to think what Teddy White would think of the way the media cover campaigns now.

Tom Brokaw began covering presidential election campaigns for NBC News in 1968. How much has television campaign coverage changed since then? Here's one telling statistic: in 1968 the average sound bite of a presidential candidate on the television network evening news was 42 seconds. In the 2000 election, the average presidential sound bite on the nightly news had shrunk from 42 seconds to about 7 seconds. In fairness, it should also be noted that the average quote from a candidate on the front page of the *New York Times* had gone from 14 lines to about 6.

Tom Brokaw has been one of the nation's most important journalistic figures throughout those years of profound change in the way the media do their work. For nearly 20 years, he's been the anchor and then managing editor of the "NBC Nightly News with Tom Brokaw." He's won virtually every broadcast honor journalism offers, not virtually, he has won every important honor, the Alfred I. Dupont/Columbia University award, the Peabody, the Emmy and many others.

. . . the average quote from a candidate on the front page of the *New York Times* had gone from 14 lines to about 6.

One of my particular favorite pieces of his work is the documentary special in June of 1997, and somehow this captures Tom Brokaw for me. It was called "Tom Brokaw Reports: Why Can't We Live Together?", which probed the realities of racial segregation in the nation's suburbs, something that has long been avoided and ignored. This was a production of "Dateline" NBC and won yet another DuPont award.

The thing that sets Tom Brokaw apart may well be the way he communicates an abiding decency and comes across as a man with a common-sensical, thoughtful sense of citizenship, which is a word I don't use lightly. I think this springs largely from his roots in the prairie of South Dakota. Perhaps the purest expression of his vision of America has been the two widely successful books he has written, *The Greatest Generation* and *The Greatest Generation Speaks.* These two books gave recognition to the generation of the depression and World War II as though they were being seen and appreciated for the first time, especially by their children and by their grandchildren.

As many of you know, Tom's lecture was to have been delivered shortly after election day; he was otherwise occupied. It was Tom who has provided probably the most quoted line from that very peculiar night for network television news that was election night. What he said was something along the lines of: "It wasn't egg on our faces, we were draped in omelet."

(Laughter)

Mr. Jones: It is because Tom Brokaw and the other anchors are invested with such trust that they bear an extra responsibility. Have the networks used that very credibility and trust, as a kind of cover for changes in the

quality and values and scope of network news, changes that many perceive to be overall for the worse? It's a big question. Certainly the work of network news has changed drastically, even in the last few years. They took away Brokaw's chair, for one thing.

But in more important ways, the network evening news that he began leading in 1983 is widely perceived to be profoundly different from the program that he now appears on. He has been a witness to those changes, indeed he has been one of the people at NBC who shaped change. It is because he takes the news seriously that we asked him here to talk about those changes.

Tom Brokaw.

(Applause)

Mr. Brokaw: Thank you, Alex, very much. Dean Nye, Walter, all of you who are students and honored guests here tonight it's a great privilege to be here.

Alex, I don't remember the incident to which you refer.

(Laughter)

Mr. Brokaw: You're a *New York Times* man, I would not question your credibility. Let me just say I hope the picture didn't turn out.

(Laughter)

Mr. Brokaw: I'm very pleased to have been invited here. I am sorry for the more than 60 day delay. Theodore White was one of my earliest role models and heroes in journalism. He was someone I got to know when he worked for a time for us at NBC News covering politics. We're very happy to have his son with us here tonight as well. He did bring the most robust passion for the subjects that he covered of any journalist that I think that I ever encountered. And he did show us the way, and I might disagree with him to some small degree, about whether or not he altered the way that we covered politics, in a negative fashion.

Theodore White . . . did bring the most robust passion for the subjects that he covered of any journalist that I think that I ever encountered.

Let me also say that I always approach this academy with a sense of trepidation and awe. It was reinforced when I walked into this Forum this evening and came through a class of bright Harvard students gathered just off this floor with one of their professors who raised his hand and said, "Mr. Brokaw, one of our students has a question for you." I steeled myself, knowing that these are Harvard students, after all. What is it that he may want to know about? The balance of power between Russia and the United States in the post Cold War era? The banking crisis in Japan? The state of race relations in America? The young man cleared his throat and said,

"Why do you stand when you're delivering the news?"

(Laughter)

Mr. Brokaw: My fear is that he may be preparing a 40-page senior thesis on why I'm standing during the news.

(Laughter)

Mr. Brokaw: I come to you as a wannabe. I think anyone who has not been a student at Harvard carries that in their mind and in their heart. In 1957, out on the prairie of South Dakota, I was recruited by Harvard, one of those provincial balance things they were doing at the time. They found 6 young men from the eastern half of the state and put us throughout the rigors of trying to determine whether we were not just worthy of admission but also eligible for the enormous amount of financial aid that would be required to get us into this great institution. And the admissions committee, in its wisdom, at the end, decided that I might be happier elsewhere.

(Laughter)

Mr. Brokaw: So I come before you as someone who has been forced to wander for more than 40 years in that cold hard place reserved for people who have no Harvard degree, wondering what might have come of me if I had only gotten a Harvard education.

(Laughter & Applause)

Mr. Brokaw: It doesn't mean I don't pay attention to what's going on at Harvard. I noticed that there is a renewed discussion about what you are going to do with that modest little endowment that you have here. I happened to be at class day 2000, I had a niece graduating from Harvard, we did get some members of the family in. And I loved Conan O'Brien, a Harvard graduate, who got up and referred to the alumni director who shared the stage with him and he said, "He's going to call and ask you for money, and your first response must be, what are you doing with the money you that you already have?"

(Laughter)

Mr. Brokaw: Now I see that there is a more lively discussion about the $19.4 billion in the Harvard endowment. A modest suggestion from an outsider, a graduate of a small land grant university. You could set up in this building alone with just a small portion of that endowment, a permanent office of presidential pardons that would carry us through the remainder of the 21st century.

(Laughter)

Mr. Brokaw: The title of my speech tonight, and it came rather swiftly and improvisationally when I was called by Alex and was asked what are you going to talk about, and I said off the top of my head: "So much information, so little time." Friends of mine have suggested it would be more appropriate, given the state of our business these days to say, "so much information, so few facts;" "so much time, so little news;" "so much Matt Drudge, so little Walter Cronkite." But we will press forward this evening. I will outline in the broadest possible terms, some of my reflections on the

state of what I believe is the most exciting time I have ever been witness to in this age of information and communication, and some of the reservations that I have.

I will concentrate primarily on the electronic part of the spectrum. My brothers and sisters in the print world have no reservations about commenting on what it is that we do, but I find that they are not terribly tolerant when we comment on what they do, so I will let them have an evening of some mental relaxation here tonight.

It is worth remembering that there was a time not so long ago when darkness came in the early evening, and only two planets lit up the skies over America in the news world. The "Huntley Brinkley Report" on NBC and "CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite." All across this republic, families gathered, by appointment, to share an evening meal and the experience of at first 15 minutes, then a half hour of news programming.

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I was part of that audience. I was an impressionable and ambitious teenager in a small town of the great plains, my nose pressed up against the glass at this magical view of the world, well beyond my ordinary surroundings. It was, in many ways, a transforming expansion of the universe occupied not only by my working class family, but by millions of others across the television landscape. We were witness in our own homes for the first time to the events that defined our lives. Political conventions and elections, scandals and triumphs, disasters and great advances in the social contract with America, great social causes, the civil rights movement, the anti-war protest were beamed directly into our living rooms.

Still, for all their illumination, those two planets still had deep shadows where other forms of life were not nurtured. Racial issues were covered extensively but gender issues were not. Indeed, very few women had any role in determining, reporting or commenting on the news. Moreover, in retrospect, the reporting on racial issues was mostly a black and white equation. There was very little reporting on the profound changes within the black culture, positive and negative.

The race for space was a marquee event of those early network news broadcasts, but the breathtaking advances in the health sciences were little noticed. Cancer, its origins, prevalence and treatment, was a subject ignored socially and editorially.

In foreign news there was a heavy reliance on Europe, the Middle East and the Cold War, but Asia, apart from Vietnam, later had little coverage, especially about the extraordinary political and economic evolution of the region from Japan and Korea to Singapore. At home, rock and roll was

treated, if at all, as a curiosity and not as a transforming popular cultural event of the time. In some circles to this day, perhaps even in this room, NBC News' decision to lead the nightly news broadcast with the death of Elvis Presley is still considered a heresy, a hinge event, representing a break from the secular sacraments of traditional news.

The changing role of the young, as represented by the most clearly defined generation of the 20th century, the baby boomers, was little noticed outside of the protest context. There was a heavy reliance on Washington hearings, too often without a clear-eyed appraisal of their merit or impact. It was a world reflecting the interests of the people who made the decisions, most of them white, middle-aged men from a common culture from along the eastern seaboard. These were serious professionals of unquestioned integrity and intelligence, who understandably reflected the sensibilities of their time and their place. They were my role models and my mentors. After all, I aspired to their place and I shared their interest, by and large, as someone who expected to be white and middle-aged myself, I was content to follow their lead as I set out on my own journalistic pilgrimage across America and around the world.

Now back to the future. Were I a teenager in South Dakota in the year 2001, I would have access to three full-throated networks, three full-time cable news channels and a local news cable channel, two financial news cable channels, three sports networks, a history channel, a biography channel, two cable channels broadcasting public policy discussions all day every day, a wide ranging public broadcasting system with its own evening news and an award winning documentary unit. I could probably watch the BBC News at 10:00 as well. With a keystroke on the ubiquitous computer in my home, I could call up more than 150 Web sites devoted exclusively to news and information. I could, in my small home in South Dakota, read the *New York Times* before leaving for school, as well as check out the box score for my high school basketball team in the local paper. What would not have changed is that I would have had fewer points than almost anyone else in the starting 5.

(Laughter)

Mr. Brokaw: So which universe is best equipped to serve the public and the place of journalism in a free society? As grateful as I am to the founding fathers of broadcast news for their vision, their standards, their commitment to the idea of news on the new medium of television, I have to conclude that the new universe, physically, is richer, more accessible, more far reaching in terms of its cosmos of news information and communication. To be sure, we are living through something that is still in development; it is a universe of considerable chaos still in formation, imperfect in many of its elements. It represents, I believe, another form of the big bang. We have a vast new universe of enormous potential upon us almost every night and it demands our undivided attention as we engage this process of review and definition, recommendation and implementation.

Some historic context is in order. First is that this new universe, especially in cyberspace, is far more egalitarian than in the days when a handful of press lords pursued their personal political agendas. William Randolph Hearst, Colonel Robert McCormick, the Chandlers in Los Angeles and Henry Luce at *Time,* Inc., were in journalism not just for public service, but for profit and for the fulfillment of their personal ideologies. Edward R. Murrow was an icon for those who followed him. But Walter Winchell was at least as persuasive if not more so, to his audience which was as least as large if not more so.

. . . we are living through something that is still in development; it is a universe of considerable chaos still in formation, imperfect in many of its elements. It represents, I believe, another form of the big bang.

We lived through the O.J. Simpson trial and the funeral of Princess Diana. The Lindbergh kidnapping trial, the Sam Shepard murder case and the marriage of Wallis Simpson to the Duke of Windsor created the same kind of frenzy. We may have known too much about Bill Clinton's sex life and not enough about John Kennedy's. Does anyone believe that Adolf Hitler, in the modern era of communication and information, could have prevailed for as long as he did? There were more debates in the presidential campaign of 2000 than in all the campaign years in modern presidential elections. Sunday morning has become a regular appointment for students of American politics and policy well beyond what it was in the year when "Meet the Press" and "Face the Nation" were the only outlets, at 30 minutes apiece.

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Even as the quantitative expansion of the universe is breathtaking in its scope, it is the qualitative nature of this new reality that draws us to this occasion and others. Does it represent a step forward in the unending quest to know better the perils and possibilities of the precious time that we have in this life or is it a retreat to the lowest common denominators of fear and titillation? The short answer: It is all of the above just as in *Alice's Restaurant,* you can find just about anything you want. The news viewer is empowered as never before to explore a wide range of interests, to personally determine his or her own daily informational needs and curiosities, and to check them against other sources of information.

But for that viewer, and for those of us on the other side of the screen, the old order of trust and credibility, integrity and independence, requires a constant and vigorous reexamination. It is especially true given the pressures of time and the meteor shower of information, real and imagined, in modern personal and professional lives. It is under assault every hour because of a simple fact. The new order has a voracious appetite for something, too often anything, to fill the time. That in turn has led to what can only be described as not just pack journalism, but mob journalism.

The news viewer is empowered as never before to explore a wide range of interests, to personally determine his or her own daily informational needs and curiosities, and to check them against other sources of information.

It is not an entirely new phenomenon, the gathering of all parts of the journalistic tribe around an event manufactured or spontaneous, but it is seldom reporting in the classic sense. It is more closely akin to day-care, it is a live camera, a warm body, and an event. And any kind of an event, however banal, that may or may not lead to something meaningful or entertaining, preferably the latter. Hot pursuits on California freeways are the maddening apotheosis of this modern curse, but they are not the only examples. Small change hostage situations, calculated stunts by lesser presidential candidates, contrived protests by activist groups of undetermined origin and size, all are much more likely to get much more attention than warranted in the current climate.

The new order has a voracious appetite for something, too often anything, to fill the time.

That is not to say that the various new media must be restricted entirely to a diet of eat-your-spinach news. They do have the time and the space to do what television does best, which is to transmit experience, in the words of Reuven Frank, the founding father of the "Huntley Brinkley Report." Transmit experience, share with the viewers what is going on at any given time. Mr. Frank, a bookish intellectual and visionary, also regularly reminded his reporters and producers that it was not their place to be above the news. But what he expected is that in the transmission of experience and the coverage of the news, however unsavory the topic, the fundamental tenets of journalism would have application.

Why should we care or not care; is this an isolated development or part of a larger context? What is there beyond what we are currently showing

you on the screen? What are the facts as a proof to the conjecture? It is the application of journalistic principles that is missing or under-represented these days in too much of what we see and hear in this new universe. Those principles are the compact that we have with our viewers. It is what they expect of us; we should expect no less of ourselves.

Election night 2000 was a painful reminder of the absolute need for persistent vigilance and maintenance of standards in a climate of competitive pressures forcing the tectonic plates of change. Never mind that we later discovered that the voting procedures were more broken than our projections; especially in the state of Florida.

Occasionally, even when we believe that those principles are firmly in place, the assumptions are about as sound as the ground beneath the San Andreas Fault. Election night 2000 was a painful reminder of the absolute need for persistent vigilance and maintenance of standards in a climate of competitive pressures forcing the tectonic plates of change. Never mind that we later discovered that the voting procedures were more broken than our projections; especially in the state of Florida.

As embarrassing as it was for those of us who sat out there that night with omelet all over our suits, the one small comfort came in our ability to instantly acknowledge our errors. It was Reuven Frank's transmission of experience to a fault.

Parenthetically, may I add here, that my friends in the gold standard of journalism in America have also undergone some embarrassing experiences in the past year. They too have been forced to examine their standards and practices in a new way, in the most public fashion. Their readers may be slightly more skeptical now, but I trust that they are grateful for the self-examination.

If I may, I'd like to offer a brief outline of the Brokaw theorem; it's a new law of journalistic physics.

For too long, American journalism was too reluctant to admit error or to share with its readers and viewers the broad outlines of its decision making process. Indisputably, the time and the competitive pressures now are much greater for the readers, for the viewers and for those of us in the cockpit.

If I may, I'd like to offer a brief outline of the Brokaw theorem; it's a new law of journalistic physics. A piece of matter of undetermined origin, reliability or importance, gets sucked into the news cycle sometime in the early morning hours in some fashion. It may be just a joke or rumor on the Internet, it may be a

piece of gossip, malicious or otherwise. It catches on in the early morning radio talk circuit where fact check is more likely to be the name of the female traffic reporter than a standard practice. By mid morning, all the cable news outlets are treating it as an unsubstantiated report and it's now making its way onto the local news broadcast as well. It's already been on a number of web sites since about 5 A.M. By late afternoon it is giving my colleagues and me a collective migraine headache, 'where in the hell is this coming from?' It must be something because there it is now on the late afternoon cable news free-for-all. There's a former U.S. attorney or a campaign press secretary or a red-meat ideologue or a drip-dry think tank habituée commenting knowingly on the unsubstantiated report.

It is difficult enough for me, consider the viewer, consider also the viewer with access to what amounts to an Internet chain letter, he or she can be taking it all off the screen, immediately transferring it to the small screen, and before long it hits critical mass across America. It becomes fixed in the consciousness of the country.

It is a peril enhanced by the ever greater blurring of the line between what is the role of reputable and well-established reporters in the mainstream, and the role of the so-called pundits and commentators on cable and talk radio. Even the most discerning and vigorous viewer must be confused by the slippery place of journalists who appear on one medium as reporters and a moment later on another medium as commentators and pundits.

So what are we to make of this new world where there is a great anxiety about whether the Darwinian principles of journalism are leading forward to a bright new age of unlimited news and information dissemination and retrieval or doing a steep dive into the primordial ooze? Personally I'm much more inclined to the former than I am to the latter. I think we must take care not to judge the whole by the most sensational but least significant parts.

Still, at an age and a stage in my personal and professional life when I would prefer to shift to cruise control, I know that neither I nor my colleagues can go on autopilot. We are not immune to the greater evolutionary forces at work in our medium. As it is a new world for health care providers, for warriors, for educators, politicians, businessmen and women, spiritual leaders, so too is it a new world for us. It is much more competitive. The marketplace, journalistic and economic, is much less forgiving. The audience is not nearly as homogenous nor as structured as earlier stewards may have thought.

As we learned again recently in Chicago, the collision between reality and wishful thinking can be pretty jarring. A local Chicago news outlet returned to a more sober format with a highly regarded and skilled anchor leading the way. With all of the attended positive promotion, it failed to hold its own, losing audience steadily as it went along and the experiment was cancelled. I cannot resist noting, by the way, that in the Chicago newspapers,

first the cheering then the lamentations of the television critics for the experiment were in pages of publications that also print horoscopes, comic strips, advice to the lovelorn, sport scores, gossip of 15 minute celebrities and crossword puzzles. I often wondered what newspaper could thrive by going to press with only the front and the editorial pages.

I often wondered what newspaper could thrive by going to press with only the front and the editorial pages.

Still, however we organize our journalistic efforts and present the finished product, we must be guided by certain well-defined and understood principles. Just as there are fundamental principles of astrophysics that govern the behavior of real stars and planets, so too are there fundamental principles that govern or should govern our place and behavior in this new universe that we are privileged to occupy.

First, news is change, what's new, what's different; but new alone is not enough. We should also apply the test of importance, which very often is in the eye of the beholder. Then if it is new, important and true, how do we determine and demonstrate the truth, and if not the truth how about just the facts? If it is new, important and true what is the effect and the context? Also, where does it fit, after all daily journalism is also about the 'oh my God' elements of life. The arresting picture, the unexpected and riveting event that may not have lasting consequence, that moment of humanity that can be so reassuring.

. . . news is change, what's new, what's different; but new alone is not enough. We should also apply the test of importance, which very often is in the eye of the beholder.

Finally, if it is new, important and true, how do we present it in such a way that our viewers can be engaged by it and recognize it as something they should know? These principles are neither staid nor toxic, they are critical to the health of the profession and to the bond between the viewer and the news producers. They have not disappeared, but their place seems to have been diminished in the daily struggle to master this new universe.

I have believed for some time that it might be useful to conduct an experiment that I heard from a man by the name of Harold Agnew who ran Los Alamos for a period of time. He was one of America's top nuclear scientists. He was present at the creation of the nuclear age. And when I asked him if he had the power to do anything, given the political reality of the nuclear age, what was it that he would do? And he said: "I would take anyone who comes to power, however small their domain in the world in

a given year, and place them on an isolated Pacific Island atoll, and strip them naked, and turn their back to a far more distant Pacific island and set off a low yield nuclear device, so they could feel for themselves the heat and the power of a nuclear explosion and to know what they are then dealing with."

Were it left to me, I would take anyone who comes to power in American journalism and make them the subject of a news story, unleash on them their competitors, their colleagues and others, and tell them that the story is going to be on the front page of every newspaper in America and in the style sections of those papers as well.

(Laughter)

Mr. Brokaw: Let them see what people unsuspecting and innocent go through, and what other people who step into the public arena determined in some way to enhance this great republic, what they go through, as well.

. . . I would take anyone who comes to power in American journalism and make them the subject of a news story, unleash on them their competitors, their colleagues and others, and tell them that the story is going to be on the front page of every newspaper in America . . .

I'm personally grateful for the most part for the work of the Project for Excellence in Journalism. I think that Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel have performed a great service for our profession and the public in their new book *The Elements of Journalism.* I may differ with them, pretty vigorously on some parts, but the overall effect is instructive and useful and provocative. It is a timely reminder of the principles that are necessary to the continuing health of journalism everywhere, but especially a society privileged to be governed by the First Amendment, a society that is undergoing this explosion of availability of news and information in so many new media.

While they occasionally fray my fragile anchorman's ego, I also welcome the growing presence of designated press critics and ombudsmen in the public press. I noted with some interest today that Michael Getler, who is now the ombudsman for the *Washington Post,* has to move his report back to Thursdays because when it came out on Fridays, it so interfered with those who were writing on the Sunday newspaper deadline that they weren't getting their things done. It was reassuring to me to know that those journalists on that side of the spectrum like those of us on my side, have what my old friend the late John Osborne called the classic glass jaw of journalists. We throw punches all day long but as soon as someone winds up and looks as if they may throw a punch at us, we go down whining and screaming in great pain.

Moreover, I strongly believe the place of my medium in all of its forms is so pervasive and so provocative, it has a fundamental obligation to receive as well as to send. In the past, I have participated in town hall meetings on the press, in places like Phoenix, and Pittsburgh and Minneapolis. I never fail to come away with a better understanding of that vital but delicate link between my side of the screen and the viewers.

We should have a constant and wide ranging dialogue on the powers that we have been privileged to exercise.

After almost 40 years in this profession, in small towns and on the world stage, for the last 20 years at every crisis around the world, every moment of triumph, constitutional crises, wars, natural disasters of epic proportions, social and economic upheaval, scientific triumphs and great personal tragedies, I have one enduring, primary conclusion: the people take us seriously. We fulfill our obligation to them and our place when we return that favor. They are empowered and that should not be overlooked, and so are we by the riches of this new universe that we occupy together.

We've now gone quickly past that memorable 19th century Chicago newspaper credo: print the news and raise hell. While it remains a stirring rallying cry, the fact is that we live in a far more complex world. As this new world takes shape beneath our feet and before our eyes on a daily basis, we cannot just randomly stumble forward guided only by instincts for that day's survival. But neither can we be dismissive of the appetite of viewers and readers for a rich variety of choices engagingly presented, whether serious or trivial. We owe it to ourselves, our calling, our time and place, to raise it to a higher station. We should have a constant and wide ranging dialogue on the powers that we have been privileged to exercise. I hope that this evening is one small step forward in necessary colloquy.

Thank you all very much for your time.

(Applause)

Mr. Jones: We're going to have questions now.

Mr. Weiner: Thank you. My name is Josh Weiner, a sophomore from New York.

Since election night, you have acknowledged the need for reform in election coverage; you discussed it even a little bit tonight. But it seems that your network, NBC, has been a little bit reluctant to do the same. Other networks such as ABC and CNN have recently discussed reforms they plan to make. But NBC hasn't issued similar reforms. In fact, your news president, in a recent congressional hearing, defended NBC's record, while the other networks were discussing these reforms. I'm curious if

NBC does plan to reform the way they cover election coverage and if so, what you plan to do.

Mr. Brokaw: No, we hope to make the same mistakes four years from now that we made.

(Laughter)

Mr. Brokaw: In fact we have issued a report. Tom Goldstein, who is the dean at the Columbia School of Journalism, was one of the chairs of it and it was out the same day CNN issued its statement. It was not as lengthy, but we issued it as well.

Let me just take a moment and talk about, if I can. You all now have a pretty good idea of what happened. It was a classic case of a collapse of a system where we had bad data and we took it for granted, we relied too much on historic patterns that were changing rapidly in that state. My own very strong belief is, despite the confidence of some of the people that testified before Congress, that it will be very hard for us to make projections based on exit polls four years from now, in large part because of the rising phenomenon of absentee ballots. Most states are now making it much easier for people to cast an absentee ballot.

Some of the change I was talking about here tonight takes place on election day as well, so if you get up to a 40 percent absentee ballot we're not going to be able to determine what happened with a big chunk of the electorate that day.

Now, I said in this forum—was it 2 years ago that I was here, Marvin?—that I would change things radically. I've been troubled by this for some time. I would move election day from the first Tuesday in November to the first weekend in November. I'd open all the polls simultaneously, 6:00 A.M. on the east coast, midnight in Hawaii. Go for 36 hours, vote through the weekend with an ATM card, far more secure now and people could vote at shopping malls and football stadiums and other places. And then at 6:00 P.M. eastern time on Sunday night, at noon in Hawaii all away across the country, polls close simultaneously. You have an electronic readout, you have the superbowl of politics. You have salsa parties going on, you know, and beer sales would go up, pizza sales would be great.

(Laughter)

Mr. Brokaw: I honestly think that we have to have a real extraordinary effort at election reform. It's crazy that this system which we value so highly, the right of the vote and the weight of the vote, is as broken down as we now know that it is. And the problem with reform is that it has come from those people who got into power under the old system, so they're not inclined to do that; they want to keep their hands on the machinery as much as possible. That's why we don't have campaign finance reform, by the way.

(Applause)

Mr. Norman: Hello, my name is Zachary Norman, I'm a first year at the college.

I wanted to know, in light of the spread of the availability to receive news and the increasing number of news sources, what do you see as the future of the network nightly 30 minute newscast?

Mr. Brokaw: That's a good question. We don't know, we've done some projections on it and we think it's good for another 10 years probably, at roughly these numbers. We had this discussion at dinner tonight. There are still enough people beyond your generation, your parents and others, who are going to be around who like news organized in that way, they've grown up with this tradition. The more interesting question is what happens when you get to be in your 50s and 60s and whether you'll have any interest in a network news broadcast.

My own strong hope would be to have a kind of AP story about it today about the three of us and what we've been through for the last 20 years. I've always hoped we'd have a 10:00 prime time newscast that would go for an hour. You could fiddle with the format in a couple of ways. You could do some the "Today" show format, in which the local stations get a few minutes at the bottom of the half hour and then they get to go to their 11:00 news. I don't know whether that will happen in my professional lifetime or not.

So I think that is one of the reasons we have to keep looking at the form, making sure that we are covering the important stories and addressing other stories as well. If you go back just 12 years, for example, and look at all three broadcasts, they were pretty much animated wire services. They did 12 stories in a row and maybe one longer story on a big story of the day, but everything else, if it happened somewhere in the world, it was likely to get some kind of mention in the network news that night because they were the only broadcast that were available that day. We now know that when people come to us that they have had access to all this other material, so how do we carve out our place in that? That is an ongoing dilemma for us.

Mr. Townsman: Joseph Townsman, from New Jersey, I'm a first year student at the college.

What is the origin in the major news networks of the left wing bias and will there be an end to it in the near future?

(Applause)

Mr. Brokaw: Honestly, I must say I have some trouble with the premise of your question. Let me respond however in a more general fashion than you may like. Look, reporters are involved in change, they're involved in what's new and what's different. And people who have conservative ideologies for the most part, kind of like things the way they are. They don't like a lot of change. So there's this perception that if we're involved in change—. I remember when it really blew up in America. I think that the origin of this was during the civil rights movement. Network correspondents came to be called communists on the streets in the south or in the big cities later, because they were out reporting this enormous social change that was going on.

And that's what happens, by and large, is that a lot of people look at us and say, well you must be left wing or a liberal because look at these issues that you're dealing with, and we do tend to deal with those issues that represent societal changes, whether they are economic or political or in this case both social and racial.

If you look at what's on the air now, I know that Fox says: "we report, you decide," on cable. But their biggest stars are pretty outspoken in terms of their conservative tilt. Bill O'Reilly is a Boston product, a graduate of this school, in fact. If you look at what happens even on MSNBC, I think you'll find more people to the right of center than to the left of center, in terms of what they're defending and what they're promoting.

I have these arguments with my closest friends, by the way. In the years that I've been covering politics at the presidential level, the most serious, enraged complaints that I've gotten have come from the left, not from the right directly, from presidential candidates and others about our coverage, screaming that we were being unfair to them. I just had an experience on election night that was fairly instructive to me. About a week after election night I read in the *Wall Street Journal* op-ed page, a conservative radio talk show host in Los Angeles who was railing about what happened in the country because we were still going through the election recounts in Florida. And then he said, if there is any question about how liberal the media are, Brokaw on election night said referring to Al Gore, "We still have to win—." God, I never said anything like that. I called Tim Russert who was at my side, we kind of act as each others radar on those occasions, I said do you ever remember me saying anything like that, and he said, no; we went through the transcript and couldn't find it.

We called him and said where did you get that? He said, well, I don't have the phrase quite right. What you said was, "We still must win this state." So then we called up the videotape and looked at it, and I was doing a whole run of states, and I said okay, Pennsylvania goes to Al Gore now, but we still have to call Michigan and Ohio. Those are going to be important states and when we, we must call those states, and then they said in my ear: "Michigan goes to Gore" and I said, we must win—Gore wins Michigan. That was it, that became a left wing bias in his eyes. So bias, like beauty, is very often in the eyes of the beholder.

. . . bias, like beauty, is very often in the eyes of the beholder.

I think over a long period of time it really all works out in a fairly balanced fashion, but I've been defending the news in forums like this and other places for as long as I can remember.

From the Floor: I'm a student at the school of public health. I think that the NBC news has successfully raised the American public's awareness of many health related issues and I would like to know how your team goes

about selecting these issues and how you decide what the American public should know about health care. Thank you.

Mr. Brokaw: I think there has been a general awareness that people have been taking more responsibility for their health care and having a greater curiosity about it, wanting more information about it. I don't know anybody who just goes to the doctor now and does whatever the doctor tells them to do.

Moreover, the health care industry has opened up, in terms of wanting to share with the public a lot of this stuff because it really does help the health care industry to have a more informed patient population. And finally, there have been so many dramatic advances in the last ten years in the health care sciences, that it's just a good story, it's an important story.

I don't think that there is anything more critical to a stable society than to have a population that is healthy, and so it is a legitimate issue for us . . .

In my own case, I married into a family of physicians, I have a daughter who's a physician. And I'm interested in what she's doing constantly because, her area is public health, she's really interested in what's going on. I don't think that there is anything more critical to a stable society than to have a population that is healthy, and so it is a legitimate issue for us but was not one that was covered much when I began in this business. So we have specialists in this area and it's one of the areas in which we have developed that interest.

Ms. House: I'm Theresa House, I'm from Memphis, Tennessee, and I'm a freshman at the college. I was also a regional recruitee.

Mr. Brokaw: The difference is you got in and I didn't.

(Laughter)

Ms. House: The basic question I have for you is that the decrease in the amount of time allocated to sound bites from political figures seems to correspond with the rise in hiring PR people within campaigns, like officially embracing spinning within your campaign. My question for you is what do you see as the ideal sort of ratio between the direct quotation of the politicians themselves and the commentary that you, as journalists, provide on it?

Mr. Brokaw: I was glad that Alex raised that at the outset, and I was also happy that he took note of what has happened in the print medium since then. Look, our whole pace of life has changed in the last 20 years. Music is different than it was then too, and we've compressed, we do more multitasking than when we did then, that has something to do with it. But the difference between then and now is that there are so many other places now that you can hear the whole speech, on C-SPAN or on cable, or in a lot of other places.

And at Nightly News, I'll give you the origins, I don't think I've discussed it publicly before. We have something called 'In Their Own Words,' in which we let a candidate or somebody who is involved in a public issue, describe for themselves in a minute and a half or 2 minutes without a reporter there, but it is produced by somebody that has journalistic credentials. We do have a gatekeeper overlooking the process. This began because I was watching, I'm a C-SPAN junkie, and this is the exciting life of a television anchor—

I'm a C-SPAN junkie, and this is the exciting life of a television anchor—

(Laughter)

Mr. Brokaw: On a Saturday night in 1994, after the election after the Republican revolution, I was watching the freshman Republican class brought to Washington by Newt Gingrich, having a colloquy with Rush Limbaugh and Bill Bennett about what they should expect for the next couple of years and how they should conduct themselves. And there it was buried on C-SPAN and on Saturday night and it was utterly fascinating to me because they kind of laid out their blueprint about what they wanted to do.

And I thought how do we get that on the air? We don't have anybody there. How do we now revive that and get it on the air on Monday night? And how do we come up with a technique that we can do that as we go along for not just political people but for people who are involved in natural disasters or people who have something to say about the economy? So we created something called 'In Their Own Words.' And that Monday night we had a combination of the two of them talking to the class, without a reporter between them and the audience. And I think that it's something of a new form that has served us well, frankly.

Mr. Morehouse: My name is Andrew Morehouse, I'm a first year master in public policy student here.

My question is about ethical standards that news organizations maintain. Are traditional standards that they've held for a long time still applicable, can you still maintain them with the shorter news cycle and ownership of media organizations? Or do they change in terms of sourcing, in terms of how you treat a story, checking facts.

Mr. Brokaw: Well we don't have situational ethics if that's what your asking, but constantly they're being reexamined and sometimes they're being fine-tuned, given the changes that are going on in the world in which we're living at the time. One of the big changes at NBC I think that it's fair to say, Bill Wheatley was a Shorenstein Fellow, and is one of our vice presidents, and this is one of the areas that he keeps track of. He has someone who came up through the ranks at NBC, David McCormick, who is kind of our ethics cop and he reviews a lot of things, and we're constantly looking at sourcing and the presentation of material, whether

we've been fair or not, especially when we get complaints from people who say, wait a minute, I was just totally misrepresented on that. So we go back and if they've got a case then we make the correction on the air.

Also, and it's something you haven't thought about maybe, is that the public lecture business for correspondents of some visibility is a real source of outside income for them. And we have a rule at NBC that we instigated about five or six years ago, I guess, that you can't take a fee for a speech from an organization that's involved in Washington in some fashion in lobbying. That's one of the rules that no one ever thought about before. So, yeah we're constantly looking at that.

But, truth in advertising here, it's such a scramble to get things on the air anymore that it is not something that is at the top of our agenda every day, and that's what I was trying to address here, it's something we have to pause and think about and maybe even restructure physically within these news organizations, about how we deal with it.

When I was a White House correspondent, during Watergate, I would work all day long on a story and button it up and get it tight and get it ready and share with New York what my sources were, either by name or by position more likely, and go on the air with John Chancellor at 6:30 and John and David Brinkley were there. At 7:00, I would have another three or four hours of nighttime work to do to get ready for the "Today" show.

Now, at 7:00, Claire Shipman, David Bloom, one of our correspondents David Gregory in this case and Campbell Brown, Andrea Mitchell, at 7:30 they're off the air, they hit a switch and they are right on MSNBC. And they're maybe on there for a long run, from 7:00 until 9:00, or they need to come back and do Brian Williams at 9:15. So there is this enormous pressure on them that takes away from their opportunity to run down stories and do original reporting, and that's the dilemma we're still dealing with in the chaos of this new universe that we are creating.

Mr. Bromadans: Hi, my name is Hans Bromadans, I'm a senior at the college.

I hear constantly from my European and Latin American friends here at the college that reporting back home is so much better than here in the U.S., it's more objective, that governments are questioned and criticized much more effectively. How do you feel about these comments? Have you heard them? How do you feel the media in the U.S. is lacking or praiseworthy on how it goes about criticizing or analyzing its government?

Mr. Brokaw: I suppose that I think that some of the individual European countries, if you go to Germany or you go to U.K. or go to France, that they do more of what would be described as foreign reporting than we do. They live in a slightly different environment. The European Union is going on now and things are happening right at their borders; and we've always been more insular in this country. Now there is less foreign reporting that is going on, now that it is a different kind of world.

At Nightly News, what we've decided to do is not just do episodic foreign reporting because it happens to break through, we're going to do something when we can engage the audience, in a way, by working hard on a larger story. A perfect example, the other night in the Hague, when the Serbs were found guilty of war crimes, we had worked on that for 3 weeks running. And rather than saying that this trial was underway and was still going on, we waited for the verdict and then we did this very comprehensive report.

It's hard for me to say, hard for me to make a judgement of whether they do a better job of being more critical or more analytical about their own governments. I think that we're pretty tough on our own government, sometimes to a fault. I think that we got into a situation where we were playing gotcha constantly, when we were looking at the public arena. Dean Nye and I talked about this, whether or not it helped drive the country away from its institutions of governance and discouraged people from coming into the political arena.

This is a new opportunity with George W. Bush, and he has some ideas that he wants to try out and we'll see how that goes in the next 3 months. And one of the things we have to do is kind of step up our game and analyze a lot of stuff that is not television oriented; the tax cut is a good example of that, so is the Social Security privatization plan. These are critical issues, so is his whole nuclear program, by the way, not just the missile defense shield but what he's going to do in building down and what kind of nuclear world we're going to have. So those are the things for you to keep your eye on and let us know if you don't think we're doing a good enough job.

Mr. Hubbard: First off, Mr. Brokaw, I'd like to thank you for coming tonight. I'm a first year at the college, Tyson Hubbard.

You've had such a illustrious long career and so many firsts, what do you think was the most important story you ever covered and which story was most exciting for you to cover?

Mr. Brokaw: I get asked that a lot and obviously now I have 2 answers. A lot of times people will ask who is the most memorable person that you ever interviewed, or who sticks in your mind and they always think it's—I did the first interview with Gorbachev, for example—or the day John Kennedy was killed, or covering Bobby Kennedy and then seeing his assassination, covering Dr. King and a lot of the other people.

The people who stick in my mind are the ordinary people whose names I don't even know, who showed great courage in the face of great adversity. First, in this country in the civil rights movement, but when I really saw that was in '89 with the collapse of communism, that is the single biggest story that I've covered. Right below that is Richard Nixon's resignation. But I think that over the long curve of history, the collapse of communism, as dramatic as it was and as sweeping as it was, is something that we're still

trying to come to grips with, frankly. There were times during that story when I couldn't believe that I was reporting what I was seeing.

1989 was one of those years, like '68. In '68 Dr. King and Bobby Kennedy were killed; we had the '68 conventions; we had Johnson saying he wasn't going to run again; the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia; we put a man on the moon. All these things were going on in '68 and I'll never see another year like that. Then '89 comes along Soviet Union collapses, Poland collapses, Czechoslovakia collapses; Mandela is released; Tiananmen Square happens. Those were astonishing events. So I would say those 2 years, but probably '89, for the long reach of history, will have the greatest effect.

Ms. Simone: I'd like to ask you a question, not as an anchorman but as a managing editor of the news program. My name is Maria Simone, I'm not a student here anymore.

The question is about today's news and being well aware that you are here, I don't know if you participated in the decision of what's going to be on the broadcast tonight or not. But as you probably heard, on the recount by the *Washington Post* and *Miami Herald,* even if the votes were counted that were ruled by The United States Supreme Court as unconstitutional, Gore would have only encountered another 44 votes. I can almost bet if the recount was opposite and Gore would have won by five votes, it would have been a prime story, the very first story you would have in the news. Why did it not make a blip on tonight's broadcast at all?

Mr. Brokaw: You mean the Knight-Ridder judgement? Because Knight-Ridder did it and there are still people counting down there.

Ms. Simone: Tonight's broadcast, tonight's news on your tonight's news.

Mr. Brokaw: They didn't mention it at all?

Ms. Simone: If they did, they mentioned it so late that I had to be on the way here.

Mr. Brokaw: It was on last night's, by the way. We talked about it and I said make sure you get it in, even though it was last night's story and this morning's development. I said make sure that we mention it and it's the Knight-Ridder count, so it didn't change anything.

Ms. Simone: It wouldn't have changed anything even if Gore won by five votes, we still would have Bush as the president, but I bet it would have made the very first story in the news.

Mr. Brokaw: Well, you're entitled to your opinion, that if it had happened last night in the same way and was on again this morning and it was a 5 vote difference, if Gore had won Miami-Dade by 5 votes, we would have led with it and made a big deal of it; I can assure you we wouldn't have, because it wouldn't have changed it.

Ms. Citrakian: Hi, my name is Laura Citrakian, I'm a first year at the college and hail from the New York, New Jersey metro area.

My question concerns the fact that naturally there are a lot more than two thirty-minute segments of news available daily in our world. At the same time, I think both because of the mounting freneticism in American life and also because we are overwhelmed by this smorgasbord, the variety of news, that the best case scenario is if they get five minutes they get great, relevant, truthful information. Maybe the worst case scenario is that they get someone's opinion that will be the only information they will receive in the day.

And with such limited time and such a huge variety of options, if you were a consumer of mass media where would you go for the truth? And seeing the inside and the outside where do you go for the truth?

Mr. Brokaw: This is almost a set up.

(Laughter)

Mr. Brokaw: Well, I'll just tell you what my daily practices are, maybe that will be helpful, okay? I read a lot of newspapers every day. I have delivered to the house, stacks of papers, all the principal New York dailies, and the *Washington Post* and *Financial Times* and the *International Herald Tribune.*

Ms. Citrakian: And you read them all?

Mr. Brokaw: Well I scan them. I'm good at multitasking, I sit there, and truth be told. I have a large cup of black coffee, with my dogs pawing at me to take time out, and I listen to Imus from 6:45 to 7:00.

(Laughter)

Mr. Brokaw: I catch the "Today" show from 7:00 to 7:15, so I know what they're doing at the top of theirs. Then I succumb to the dogs' overtures to me and we go the park, with my radio on and I listen to NPR for the next half hour and I come home at 7:45 and I go back to the papers and get on my computer and read the overnight wires and do a little computer traffic with my colleagues and pick up some other stuff. And then I try to do a little workout before I go to the office. That is how I start the day.

Now, if it were left to me, the other networks would suffer a California power crisis and we would be left alone.

(Laughter)

Mr. Brokaw: But look, the other thing I didn't talk about is that the news viewer and reader is more empowered than ever before. With the small screen, the large screen and the newspapers that are available on these screens, it is astonishing to me, and I'm a pretty active user of it, how quickly you can go in and get the stuff that you want. My hometown of Yankton, South Dakota, population 12,000 maybe on a good day, has a daily newspaper. I read it on the 'net.' My friends are in medical practice or they're doing things and I find out about it. I go right into the Yankton P&D, and I can even type in my name on the Yankton P&D and see what they've been saying about me back there, which is also pretty useful by the way.

(Laughter)

Mr. Brokaw: My point is that this compact is two-way, it depends on you and your intellectual determination and your own curiosity. I know that Tom Rosenstiel and Bill Kovach have written about this and they say, well they're not news consumers, but in a way we are news consumers and how we make the best of the information we're getting.

The public is great in terms of its judgement, and may get it wrong on the first pass sometimes. But the public has a longer view than those of us in our business. We're so caught up in telling what's going on every second, they tend to kind of take it in, digest it for a while, absorb it, figure out what they want to do with it, and then make a judgement as they go along.

I am very heartened by the ability of American people to use this information wisely and to reach out to a lot of sources and to come to the appropriate conclusions for their own lives.

And so I am very heartened by the ability of American people to use this information wisely and to reach out to a lot of sources and to come to the appropriate conclusions for their own lives. And it is very exciting to be living through this era in which they have so many other choices. I spend a lot of my time in a very remote part of Montana, and I've got a small dish and a laptop and I'm as wired to the world as I am in New York City and the fishing's a lot better, by the way.

Mr. Jones: Final question.

From the Floor: Hi Mr. Brokaw, it's great to have you here. My name is Biana, I'm a first year at the college.

Last night we had a forum about the Cuban Missile Crisis and we had a lot of people very informed about the crisis itself including Secretary McNamara, who said one of the crucial things in President Kennedy's decision at the time was the fact that the media gave him some time to think about his decision. He had a week to go and think about the matter at hand. And he said that he didn't think today a president would be given that amount of time by the media. And I want to hear what you have to say about that?

. . . if the White House has the courage, it can hold us at greater arms length.

Mr. Brokaw: I actually participated in forums about that very subject before, about decision making in this super-heated greenhouse in which we all live now. And I personally believe that if the White House has the courage, it can hold us at greater arms length. Now I don't want you to run down and tell George W. Bush this. But, I always thought

the one that did the worst job of dealing with the pressures that came with all of us was Jimmy Carter. They tried to respond to everything that was going on, they tried to get on the 6:00 news with their story and they kind of didn't know what it was.

The people who did it the best were the Reagan people. They determined every day what it was that they wanted to get out there. They didn't get stampeded by those of us in the pressroom or those of us on the outside, as is their right. Now that means that we have to work harder at finding out what's going on.

But you're quite right, the president can get stampeded in this kind of an environment because it seems to be all around them. And they have to make a judgement about what's more important—responding quickly or responding correctly and asking for a little more time.

We'll see what happens later this week with Bill Clinton, whether he feels that he has to respond for example to the presidential pardon question and the format in which he does respond. That will be interesting to watch.

Thank you all very much.

(Applause)

Mr. Jones: Once again, thank you very much Tom Brokaw and thank you all.

(Applause)

THEODORE H. WHITE SEMINAR
FEBRUARY 27, 2001

Mr. Jones: Welcome to the second phase of the Theodore White lecture series. This is in many ways just as important as last night because it is an opportunity to take what Tom Brokaw said as a point of departure, and then chew it up. The issues that Tom addressed are very big, complex issues and we've tried to assemble a panel that would have something important to say about them as well. We're going to have individual brief comments by the panelists and then a conversation and then before Tom leaves, we will open the conversation to the people in the room. And you are welcome to take part in it at that point.

Let me briefly introduce the panelists, we're missing one, Bob Putnam, I assume is bowling somewhere.

(Laughter)

Mr. Jones: Let me introduce them in turn. John Gage is one of the senior executives and one of the experts in research at Sun Microsystems. He was also, last semester, a fellow at the Shorenstein Center and has become a very valued and highly respected colleague here.

Mr. Gage: Well last night it was striking to me that you would, Tom, evoke the generation of journalists that have created the world of the evening news. You said we have 10 more years of the evening news as we know it. I'm in the technology world and we're the network people, responsible for the cacophony that you described a bit last night, the multiple voices that suddenly have access.

Are we entering a permissive generation of journalism?

So I wanted to explore with you a little bit about how you see this next generation coming. You mentioned Matt Drudge as someone who was not quite of this generation of journalists. The reason we use the word generation is because of your book, evoking the Second World War. That generation had integrity, a feeling of purpose, it had a feeling, that set them apart from the permissive generation.

Are we entering a permissive generation of journalism? Is that what you think will happen in these next ten years?

Mr. Brokaw: Well I think that one of the things that you should keep in mind is the historical context. I mentioned Walter Winchell last night, and he existed during that time, he flourished in the post war years. At the same time we had the rise of Edward R. Murrow and Dr. Stanton, making sure that the foundation was in place for this great new medium of television to have news divisions and to have public service consciousness.

You also had, in New York and in Chicago, and in Los Angeles for that matter, and most of the cities in the country, a very robust spectrum of tabloid newspapers and people who were kind of the Matt Drudges of their time if you will, but in print. And then on radio you had the likes of Walter Winchell, and Dorothy Killgallen was widely regarded as an important figure, however you may have felt about her credentials and what her other roles might have been. But, for example, she was a primary reporter out at the Sam Shepard trial and that had a huge following. So it wasn't an immaculate conception, if you will, that era of post war news development.

And I think it will ever be thus, you know, going from the earliest days of moveable print and the 18th century political tracts that existed in this country, the role of Tom Paine, we've always had that kind of, if you will, sensational approach to a lot of what it is that we do. There are more outlets for it now, I don't think that we ought to all come out of the same gene pool, I really don't believe that. I think there's an appetite for a rich variety of sources.

I do think that what is possible now, that didn't exist then, is that you have so many more choices that may appeal to your specific interest. I don't want you to think that I am completely boring, but I got back to the room last night after having a drink in the bar with Alex and a few others, and clicked on C-SPAN and there was a very good discussion run by "Roll Call," involving Leon Panetta and Susan Molinari and Newt Gingrich on the current budget battle that's about to occur, and I watched it for about 40 minutes.

And you know, that wasn't available to me not so long ago. It was very useful to be able to click into that and also click out of it. You know the news consumer, reader is more empowered than ever before to find what he or she wants but also to pass by what he or she wants. So I think we all have to be careful, that we don't give the likes of Matt Drudge a larger role than he may deserve in determining where it is all going.

Mr. Gage: You made one other comment last night, and it struck me in the 22½ minutes that you have, 23, you had 10 years ago 12 news stories, you said a wire service, video wire service, and that's changed today; there are different pieces in there. And the Brokaw theorem is that you have to draw that audience after you determine the truth and after you determine the context in which you draw that audience, following the 22½ minutes. You said today the White House correspondent goes on CNBC to give further, an hour perhaps, of discussion; shouldn't you do that? Shouldn't there be a continuation of that 22½ minutes to give that background and context?

Mr. Brokaw: It's been my life long dream and hope and belief that at one point, we would get beyond the 22½ minutes. I never thought that at this stage we'd still be doing only a half hour of evening news. I really had

always believed that someone would be daring enough to take the step, and we did briefly experiment with it at NBC at the beginning of the Persian Gulf War; the affiliates rose up almost as one and said we want the half hour back because it's a big revenue producer for them. This so-called prime time access which is 7:00 to 7:30 in some markets, 7:30 to 8:00 in others was originally designed by the FCC so that there would be programming of local interest. Well, that's where you see "Jeopardy" and "Access Hollywood" and "Entertainment Tonight" and so on.

It's been my life long dream and hope and belief that at one point, we would get beyond the 22½ minutes. I never thought that at this stage we'd still be doing only a half hour of evening news.

It will happen, maybe after I'm long gone. I would hope that the networks, given the cost considerations of finding hit entertainment programs and so on, would at some point make the bold step of going on at 10:00 at night with a news broadcast, a national news broadcast, and it would go from 10:00 to 11:00. I talked about this some last night where you would have a little, a construct that would be like the "Today" show, like at 10:25 the local station would get 4 minutes to do their local news and talk about what's coming up at 11:00.

But it is a difficult problem for us on the networks to maintain our place. Also, as you have greater, ever greater cable penetration, there's less will on the part of the networks to compete against that. CNN is now close to 70 percent penetration, I think, in the country, and MSNBC and Fox and so on are quickly getting to that point. And I also think that at some point you're going to have pretty much full penetration because there are people who want to watch the news. The other 25 percent who chose not to get cable do that deliberately, it's not that it's not available to them. And I think that cable will continue to rise, and it's a question of how we then define the place of cable. I think there could be another MSNBC2 at some point, just like there is ESPN1 and ESPN2.

Let me just say something about the area that is of interest to you. When we had the arrest of the FBI suspected spy, I said matter of factly, at the conclusion of the report, "if you want to read the entire affidavit it's available on MSNBC.com." And then it dawned on me, my God, that's great. That's a really rich document, because I read it, and I thought they can just sit there and call it up. And so that's real synergy that didn't exist before, and that in a way expands the 22½ minutes that we have.

Mr. Jones: Mike Oreskes is my colleague from the *New York Times*; he has had many, many positions at the *Times* including running a metro desk

that won a couple of Pulitzer Prizes. Most recently he was the bureau chief of the Washington bureau. Mike has now been persuaded by Arthur Sulzberger, Jr., to give up the bureau chief spot in Washington and become an assistant managing editor of the newspaper and director of the *New York Times* electronic news.

Now let me decipher a little bit what this means. The *New York Times* is going into the television business. And the *New York Times* doesn't do anything but newspapers very well usually. They have done well with their Web site, but television is something that they have never really done very well, and they have experimented with it in the past. They're serious about television now, and the fact that they are serious is reflected in the fact that the person they chose to run that is someone who has absolutely impeccable *New York Times* credentials and someone, who in the course of giving him this new job, has also made him an assistant managing editor, which at the *New York Times* puts you on the masthead, which at the *New York Times* is also a very big deal.

So what I'm trying to tell you is that Mike Oreskes, although he may not know a great deal yet about television, he is going to be plotting that course for the *New York Times*, and with that I give you Mike Oreskes.

Mr. Oreskes: Of course the best thing about giving up the Washington bureau chief job is that I didn't have to watch the "Roll Call" show last night on the budget.

(Laughter)

Mr. Oreskes: Thank you, Alex.

I wanted to just linger for a minute on the remark that you have 10 years left of the evening news at their current levels of audiences, which is what I think you were saying, which is one little piece of this enormous change that we're all living through. In order to avoid any more barbs from Tom about the print press, I want to rush in and say that the newspaper business is going through virtually the identical phenomenon, only those newspapers that have managed to break out of regional bases, *USA Today,* the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal* have been able to sustain circulation levels or build them, everybody else is basically losing audience in much the same way that the network news shows are.

And that change, which I think is driven by a whole series of things, both technological and sociological, is clearly every bit as big and important as the rise of the penny press 100 years earlier, and the whole history that that brought on which you've alluded to in a variety of ways. And it's always hardest when you're in the middle of historic change to understand what the hell the change is really all about. But I think there are a couple of things that are going on right now that are very worrisome to journalists, and you touched on a couple of them, but I thought it was worth stopping on them for a second and trying to sort out what we think about them.

The first is that I think there's a very important distinction between voices and journalism. And we clearly are benefiting from a profusion of voices, and that's something I think that would have pleased the framers to no end. Tom Paine would have loved to have a Web site, and his material would have been perfect for a Web site, tendentious and illogical and over-heated, it would have worked wonderfully, and it was wonderful; it wasn't journalism.

. . . only those newspapers that have managed to break out of regional bases, . . . have been able to sustain circulation levels or build them, everybody else is basically losing audience in much the same way that the network news shows are.

And one of the things that I find worrisome in the current environment and I really specifically do not single out broadcast news here because I think very much the same phenomenon is occurring in print journalism in different ways and we can talk more about it, is the sense in which we have more channels and actually less competitive journalism. And we tend to recycle the same material over and over, and I think we've seen a lot of examples of that in the last couple of years.

You mentioned the anecdote about Andrea Mitchell coming straight off Nightly News into MSNBC. That may be good for her, in terms of face time, but it's not reassuring. I know her well and have enormous respect for her as a journalist, but if you can't make a phone call you can't add anything to what you're doing. I personally think that the catastrophe on election night, which by the way did not only affect the broadcast business but affected a lot of us too in print—

. . . we have more channels and actually less competitive journalism.

Mr. Brokaw: You have one of those copies of the *New York Times*?

Mr. Oreskes: I do actually, and for the right price I might share it.

(Laughter)

Mr. Oreskes: I actually walked out with a box of them.

Mr. Brokaw: My friend Maureen Dowd called me the next morning and said, guess what I've got, and I said, oh thank God, somebody has got one.

Mr. Oreskes: I hope she didn't cut the price on it. E-Bay has a future with me.

What really went wrong that night, yes there were issues of standards, yes there were issues of competitive pressure, but the most terrifying thing

that happened that night was that we had allowed the competition for the gathering and analyzing of election data to contract into the hands of one group, and we paid a price for that on election night, a big price, all of us did.

. . . we had allowed the competition for the gathering and analyzing of election data to contract into the hands of one group, and we paid a price for that on election night, a big price, all of us did.

And that was the outgrowth of the tremendous business pressures that everybody is under, the fears about audience shrinkage, the effort to think you can do it more efficiently but still kind of do the same thing. Journalism is not an efficient business, it's not a cost effective business, it is never going to be. And yet all of us and maybe in some ways television is singled out, because A, you're right there in front of everybody, and B, because in some ways the issues are even more rarified and more focused for you just as the report is more focused.

Election night to me was a big warning of something we've seen going on a lot, which is this shrinkage of the actual journalism going on at a time when we've got more places to say things, and the net result I think is what we saw happen.

Mr. Brokaw: Yes, Michael, I agree with all those points. I'd like to make a couple of observations about some very pertinent things that you said. One is that when you're in the midst of the great change that we're in the midst of, it's sometimes difficult to understand what is going on around us. I think that's true.

The other difficulty that we have is that we have to continue to produce a product on a daily basis in the midst of that change, that's the biggest single problem that we have. I spend more time thinking about it, this is not being as modest as it sounds, because I've just been at it longer than most people at NBC News now. And yet I've got to be on the air every night at 6:30 and I've got an important role that I play everyday in getting us on the air everyday, and then there are the ancillary parts of my job which just come with being an anchor, other news projects that I'm involved in, and then the considerations like coming to Harvard and doing those kinds of things that come with the kind of job that I have.

. . . we have to continue to produce a product on a daily basis in the midst of that change, that's the biggest single problem that we have.

So whatever metaphor you choose, learning to ski in an avalanche, drinking from a fire hydrant, that's what we're doing on a daily basis, trying to cope with this cataclysmic change that is going on in this universe in which we live and how we want to sort it out. And I do think that we probably ought to have more people designated, as I gather you are at the *Times,* to stop and think about where we're going and how we're going to get there, and what is the best use of it.

. . . the painful lesson of election night is that journalism does count, . . .

One of the things that's happened, and this is not unique to NBC and MSNBC, but you can now get on the cable channels a minute by minute rating system. You can watch the audience go up and go down in the course of a half hour, minute by minute. And so there are a lot of people looking at these charts about why that program worked or didn't work and there's this kind of constant tweaking, fine tuning, whatever, hoping to hold on in this hotly competitive cable environment that's going on, where the margins are very small indeed at this time, so I think that is a consideration.

And the painful lesson of election night is that journalism does count, and that you do have to do the old-fashioned things and go back to some of the old fashioned systems again to make sure that you get it right. Despite the best intentions, however, things still blow up in your face from time to time. You know the *Times* had a difficult experience in the past year with a highly visible case; the *Boston Globe* has gone through something here in the last 10 days where they've dealt with that kind of thing, and it plays out in a more conspicuous way than it did in the past.

So I think that all organizations ought to have people set aside who are thinking about where they're going to get to and how they're going to get there and acting as the filters for what is going on in the meantime.

Mr. Jones: Katrina Heron is the editor in chief of *Wired* magazine. *Wired* magazine has, under her editorship, not only been one of the real vanguard publications, as far as the world of technology, but has taken a kind of editorial stance that is human and rich as well as being calculating to be penetrating and insightful about what this revolution that we've been discussing is all about. Katrina has also worked at the *New York Times Magazine*.

Ms. Heron: Thanks. Last night I was very interested in Tom's remarks but quite surprised that when the students got up and asked questions very few of them really talked about the future. Obviously that's something that we think about obsessively at *Wired* magazine but I dare say that Tom and everybody else on this panel is thinking about it all the time and in the way that you just suggested.

I just want to talk a minute about technology as tools because of course that's really what technology is. It's a really profound tool that changes us

and the way that we're going to see journalism completely reborn and remade as a result of it. It was Marshall McLuhan you know who said, "first we invent our tools and then they invent us." And we've been talking last night and a little bit this morning about the print and broadcast tools that we use and these tools are, I wouldn't say they're on the way out, but I would say that they're on the way to being profoundly altered and enriched by newer technologies that are coming along.

And I guess from my perspective, yes, I think it would be a wonderful thing if there were people at NBC dedicated uniquely to looking at these tools and how people can best implement them. To say that we should be careful about giving too much responsibility or authority to a Matt Drudge actually is in a way an admission of the fact that the people who are in control of today's tools don't understand tomorrow's tools. And the reason that Matt Drudge made the impact that he did is because he's a guy who is interested in what he can do with new technology.

And very briefly, new technology is incredibly exciting. It's chaotic, it's haphazard, it's random, and its outcome is uncertain. But I think that these new technologies have a great capability of enriching journalism and of enriching the public discourse, and of helping us renew what we often refer to as the social contract. To me, it is insane to try to tell the world's news in 22 minutes. I think you're a hero for even attempting that on a daily basis. Seriously, I mean that. And I think that to be able to say at the end of your broadcast, "and you can find the entire document on MSNBC.com" is a wonderful tool, and I know that you're going to use more of it.

. . . the reason that Matt Drudge made the impact that he did is because he's a guy who is interested in what he can do with new technology.

But there's a lot of other things that make it possible for more and greater interaction with people and the public, and I think that the public has become very laissez-faire and very much a passive observer and receiver of information. But the amazingly dynamic thing about these new tools we have at our disposal is they are interactive and they really allow us to do something very different than what we've done before.

My great fear is that because of the market realities and the kind of entrenched habits that people have, that journalists, more than anyone, journalists are among the most retrograde class of people around. We're very, very attached to old habits, and very loathe to change, paradoxically. But I really believe that these tools can make an enormous difference. And so my great fear is that the people with enormous depth and wealth of experience who really need to lead us into the 21st century are being stuck in this technological primitivism, and that the people who are going forward, like the Matt Drudges, don't have the experience and the wisdom to

be able to guide us. We're at this terribly different digital divide than the one that you normally hear about.

But we need to get together on this, this has to be an and/and scenario not an either/or and not a past/future, and so I hope that Tom is really going to take a leadership role in this.

Mr. Brokaw: Well, Katrina, as you know I have been actively interested in this area for a long time, and extending NBC into cyberspace as it were. When I first began to raise the idea that we should have an alliance with one of the cyber companies, I wasn't sure which one. I thought Microsoft at the time, because I could see this 900,000 pound gorilla getting to be a 2 million ton gorilla very quickly. Based on my own conversations with Bill Gates, it was clear to me that he had his eye on content from the beginning, and that was the next logical step.

. . . journalists are among the most retrograde class of people around.

And when I came back and became kind of an outrider, up in all the hallways of NBC saying the Internet is coming, people were utterly dismissive of me, it's not what we do, were not going to have any part of it. And then obviously there was a big conversion. Now there were people on the 52nd floor in the executive suite who did see the economic possibilities of it and so they are actively interested in it. But since we've had the marriage that resulted in MSNBC on cable and MSNBC.com, it has been a more uncertain journey, no question about it.

I don't think it is as fully integrated as it ought to be in our daily broadcasts and our daily mission at NBC News, or for that matter maybe even at MSNBC on cable, that I don't think that the synergy is as explicit as it ought to be. But again, it's part of what Michael Oreskes was talking about, we're in the midst of this great change trying to get things on the air on a nightly basis, and the network on MSNBC and so people are running at full speed trying to do that without thinking enough about how do we find the intersection for these two media. And it's something that should continue to be addressed.

. . . my great fear is that the people with enormous depth and wealth of experience who really need to lead us into the 21st century are being stuck in this technological primitivism, and that the people who are going forward, like the Matt Drudges, don't have the experience and the wisdom to be able to guide us.

You're quite right, Matt Drudge does understand the new technology. A hell of a lot of kids understand the new technology and they are passing along their own interest to each other on the Internet and directing people to certain sites because there's something going on there. And so there's this whole other path out there that we're kind of oblivious to, at our peril.

Ms. Heron: Plus everyone knows Napster was invented by a college student in a dorm room, using a relatively simple piece of software and it's completely upended the entire music industry.

Mr. Brokaw: Right, it's a huge consequence, Napster is, and that technology is.

If you just look at the place of cyber technology in the health care field, or if you look at the place of cyber technology in business. We did do a lot about day trading, but in that kind of 'oh my God' basis. It did change the way that people traded stocks, and who got involved in it and how it democratized to one degree or another the whole business of stock trading.

So yeah, I don't have an answer that I'm proud of because we're still stumbling along.

Mr. Jones: Bob Putnam is the Peter and Isabelle Malkin Professor of Public Policy here at the Kennedy School. He is a very distinguished scholar and probably best known for *Bowling Alone: Civic Disengagement in America and What To Do About It*, at least that's his best-selling book. Bob Putnam.

. . . the decline in newspaper circulation which is not reflected demographically in the decline in network news audience is driven entirely by generational replacement. . .

Mr. Putnam: Thanks very much. I'm fascinated by the impact of technology on what we're talking about, but that's not my area of special interest. I rather want to talk about the sociological changes that I think are transforming the business. The sociological changes are slower, less dramatic, but actually I want to argue, much more important for the future of news than the technological changes.

And I want to begin by expressing my enormous admiration for Tom Brokaw as a sociologist and historian because what I want to talk about just briefly is the Greatest Generation. That generation was not only great in the ways that your book talks about but that generation gave more, joined more, read more, schmoozed more, and were more engaged in public affairs.

When they came home from the war, the average American had about 5 years less education than the average American does now. The average American was a high school graduate not a college graduate, and yet the average American household received 2.2 newspapers. Michael Oreskes can tell us what that figure is now, but there has been a steady long term decline.

Those folks were the Greatest Generation, and actually their parents too, the all time great news hounds, and the decline in newspaper circulation which is not reflected demographically in the decline in network news audience is driven entirely by generational replacement, as the Greatest Generation has been replaced. They didn't transmit that to their kids, the boomers and to the X'ers. And any given generation, any given cohort of people, is not watching news now any less than they ever did. Basically if you watch news when you're 18 you watch news when you're 80. But the successive generations are watching news a lot less, and not just watching news less, they're reading news less, they're consuming news less, this is not a cross media transfer.

. . . the new technology does empower the news hound, . . , but it also empowers the news avoider. . .

And this is not a distinction between the networks and the cables. If you just watch the ads for Depends, and the ads for retirement, managing your finances and so on, that is are driven by what the demographics of those audiences are.

So the new technology does empower the news hound, as Tom Brokaw said last evening, but it also empowers the news avoider, which is what primarily I see the younger generations as being. They're wonderful kids, they're my own kids, I love them a lot, but they don't have the habit that even I did, much less their grandparents did.

The important comparison I want to argue is not between print and electronic media, it's not between the networks and cables, it's not between television and the Internet, the important distinction is between the news audience and the entertainment audience. And that balance between the news audience and the entertainment audience is shifting dramatically. It's not Matt Drudge, it's not the *New York Times* that's your most important competitor, your most important competitor is David Letterman, or "ET," "Entertainment Tonight," is that what ET stands for, I think so.

. . . the important distinction is between the news audience and the entertainment audience.

I just finished looking at trends in American political participation and social participation. I'm trying to predict who joins, who votes, who pays attention to civic life, who goes to the PTA and so on. The best single indicator—it's not years of education, it's not income, it's not anything that you might think—the answer to the following question, and ask yourself this question actually, agree or disagree, television is my primary form of entertainment. If

you say yes to that, and half of Americans say yes to that, the half that say yes are 3 or 4 times less likely to participate in any way, to vote, to join, to schmooze.

And as you all know, this factoid comes I think from Andy Kohut, that among Americans in their early twenties the greatest single source of information about the election campaign actually was the late night comedy hours, not any of the other media that we're talking about here. This seems to me to pose a serious journalistic dilemma and, that's what I want to end with, which is a question. If the news programs don't move towards more entertainment values, the audience is going to continue to drift away. On the other hand, the more you move toward entertainment values, the more that it becomes harder to distinguish between the "NBC Nightly News" and one of these comedy shows.

. . . the audience for the nightly network TV shows is the most civic audience in America, it's just dwindling and old.

I'm not here in the mode of being critical of television news. The audience for the nightly network TV shows is the most civic audience in America, it's just dwindling and old.

Mr. Brokaw: Let me begin with the part that pleases me most, your references to the Greatest Generation.

(Laughter)

Mr. Brokaw: I will take that as public affirmation of what it is that I wrote about when I'm challenged on that claim, the *Greatest Generation.* My short answer is, that's my title and I'm sticking to it. But I think that all the points that you raised are accurate and are reflective of what that generation was about. I thought through why they were joiners and schmoozers and news hounds, and in part it was because their lives were defined by great events that had a direct effect on them personally, the Depression, the war, the post-war period, civil rights.

When I was in college and preparing to marry the daughter of a physician, the summer that we were being married, my wife's father's partners were giving us parties, and in the small town in which we both grew up, the discussion every night at those parties was about Medicare and the socialization of medicine in America. And my parents were persuaded that they were going to call off the wedding because I was taking on all these doctors on behalf of Medicare.

(Laughter)

Mr. Brokaw: But it was a big defining issue for the country about something that was crucial in terms of a new social contract with elderly people especially, the civil rights movement was going on at the same

time, Vietnam then came along, and people of draft age were engaged by what was going on in the evening news. There were events that pulled them to it.

Now if you look at the political landscape, there are not those great rifts in the landscape that are perilous to young people in a way that they can identify with it. They're not subject to the draft, they don't see the great social upheaval brought on by a war or civil rights. There's nothing in Washington that seems to be speaking to them directly about their lives, so they don't feel terribly engaged.

It also has an effect on the kinds of people that are coming into, especially electronic journalism, broadcast journalism. In the last 5 to 10 years I have been deeply grateful and a little thunderstruck, by the quality of the education of the people who are coming to work at the networks, they are eager to come to work there and they're well traveled, and are highly educated, they have a range of interests, but they have almost no interest in public policy. They come for other reasons, they come because they love the medium and they love the tools of the medium and what it can do and they have been weaned on a lot of what you're talking about, of seeing magazine shows and David Letterman and Comedy Central with Jon Stewart and they come to work in the news division because they have kind of an inclination there, but not a passion about it as I did when I was growing up, or as Marvin Kalb did when he grew up. We came to these news divisions because it was the place in which we could indulge our interest 24 hours a day and maybe make a difference and certainly go off and enhance our own understanding of how the world worked. There's a lot less of that now frankly than there was then.

I have been deeply grateful and a little thunderstruck, by the quality of the education of the people who are coming to work at the networks, . . . they're well traveled, and are highly educated, they have a range of interests, but they have almost no interest in public policy.

On the other hand, when something like the post-election period comes along, in which this country was galvanized by what was happening and there was no fixed expectation of how it was going to change hour to hour. We did see the audiences rise, and young people as well got caught up in it, it was a great civics lesson, it was a great lesson in constitutional law, it was a great political story, there were dramatic and human overtones to it, larger than life players on both sides. And people really did get involved in that story and stayed with it throughout.

On the night of the concession speech, first by the vice president and

then the acknowledgement of victory by George W. Bush, stay with me for a moment, this has a purpose, at 9:00 the vice president comes on with his concession speech, at 10:00 George Bush is scheduled to come on. NBC had a heavily promoted "West Wing" that was scheduled to come on that night at 9:00, they didn't want to burn it off so to speak by collapsing it or moving it through the schedule, so they said to the news division at 4:00 in the afternoon, you've got to fill 90 minutes beginning at 9:00 tonight, it will begin with the vice president's speech and then you've got to go from there for 90 minutes.

And a scramble was unleashed at that point about who we were going to get on the air, what we were going to talk about, and I said at 5:40, to the president of the news division, you cannot hold me responsible for the ratings tonight between 9:00 and 10:30, we're going to get this done, and it's going to be interesting I think. But I don't want to hear from you tomorrow about how we tanked in the ratings overnight because this is a real suicide mission, I'm going off the high board here into an empty pool, I'm competing against entertainment on the other two networks, I'm glad to be able to do this, but I do not want to hear again from you about ratings tomorrow. And he said, fair enough.

I don't have an easy answer, in fact, I came here in part because I thought you would have answers.

And at the end of 90 minutes we walked down the hall together and we were both laughing and shaking hands and saying well that was the best that we could do under the circumstances. The ratings were exceptionally good, it turns out, the next day, because there was this kind of carry forward from the post election period, people were genuinely interested in what was going on, and there was that kind of national dialogue that was a regular occurrence in America where you put something on television and people got engaged in it and stayed with it, and talked about it the next day and talked about it that evening. Then very quickly there was a dwindling, if you will, of that.

It is a dilemma about how we deal with young people while we try to maintain the place of the evening news knowing what the demographics are, and knowing that this audience is growing out there, and as one dies off how do we fill in the other one. I don't have an easy answer to that. A lot of it is going to be on cable I think, and I think as cable penetrates more, that there will be more niches for that kind of thing, that there will be broadcasts that are designed primarily for different kinds of audiences than there are now.

And one of the things that has happened, I made a fleeting reference last night to listening to Don Imus in the morning. Don Imus does a hell of a good job. I mean there is really more political dialogue that goes on in

that morning talk show sometimes than people give him credit for. They think he's just a radio talk jock of some kind, but he gets real people on, he talks about them in real ways that are engaging.

And one of the things I think that we have to learn is how you do get people engaged in the process rather than the old ritual of, I talk for fifteen seconds and a reporter goes on for two minutes. So we are examining all of those things without sliding all the way across and bringing out Jon Stewart to do a monologue at the end of the "NBC Nightly News." The Internet will have a lot to do with that, frankly, about how we find that intersection between the two of them. I don't have an easy answer, in fact, I came here in part because I thought you would have answers.

(Laughter)

Mr. Oreskes: Luckily you're leaving early, right.

(Laughter)

Mr. Oreskes: I wanted to ask both Tom Brokaw and Professor Putnam a question. As a representative of one of the great niche publications in America, I find it both problematic and worrisome what I think is developing and what I think you're completely right about, Tom, and we're all sort of gravitating towards it because we can't figure out another answer. But the more we develop this sense of niches, the more we're cooperating in the fracturing of our audience.

Mr. Brokaw: Right.

Mr. Oreskes: —which is a business problem for us and a terrible social problem I think for the country. But I didn't come here with an answer either, I just wondered what each of you thought about that.

Mr. Brokaw: One of the reasons, and Marvin and I have had some differences along the way about the determination that I have and the manner in which I'm going about it, to preserve the place of the network evening news broadcast against the business reality and also the audience diffusion reality that we're dealing with. I feel very strongly as I have for a long time as a journalist and as a citizen that there ought to be one place in America on a nightly or a daily basis, in which the people in Spokane and the people in Sarasota and the people all across the country have a common source of information. It doesn't mean that there ought to be just one, I believe that there should be a real menu of choices for them, but there ought to be an organized broadcast that is wide ranging of general interest.

One of the things, Michael, that your newspaper has allowed me to do recently is that people will say to me, why can't you be more like the *New York Times* and I say, well we thought about adding a "Dining In and Dining Out" section but we didn't think that would work on television.

Mr. Oreskes: I'm sure you and Johnny would do wonderfully.

(Laughter)

Mr. Jones: I want to ask Tom Brokaw a question and change the focus slightly. I know that you personally are not responsible for everything that

happens at NBC News, but you are probably, certainly because of your status as an icon in a way, you are the visible face, you have the title of managing editor of the nightly news. I wonder where you see yourself after this career that you've had. What do you see as your responsibility, personally; and the role that you want to play in trying to solve these value questions that are really at the heart? There's no way that you're going to simply flip a switch and solve all these problems, I understand that. But it's also true that there is going to be a job for Tom Brokaw and I wonder what you perceive that job exactly to be.

Mr. Brokaw: I appreciate the phrase icon, it would get me laughed out of my own household however, were I to invoke it in some way.

I find myself in a surprising and slightly uncomfortable position of being, I think, the senior member of the NBC News team at this point, at the age of 61. For a long time I was kind of the youngest senior member and now I'm the oldest senior member. Metaphorically the way I see myself as keeping two hands on the tiller, there are other hands on it as well, but we're sailing through these stormy seas and I'm making sure that I have an influence in the direction that we're taking and making sure that we don't capsize if we go on one route or another.

I am a kind of a catalyst for discussion, in part because I bring to my role a certain amount of history and I bring daily news discussions within nightly news or for that matter with my friends who are producers and other broadcasters—not just that history but also a discussion of our place, and what is the expectation of our audience. Sometimes I like to think that I provide them with a certain amount of courage, I'm here with you, we can get through this together, you know, let's make a small stand here and see if this doesn't work out.

The people at NBC News, all of them, from Andy Lack down, are all extraordinarily well-intentioned. They want to survive, and do the right thing. But there are enormous pressures on them, economic and journalistic, and time pressures of all kinds. My own role is that kind of gadfly around the news. Certainly I have a much stronger voice within the Nightly News, and one of the things that I've been doing is moving as much as I can both on MSNBC.com and on the network, to longer-form treatment of serious subjects.

Katrina knows that we've got a couple of projects underway on the cyber technology world. A year ago at this time we had a successful MSNBC broadcast on a Sunday night called the "Silicon Valley Summit." We're doing it again on March 11th. That world has changed enormously in the last year and we're going to take a couple of hours on a Sunday night on MSNBC and look not just at the collapse of the dot-coms but where this new intersection is going to take us, where it's going to lead us.

And we've got some other broadcasts that are planned for later in the summer that I don't want to talk about. And we're now finding that if we do in our prime time programming more one hour broadcasts on subjects

of serious import to society and to the political arena that we can get an audience. We can get what historically would not have been a great audience but now it is a fully competitive audience. I've got two or three of those projects on the books now.

I kind of see that as my role, I want to do more of that kind of thing. The one that you referred to last night "Why Can't We Live Together?" that grew out of my interest in race generally. I was working with a producer and I just said to him simply, you know the simple question is why can't we live together in these suburbs or in America, and we went out to Chicago and found the appropriate suburb and it was a broadcast that is still resonating across the country. It is shown in communities, in universities and different places. It won a lot of journalistic awards for which I was proud, but it did mostly what I wanted it to do, which was it generated a dialogue, it put the subject on the table, got people to think about it, and to speak openly about it.

So that's what I see as my role, but my role also at some point in the not too distant future is to step aside, frankly. You know, a new generation will take over. And I would hope that those who have worked with me along the way will have been influenced by my standards and my values and they will carry them on.

Mr. Jones: When you think, to use your metaphor, of the hands on the tiller image in the boat, do you think of yourself as having your hands on the tiller of a boat that is in charge of itself and is going through the water, or that it is being propelled in stormy seas and with corporate winds, and all kinds of other things, that having your hands on the tiller really doesn't, can't really affect much?

Mr. Brokaw: I don't want to torture this metaphor any more than we have. I'm not a great sailor. I do some mountain climbing, and I do some ice climbing and we have this phrase that we call objective realities, things that you can't do anything about, avalanches, rock slides, pitons not holding, you know, having someone dumb on the rope like me. And the objective reality of having your hand on the tiller is that the fact is that you are buffeted by these winds of change, Alex, and we're trying the best that we can to steer the boat in the direction that we want to take it. But what we have to learn is how to tack through these winds and how to use them to our advantage so that they don't destroy us or we're not overwhelmed by them.

I'm making this up as I go along, obviously, but that's what I mean by that. I'm not the only hand on the tiller, there are 3 or 4 hands on the tiller and we're in constant consultation about what our direction is, what our destination is, what our mission is here, so there is more of a dialogue going on than I think a lot of people may realize. And there are also day to day hard economic realities, we're going through them right now, all the networks are, the network business stopped, in fact some time in mid September, the sails just fell off the cliff.

Well that budget is reflected, and so one of the reasons that we're grateful for having a corporate parent with deep pockets even though it causes other dilemmas is that we're going to get through it. Frankly, the cuts are not going to be Draconian.

And having said all of that, I've got to go get on an airplane.

From the Floor: What do you think about the tremendous performance of Time Warner. What's it going to do to the media, to journalism?

Mr. Brokaw: I think we'll wait to find out, I think that those are very smart people at AOL who have moved into Time Warner and I think you're already seeing some changes at CNN that's driven partly by the economics of the moment.

But also, I think that there will be a change, I think that they understand the great value that they have in CNN. I happen to know Bob Pittman quite well personally and he's very imaginative, and he's concentrating on the bigger business issues of trying to get the merger accomplished. My own guess is that that will become a real colossus for us to have to deal with at some point, because they've got all the elements under one roof now, and they'll be able to attract very good people.

From the Floor: We will get the same virtuous journalism with the same independence from the people—

Mr. Brokaw: It's hard to know yet. I don't think that they're going to give up on journalism, it doesn't mean that CNN is about to become a Time Warner marquee or billboard of some kind for just their music acts and so on. But I do think with AOL and CNN joining forces, CNN has another relationship at the moment, but that could be a powerful force. And they're like all of us around this table, they're trying to figure out how this is all going to have a positive effect on what their long term business plans are.

I want to leave before the Mayor asks me a question, we've been through this.

Mr. Jones: Instead of presenting you with this magnificent plaque, I'm going to take one more question here.

Mr. Bowie: Thank you very much. I should warn you I'm a former public interest communications lawyer, my name is Nolan Bowie, I'm a senior fellow here.

I heard you say that we produce a product. When you were talking about the news, you didn't say a service or a public service, and you later said that you were seeking a fully competitive audience, and I assume that's as a goal. I'm concerned about the public interest remaining and whether or not broadcasters consider themselves public trustees and whether they consider that they are still entitled to government subsidies and a free broadcast license without being taxed for the value of the spectrums that they use.

Right now, current public policy has a deadline set for 2006 in which there will be a transition from analogue to digital television. So you can go from a nation with 1600 channels to 9600 channels which implies lots of

competition, many stations probably will use these additional channels for revenue stream.

In light of that, should TV broadcasters have a public interest obligation? Since 1983 there have been no obligations for TV stations to do any news or informational programming, and since '87 there's been no fairness doctrine so no issue access, is the public better served?

Mr. Brokaw: Obviously I think that they should have a public service obligation. You know I came into the business at the time when it was mandated. There's been less of a mandate, obviously. It's not been as a conspicuous charge if you will from the FCC and other regulatory agencies, in part because the market has changed so enormously, the penetration of cable and the presence of cable had a lot to do with that. But I do think that 2006 is something that does require kind of a flag waving on the horizon, people saying you better pay attention to this, the stakes are huge here.

I think all of these spectrum auctions have been undercovered by everybody for that matter. No one has paid very much attention to them, including the print and financial press. And that is something that people do need to pay more attention to because it does affect them more directly than almost anything else I can imagine, is who ends up with it, and for how little money. I mean that could become the colossal Fleecing of America frankly.

And it's stunning to me that the political powers have been so quiescent on it, it may have something to do with campaign finance contributions.

Mr. Jones: Tom Brokaw, thank you very much for being with us.

(Applause)

Mr. Jones: We're going to continue the conversation. Mike Oreskes, is the *New York Times* going to go into the television business in a way that's comparable to something that NBC News might have done 10, 20 years ago?

Mr. Oreskes: You have to tell me what they might have done 10, 20 years ago.

Mr. Jones: Well what I mean is, we think of broadcast network news of 20 years ago as being something that is more in the frame of traditional news services. Not one that is oriented toward magazine shows, not one that's chat, not one that's aimed at filling air time with MSNBC kinds of programming, but is going to be in the traditional mode of at least of the "A" section of the *New York Times*. Can you give us some sense of how this news organization, which has no real history in television, is approaching this issue of broadcast news?

Mr. Oreskes: Yeah, let me answer in two parts. The first part is the honest answer is that I don't know until I've had a chance to really talk to Rick and Marvin and to a lot of other smart people and think through what is realistic, what is available. As a practical matter, I don't have an answer for you, and I'm specifically taking my time before I do. However, having said that, I think part of the answer is very definitely yes in the following way

which may also a little bit address the question from over here just a minute ago.

I believe very strongly that at least for an institution like ours the value we're going to have in this future world of 9600 digital channels, and infinite numbers of Web channels is the credibility and value of our name, that that is what we will have of value. It's sure as hell not going to be our trucks, and our printing presses and all of the old equipment. I believe that the printed paper is going to last for a good long time, more than the 10 years that Tom has given himself.

Over the next few years, increasingly, the audience is going to spread itself out across a bunch of different venues; I've been trying to avoid the word platforms, and we're going to have to find ways to reach people through different medium. If in the course of doing that, we do things that degrade our own credibility, we will have made a terrible, terrible journalistic and business blunder.

So the philosophic answer to your question is that whatever we choose to do, this is just my view of where the *New York Times* needs to be. I don't know what other people's dynamics are going to be, or how that will affect them, although I tend to believe that there is actually going to be this kind of upward pressure on at least some people to establish firm standards and high credibility because it's the only thing they're going to have to offer in the end in a world where news is a commodity and you get the broad information yourself anywhere you want, you've got to offer something special or something better.

So there will be this kind of fracturing between real entertainment, which is entertainment and that's great, and quality journalism, which I think will have a real value in the future and which people, I hope a lot of people, but maybe not so many people, will gravitate back to.

Now how that translates into the specific things you do on the Internet, on television, in print, I don't know the answer to that, but I think whatever they are they have to both be seen as and be responsible, credible, of high quality and high standards. And whether that literally means back to the future to doing what the gold standard of broadcast journalism did in the Cronkite era and in the Murrow era, and the Kalb era—it makes him nervous when I say it that way. I can't answer that yet, I imagine it won't be identical, I imagine it will be different in some ways.

As Tom hinted, there are certain things about the newspaper itself that are different from what they were 20 years ago, I would never go back to republishing the newspaper of 20 years ago. And clearly the public interest is different than it was before, and you know journalists don't live in a world that doesn't pay any attention to the interests that people have. And if the world today has a lot less interest in old fashioned foreign policy, because there isn't as much of a threat in the world as there used to be in the days when Marvin covered the Russians and the Americans and we had the ability to eliminate each other in 3 minutes. But they're interested in

other things like health or leisure time.

I mean it's okay for journalists to work on topics other than the ones they used to work on, that's not what's corrupting journalism. What corrupts journalism is lowering the standards or adopting techniques of entertainment that degrade the quality of what you do.

So that's a long way around saying I think the heart of what we're going to do I hope will be consistent with the best standards of journalism in any medium but what the actual form of it will be I couldn't begin to guess yet.

Mr. Kaplan: I'm Rick Kaplan, I work for Alex at the Shorenstein Center and I've been involved in television news for about 33 years. I worked at CBS, ABC and CNN. Got my training at CBS in its finest years.

I think we need to put a little reality to what Tom talked about. He talked about the economic travails of the networks because the business came to a halt in September. NBC News will make well over $200 million this year. CNN with a .3 daily rating, his evening news is doing about an 8.0, with a .3 rating CNN will net well over $350 million. Those are the businesses that are in trouble, so both of those companies cut ten percent of their staff. And they cut ten percent of their staffs because they had to make good on promises that their CEOs made to Wall Street. Because the punishment that Wall Street metes out, if you don't make your quarterly numbers, is that they will take your market cap down to the point where you will lose so much value in your stock, because they'll punish you for 5 points, 10 points, who knows what. Take a look at what's happened to some stocks. Your circulation nationwide is?

What corrupts journalism is lowering the standards or adopting techniques of entertainment that degrade the quality of what you do.

Mr. Oreskes: A bit over a million a day.

Mr. Kaplan: A bit over a million a day. If just the people who bought the *New York Times*, forget about every other paper and all the rest, if those people tuned in to CNN, CNN's profit would almost, it would certainly more than double.

When we start talking about what's happened to news audiences and I hear the most frustrating comments that one could possibly imagine, and I hear about the audiences dying off, and it's an albatross, or it's a dying buffalo or whatever the hell it is, what's very frustrating to me is that people are not paying attention to the fact that what evening newscasts have done is they've chased away their audiences, it's how you read the research. You can read the research and say, well the reality is people don't give a damn, and it's a disconnected generation and all the rest. Or maybe it's an educated generation and they look at the evening news and they

say you know this is a God damned waste of my time, that when you, 7 or 8 minutes into the show, say "Now in our 'Eye On America' program," I mean how about the news? How about the news? You can make a fortune in news, a fortune, a .3 rating is worth more money than some news divisions spend right now.

. . . evening newscasts have . . . chased away their audiences, . . You can read the research and say, well the reality is people don't give a damn, and it's a disconnected generation and all the rest. Or maybe it's an educated generation and they look at the evening news and they say you know this is a God damned waste of my time, . . .

And if they just got the *New York Times* audience, one newspaper's audience, they'd make $700 or $800 million, it would be an incredible business. Of course if they didn't go up 20 percent in their net profit next year, they wouldn't make budget based on promises made to Wall Street.

And I think there has to be a reality to this. This is a terrific business and one of the problems that needs to be addressed is maybe the audience has gone away, you might say because it's real easy to describe the problem facing you when all those Soviet missiles are pointed at you. Well, we still have Russian missiles pointed, God knows where, and they're just as dangerous now as they were, maybe more dangerous now then they were 20 years ago. I'll leave that for Marvin to explain.

But maybe the problem has been that evening newscasts in particular, because I'm not talking about what the entire product ought to be in the course of a day, and I'm not discussing the magazine shows in this breath either, but maybe the problem is that news has not defined for people what's going on. It's so easy to tell you when someone is pointing a gun at you, it's a lot less easy to tell you when we're searching for a cancer cure or trying to discuss stem cell therapy or determining how big a tax cut we should or shouldn't get, or is there really a budget surplus? Those are drier subjects, but far more important.

And I would just make one other point and then I'll stop. There was no coverage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 to speak of on the networks for good reason, because the big businesses that rule those networks don't want to have any coverage of the Telecommunications Act. And the point that you were alluding to is if when they have given away digital platforms to the networks and as time goes by, he won't be doing any specials, I promise you, you won't see any specials on MSNBC or NBC, the networks are not going to cover this because it's not in their corporate interest to cover it, which says something about a concern that people have.

When you don't have a company like the *New York Times* where the family that runs it cares about the news, when you have a company that's beholden to stockholders only and it's not that stockholders are bad people, we're probably all stockholders, and I really want the stocks to go up, I wish a few of mine did. But the goal of a stockholder is that his stock should go up, well the stock isn't going to go up necessarily you know, I mean there's pressures that companies are acutely aware of. And I just don't think you're going to see coverage of the subjects that will matter regarding television and broadcasting platforms that the subject deserves.

There was no coverage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 to speak of on the networks for good reason, because the big businesses that rule those networks don't want to have any coverage of the Telecommunications Act.

Mr. Oreskes: I just wanted to point something out to everybody for those who didn't see it, and it fits right into Rick's broadest point. Don Graham, if I may say a word for a competitor, Don Graham, the chairman of the Washington Post Company, gave a little talk a few weeks ago, an extremely important talk that frankly didn't get a whole lot of attention, I found it somewhere on our business page, to the Wall Street analysts of the communications industry.

And of course the Washington Post Company is a big company with a lot of different interests including television interests, and magazine interests, and newspaper interests. And he basically said a very simple thing which is I can't be bound by the quarterly bounces of the stock, that I've got to think more long term and you've got to live with it. And it was almost that blunt, I mean I may be taking a little bit of a liberty but it was pretty straightforward, and it was a remarkably important thing for a guy at that level of a communications company to be saying to Wall Street analysts.

. . . somebody needs to be able to be the insulation between the bouncing of the stock price and the quality of the work.

And I think Rick is putting his finger on one of the very important pressures that is affecting all of this and that I think is becoming a bigger and bigger pressure the more these businesses converge, to use another word I was hoping to avoid, they're increasingly becoming responsive to that pressure and somebody needs to be able to be the insulation between the bouncing of the stock price and the quality of the work.

Mr. Kaplan: Just one quick thing. If the evening newscast maybe reflected more the traditional news values that evening newscasts used to stand for before, with today's technology and the ability to do it more interestingly and more completely and more deeply and the rest, you might not see the kind of fragmentation that you see going on right now.

Mr. Jones: Marvin, I want to get to you in just a moment. But before that I want to ask John Riedy to respond. John Riedy is someone who essentially has lived from the Wall Street side of this equation for many, many years, and I'd like to get your response to this.

Mr. Riedy: Okay. John Riedy, I'm with Solomon, Smith, Barney at the moment.

The comments about stock markets I think are extremely valid, but I think everyone here probably recognized that over the last few years the stock market has turned into really one great big Las Vegas casino. Because with valuation parameters being thrown out, just how can you explain a stock, like a local company CMGI going from a $150 or $200 down to $3 or $4. A lot of young portfolio managers see momentum, everybody jumps on, things go up, everybody jumps off, the things go down. Very little evaluation. I mean we have gotten so far away from the Don Grahams, even with Warren Buffet still around there, and trying to make his points.

But I think hopefully this period will be somewhat temporary and that we are gradually moving back to a more realistic type of valuation. I think what Mike said could also obviously be applied to the Sulzberger family, to the people who say, look if you want to ride quarterly earnings, don't ride my company, because it really isn't the way you want to invest.

Now that being said, with all these portfolio managers who are running pension funds for your companies, your pension fund manager looks at you—I want to see what you did last quarter, so and if you did badly we're going to move the money from Fleet to Fidelity or Fidelity to Provident or whatever. So we've all become participants in this game of focusing on very short term, not very meaningful results. And I truly think valuations just went bananas, and we're paying the penalty for it now. Of course no one shouted very loudly, other than people like Rubin and Greenspan, but for the most part everybody enjoyed the ride, and when you hit a few bumps, it's pretty painful.

But I do think we're going to see more realistic valuation methodologies return on Wall Street. These dot-coms were preposterous. We went through 10 or 15 different iterations of how to value them to justify the price every time something went up 20, 30, 40, 50 percent, and it sure was hard for the *Times* or the *Post* to take 2 companies that really are run for the sake of, there is a mission statement there.

I'll also make one comment, think of the difference between CBS under Dr. Stanton and Bill Paley and the gentleman down the road here, Mr. Ansin, who is basically interested in a buck. And look at what's happened to the amount of news, look particularly on the radio. Look at Mr. Eisner

now having taken over an icon way back, Capital City Broadcasting, ABC, there you really have quite a contrast, Eisner and Redstone on one side controlling big media companies, and the *Times* and the *Post*. And we sort of have AOL Time Warner right in the middle, I don't know quite where it is going to go, but I would suspect it's going to cut a fairly good middle of the road path. Steve Case has a very long view of the world, and Gerald Levin has high journalistic standards because he came out of the publishing side.

One point on cable though, Rick, which everybody may not be familiar with, the reason CNN makes so much more money than NBC News is that peculiarity, you all know you pay a monthly cable fee, and part of those monthly cable fees go to the cable networks. And let me tell you if the broadcasters could get both advertising and subscriber fees, NBC News would be multiples of what CNN's is. If even a newspaper like the *Times* or the *Post* could get subscription fees that were not 20 percent of the total, but were 50 percent of the total, so they were up much higher, your advertising pay is 80 percent of your newspaper's revenue typically. So CNN does have a unique advantage and all the other cable networks. You can't totally equate them and say that NBC is doing the wrong thing, they're stuck with the structure of free over the air broadcasting.

Mr. Kaplan: They do 25 hours, not counting the overnight of broadcasting a week out of 168 hours, CNN has to do 168 hours to make it. They do 25 hours of broadcasting and they make well over $200 million a year, just NBC News.

I remember there was a time when William Paley used to brag about the fact that he lost 2 or 3 million dollars and it showed his commitment to public service that he was willing to invest 2 or 3 million dollars in news, proved that he cared about news, proved that he cared about public service. Now, gee we're only making $200 million and we might not go up to $240 million next year, we better cut the staff, okay.

. . . some of the dumbest people in the world who I've ever met are running some of the cable entities, . . .

The $500 million, it's true CNN takes in $500 million in fees that people pay to get it, and they get 24 hours of news that has to be live even when there's no news. But these are businesses. On Wall Street you take all the companies, how many of them have the U.S. Government out protecting them? How many of them are shielded with licensing and other federal protections so that they're guaranteed almost that they make this money? At this point, some of the dumbest people in the world who I've ever met are running some of the cable entities, you know it's quite amazing, it's just a license to print it, and oh well.

Mr. Jones: Marvin, you had a comment.

Mr. Kalb: Yes, I think that we have heard some deeply thoughtful comments around the table today. And I thought Tom Brokaw's speech last night was excellent. My sense however, and I'm sorry that Tom had to leave, but he's a busy guy. My thought however is that we are left with an image of journalism as being a helpless cork on an ocean driven by the new technology and driven by powerful economic forces over which no one has any control.

. . . we are left with an image of journalism as being a helpless cork on an ocean driven by the new technology and driven by powerful economic forces over which no one has any control.

Tom spoke earlier today about his concern, he had to make a call to the president of NBC News saying that in the height of an election frenzy, if we have to put on a broadcast from 9:00 to 10:30 in the evening, I have to apologize in advance that I may not produce the right numbers for you, the ratings may dip. And his profound satisfaction that when he did do an hour and a half of network programming, sparked by the largest political event of the year, and he found that there was a good audience for it, his profound sense of satisfaction and he and the president of NBC News walk off into the horizon happy people.

And the part of this that is ignored time and time again is that journalism, like business, is composed of people who make decisions on an hourly, in broadcast journalism, on a minute to minute basis. So where are, as we define today's journalism, where are those few good men, forgive me Nancy, those few good men who will say no, who will raise a question on election night and say do we have accurate information? They knew, the network people knew at 2:16 in the morning on Wednesday that they had been fed lousy information up to that point, they knew it by then, very well.

Why did they leap the minute Fox made its call for Bush? They leaped because there was competitive pressure, they were driven to move, but individuals make the call. And where is that sense of self-satisfaction derived from nothing more than the feeling that I'm doing the right thing? That too is important in journalism.

Mr. Jones: Marvin, I have to say that I think what you said has a very powerful resonance. The thing that struck me about what happened on election night was not that people made mistakes, people can make mistakes, the Voter News Service screwed up. But what was really in stark relief was what I would call the decay of the news culture at the networks. I think what you should keep in mind is this, there are several parties that make up the Voter News Service, the networks and the Associated Press. Late that night when Fox called the election for Bush and the other networks followed suit, the Associated Press, which has a very different kind

of news culture, did not make that call. I don't think a lot of people really know that, or really sort of grasped the importance of the fact that the Associated Press declined to join that parade.

So I think that what was on display was something that is profound and is a matter of as much as anything else of leadership. One of the reasons I asked Tom Brokaw about how he perceived his own role, is that if anybody has any power, in a symbolic sense especially, it's the anchors of the various news operations, and it's a difficult situation he's in. I don't want to minimize that.

Mr. Kalb: Alex, every single anchor has come up here and in many other places, many other forums, and said, boy, I would love to have an evening of prime time, one hour news programming, and I want Rick Kaplan to be the executive producer. That kind of hope and desire have been expressed a thousand times.

At what point is it possible for the anchors either individually or together to begin to raise a public fuss about that? I mean if they feel that strongly about the issue, each one is being paid an immense amount of money, each one has enormous power at his network, why don't they stand up and say this is what I really want, I'm the most important guy here, I want this, produce it for me. Now the answer is going to come very fast: well economically, one thing or another; not good enough, I'm your anchor and this is what I want. What would happen then?

Mr. Kaplan: They'd all be fired, and they probably should—

(Laughter)

Mr. Kalb: They'd all be fired?

Mr. Kaplan: They'd all be fired.

Mr. Kalb: So it would never happen?

Mr. Kaplan: It won't happen. It will never happen because the economic realities are that at 10:00 P.M. the local stations need an extraordinary lead-in because they make most of their money from their 11:00 P.M. news, so they want "Survivor" leading into them with a thirty share, they don't want Tom Brokaw's news leading into them. He might be in first place if all three networks were competitive at 10:00.

Mr. Kalb: Mike, what would be the story in the *New York Times* if all three network anchors were fired, front page?

Mr. Oreskes: If all three anchors were fired.

Mr. Kaplan: They're never going to do this, the three guys aren't going to do this.

Mr. Kalb: No, but you followed up and said they'd be fired.

Mr. Kaplan: Well they ought to be committed if they did that.

(Laughter)

Mr. Kaplan: You know, I'll tell you that on election night it is not at 2:30 in the morning that they knew they had bad numbers, they knew they had bad numbers at 10:30. The idea that nobody running any of the programs understood that because of the closeness of the race it was an automatic

recount and you should just shut up for that reason alone is like kind of—?

Ms. Heron: Can I also interject, that people who are online did know and that's something that's really not being discussed here. I don't really buy the argument that the audience has gone away or dwindled or whatever it is.

I think that Rick really is right that what's happened is the audience has turned off, and they're going other places. And they're going to other places in a very fragmentary and very haphazard environment where the gatekeepers and the great brands haven't yet emerged. But they're going somewhere, they want the information. And if you look at Internet usage, you know particularly that night, but obviously all through that entire period, it was huge. The hits to these sites were phenomenal. And that was because people were totally engaged but they looked at the network newscasts and thought I'm not getting the straight dope here, right.

Mr. Jones: Tom Patterson, the Bradlee Professor at the Shorenstein Center, has done some research on this exact thing.

Tom, very briefly could you give us your opinion about this issue of audience?

Mr. Patterson: Well I think the audience is slipping, I do think there is audience attrition. Some of it is escaping into alternative places and therefore, when you look at the audience numbers for the networks you get a misleading impression about how steep the decline is. But when you look at, and I think the best data on this is the Pew data, when you look at news consumption, and people saying whether they watched television news yesterday, read a newspaper yesterday, those numbers are down and they're down significantly.

Mr. Putnam: Even including the Internet.

Mr. Patterson: Right. So there is audience loss, and I think that long term perspective that has come up is an important piece of this. Thinking long term is not only important for journalism, it is important for audience retention. You know news is an acquired taste, it's kind of like coffee or beer. I could parachute through the air I think and land in a theater in a Jim Carrey movie and laugh; I couldn't do that I think if I was watching the evening news.

You've got to build essentially a taste for news and an interest in news. And I think you do that best by doing news, and not something that is kind of news with a hefty dose of entertainment. I think that works in the short term, because you do pull some people in who might not otherwise pay attention to news when you lace it with entertainment.

So the short term audience strategy of soft news happens to work, but what happens I think in the long run is you diminish taste for news. And when that's lost, it's very hard to get those people back. Or when it's not acquired it's very difficult to think that you're somehow going to inspire people at the age of 35 to gain some interest in news if they haven't had a news interest earlier.

And when you look at the numbers with young people and you look at what their home environments are like. There's very little discussion of politics, there's very little exposure to news. I'm talking about when they're young, so that they don't essentially acquire that taste that I'm talking about, you're not going to capture them.

So you know I think there's a real audience problem here which then becomes a collective problem, how we pull society together not only on a daily basis but even around these large moments that help define our democracy. I think the larger problem is the daily problem but also those key moments are part of the problem. I think when NBC essentially pulls the plug on its convention coverage and makes a decision to play baseball rather than to cover the debates, those are kind of special moments. And unless we take advantage of those moments, we miss an opportunity.

. . . you've got to build essentially a taste for news and an interest in news. And I think you do that best by doing news, and not something that is kind of news with a hefty dose of entertainment.

But in the longer term I do think that staying with news, and that doesn't mean that you do just dry news—Tom in his speech last night made reference to I think it's Channel 4 in Chicago and that failed experiment. Well it failed because there were no production values. It doesn't mean that you forsake production values. You also have to have a deep quotient of news if you're going to build an audience in the long run, and it gets very hard with the dynamics that Rick is talking about.

Mr. Jones: Bob Putnam, you have a comment.

Mr. Putnam: Well I wanted to say, Tom and I are doing entirely independent streams of research here, but I utterly agree with him. That's the way the evidence is, and it does seem to me that there is a matter of corporate structure to be concerned about what the state of civic education in America is. That's what is driving this problem, and therefore this is not a matter of should we have a "Eye on the Nation" in tonight's broadcast or not, it's a matter of a longer term concern about what's going on in American schools for example. And we know things that would work.

Mr. Jones: What would work?

Mr. Putnam: Well we know for example that we've dropped civics education in America. It used to be that all requirements for graduating were problems of democracy or some course that had kind of that title. I bet most people around here had a course like that in high school. That's been dropped from the requirements. We know that smaller is better in terms of people being involved. We know that extracurriculars worked. Taking part in extracurricular activities is a strong predictor of who is as an adult

engaged in community affairs, and we defunded extracurricular activities. I mean there are a whole string of things.

All I'm trying to say there is a coincidence here between the corporate interest of the news divisions and the public interest in getting people reengaged in civic life. I utterly agree that that's what is driving it, that it's the long run decline in interest in news.

. . . there is coincidence here between the corporate interest of the news divisions and the public interest in getting people reengaged in civic life.

Mr. Jones: Jeff Madrick.

Mr. Madrick: It's hard to follow Rick and Marvin, I wanted to commend them for introducing some reality here. I wanted to point out that I think we keep coming back to one theme in our discussions yesterday and today, long term financial motivations I do not think will return to the business world with the stock market crash. People were worrying about short term profit needs in the 1980s long before the run up in the 1990s, there was all kinds of literature on it.

There's a new ethic in America. When GE senses it's not going to make 20 percent profit out of NBC or anything else, when it senses it's only going to make 15 percent, it fires people. It's a new, much more callous environment, because we believe in the end, in the long run in fact, that kind of market ethic will work out.

Now, we think about journalism and we see the consequences of that. It's not going to change. And we keep coming back to the one principle: the journalistic outlets we tend to respect are the ones that are family driven, like the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* to some degree, the Dow Jones people, CNN, when Ted Turner was working it. It keeps coming back to the people who have the power to buck the economic interests. When we talk about new technologies, they are fascinating, but what they typically do at places like NBC is give the nightly news show an excuse to abdicate responsibility. They say MSNBC is doing it, C-SPAN is doing it, CNBC is doing it, so we don't really have to do it, we can do other things.

There's a new ethic in America. When GE senses it's not going to make 20 percent profit out of NBC . . . it fires people.

What we don't discuss at all anymore is the fact that civics is equal in some respects anyway to government, we're not talking about using government again. What maybe those three anchormen should do instead of quitting is get together and go to the FCC and say, make a rule that we have to do one half hour of public affairs programs that has nothing to do with profits,

and then maybe Rick will turn out to be right. Maybe that hard news will get an audience and it will become profitable, like Brokaw's show that night instead of "West Wing."

But to think that things are going to change easily or that a couple of well meaning people can change it, or even that technology can change it, or even education reform can change it, there is an inexorable economic process here, and until that's recognized and until we reintroduce government into the equation, which doesn't even come up any more, it's not going to change for the better, I don't think.

. . . journalistic outlets we tend to respect are the ones that are family driven, . . . it keeps coming back to the people who have the power to buck the economic interests.

Ms. Charren: Peggy Charren, the founder of Action for Children's Television.

Introducing government into the equation doesn't always work. I spent 30 years trying to get the FCC to say that your public interest obligation involves diversity for children's programming, in addition to diversity for adult programming, and I did it. I became the grandma of the Children's Television Act in 1990. And what did the industry do? It said every station has to provide at least three hours of programming specifically designed to educate children as part of that public interest obligation. And what did the industry do with that three hours a week, and what do they do? They did the same kind of idiot programming that they were doing, the same kind of animated stuff, and at the end they had Superman stop to eat an orange and said it was nutrition education.

(Laughter)

Ms. Charren: You really can't legislate quality. You have to have the person who's running the stuff, who is making the decisions, it is not the FCC.

Mr. Jones: John Gage, you haven't had much to say, how do you react to this?

Mr. Gage: Rick may disagree with this but his creed de coeur is precisely what Silicon Valley would say. It's what the engineers would say, it's what technical people would say. It's a waste of time. Why would I watch this 22½ minutes of pablum? Why bother? Over the years the technical community, the Internet community, in attempting to talk to the journalism community we try to point things out. I can hold in my hand a camera today that's better quality imaging than that camera, hold it in my hand. I can connect it to the Internet, you know the source of the imagery that will allow an empathetic story to be told, the cost of it now goes to zero.

Frank Stanton invested unbelievable amounts of money to get that story back so it could turn into something. Now from this room we can send

this trivially out, globally. So the technical community said, why don't you go to the biggest newsroom in the world, the National Center for Signals Intelligence takes in every phone call, it takes in every surface-to-air missile, it takes in every electronic signal globally, analyzes it, and in 8 minutes it has to be down to the national, to the Pentagon, the Center for Immediate Response.

There is a journalistic enterprise that takes every camera out there, ITN, anything subtitled, all subtitling in any television program feeds into full text databases searchable so I can look up 10 seconds after something passes by, whether in Sarajevo, and I'll get every mention in numerous languages, subtitled. I've got an indexing system the networks should eat their hearts out for. I think of the field tapes that molder, the history of this country that molders inside the storehouses of the national networks, they can be turned back into a variety of things.

The technical community looks at these lost opportunities and says, why isn't this journalism community that's attempting to tell us things, getting on with it?

The technical community looks at these lost opportunities and says, why isn't this journalism community that's attempting to tell us things, getting on with it? Joe Flaherty years ago said, we should attempt to use the capabilities that are trivially available. You can buy submeter satellite imagery. At this moment I can go to a Web page that shows how the President of Togo was illegally stripping the forest in the National Forest Preserve because I have a picture of 10 minutes ago that shows the last tree cut down in Togo.

Then you watch the debacle of the election news. On the Net there are things coming across, people are getting from Florida information from people that are local, CNN. You know that question last night, where's the left wing bias? Where is the right wing bias of the press? I couldn't believe the stories we were watching about what was coming in theory in real time from Florida, in reality lagging hours behind what was present.

So Rick goes straight to the heart of it, it's a waste of time to watch this stuff. And when I asked Tom Brokaw, you're well paid, you've now done your 22½ minutes, you ought to be on for the next hour; it turns out he's not going to do that. It turns out that it's perhaps going to be the White House correspondent who gets that or someone else that's in the field. But he has a perspective and he's the managing editor, and he's the person making decisions. He ought to be in his public responsibility, accessible in some other way than 22½ minutes of kicking into 10 packages.

When I asked him about the generation of the news gatherers, if we can bring the cost of news gathering to zero, the cost of thinking is the hard

cost. Marvin made this point exactly, this is a quality issue here that's fundamental. So where does the generation that has quality at the core, convey that to this new generation with these new tools of zero cost news gathering?

You know we're in confrontational terrain here, because I watched the Desert Storm coverage and contrasted it with Vietnam. In Vietnam people went in the field, in Desert Storm the entire world press corps went to the bar at the hotel, that was it.

. . . in Vietnam people went in the field, in Desert Storm the entire world press corps . . . went to the bar at the hotel, that was it.

From the Floor: The Pentagon didn't let them.

Mr. Gage: That's right. So the change in the rules the next round is if you put something up that sees where a platoon is going around the corner and you can, 30 countries have submeter imaging coming, something is going to take that satellite out because someone's troops are put at risk. So we're going to have a confrontation here.

There's another confrontation coming. Look at the Super Bowl, faces walking into the Super Bowl. I can identify your face biometrically with just a little camera on you, as good as a fingerprint. So walk into the Super Bowl, scanning for hooligans, everybody's face was imaged and ID'd. Now that's something new, it's cheap too.

So this new technology is something that's invading. Every person in this room with a cell phone, by law, you hit 911 and the cell phone companies must report to the police your location within 50 to 100 yards, that's something one could call chilling.

So this new technology is something that's invading, . . . you hit 911 and the cell phone companies must report to the police your location within 50 to a 100 yards, that's something one could call chilling.

So you add no-cost cameras, and submeter locational data, and we have a completely new world here, and it's changing the attitude of the technical community about the journalism community. Where are our voices of integrity that point out that there is a commonality in being an American that has certain values at the base? It is why I value Brokaw's book about the war generation so much, they're common values, we are now in the grip of massive changes, we need those voices to describe these things.

Mr. Dunham: Corey Dunham, a media counsel.

I'd like to go back to, if I may, something that Marvin said, and perhaps you could speak further to it. What happened election eve, I think as you

were pointing out Alex, does reflect a deterioration in the news culture. And we now have a picture where this happened and the networks spoke about it. They appeared before Congress, rightly or wrongly. And the picture is of this group saying, well we were fed bad information and it won't happen again, which is a startling position it seems to me for them to be in.

This institution is in the position to examine what is a much more profound problem in what happened. I don't think in the days, if I may say so, of Stanton and Salant and Goodman, and Reuven Frank, that would have happened. There would have been people who would say no, or we don't have the information. More important, going in, the media spokespeople and reporters would have been better informed, would have known that there might have been recounts. You just had the feeling that this was sort of a rip and read operation which the Internet now or the new wired world will encourage.

And if this institution is not able in some way to study it and perhaps comment on the value of the news culture as we've come to think of it in the past, and journalism standards, then in a way this institution isn't doing its part either. And I'd like to have Marvin speak to that.

Mr. Jones: Let me speak to it briefly if I may, and then I'll invite Marvin to speak, because I completely agree with you. It is our job and we're going to do it. In fact we have already launched what we call the "Election Day Project," which is going to be focusing on the broadcast networks and election day. And it's going to include a creation of a model for how a broadcast network news operation in the United States in the year 2004 should look, how it should operate, what its resources should be.

I agree with you that what happened on election night is far, far beyond the failure of the statisticians for the Voter News Service. And I think that the issues about broadcast news in general are enormous. What we really saw on election night was broadcast news as it actually is now, when it comes to covering a piece of traditional news that needs to be done in some traditional ways.

Marvin did you want to comment?

Mr. Kalb: I think Alex has really answered that. I applaud his decision to do this kind of research.

I had a question for John. John you spoke about cost-free cameras, which might have been a short hand phraseology to imply that the richness of the flow of information could one day become a substitute for journalism. What I'm getting at is that information is one thing, and the ordering of information is very important. You take a look at a daily newspaper, think about the enormous amounts of information that come in, and it comes to you every morning ordered. It's interesting, it's written, it's terrific.

But journalism is the function of ordering that information, of bringing some sense to it. And that is not cost free, that's very expensive, because the talent has to be paid, and you've got to have the editor. My concern is

not that there's a shortage of editors, in fact, there are more editors now than we've ever had, and as Tom suggested they're better paid, they're better educated they've ever been. It is that independent judgement that gets lost in the drama and competitive nature of the business today.

And Mike was talking I think very much to the point when he said that there are so many different sources of information and there appears to be less journalism, less news. That's a horror. And that's the price that we're all paying right now. The election night calamity is an almost inevitable result of these kind of large changes that have taken place without people along the way, important people, blowing the whistle and saying, this is wrong, we really shouldn't be doing this. The sense of value of the commodity is being diminished.

Mr. Gage: You're using the word editor, this is the most encouraging thing I've heard, that there are more of them. Now this is a distinction of Tom Brokaw's role. He's the editor but he's also the anchor. To me, his editor voice should have been saying that evening and he did say this a little bit, these numbers are wrong, this is bad. He needed somebody who is truly an editor sitting next to him saying that's wrong, we can't trust this, you've got to say this. There needs to be that voice, that conscience.

You were quite right, when I say the cameras are zero cost, simply means that the focus of much of the news gathering organization went oh my God how are we going to get the costs down? Imagine that goes to zero, that leaves the nub of the problem which is what does it mean? And what's the context?

There's someone in the room here, Peter Turnley, a photographer who is a Nieman Fellow here now. I could say that the technology costs nothing, but putting it in exactly the right place, and composing something that carries the story, that's a skill far beyond and there aren't a lot people that can do that sort of thing. So at that end of editorial we need to invest.

There's one twist that technology does which people may not appreciate. NBC shoots field tapes and they go into NBC and maybe under subpoena they come out, but they're hidden back there and somebody logs them incompletely and oh my God it's all lost forever. In this world, nothing goes away. I've taken *New York Times* reporter stories and identify the source, now since the *New York Times* is permanently accessible to me, I take the slug, the ID for that person, and I search back through 10 years of stories, and I unroll the rolodex of that reporter, and pop that source 5 years ago in a story, it turns out to be the same ideas of the person now identified.

So the rolodex, every story searchable allows me to begin to understand the true drama of the front page of the *New York Times*. The *Times* has some control over it, but why did Jane Perlez write about Powell's sanctions? There's a lot in this story, that Powell wants this story in, and there's a lot of play here, and only the players can fully read who put that story out and why the third graph had that particular quote, and who lay behind

that. That's the drama behind the news, which we now with these new tools, can unravel in sort of a different kind of backward engineering of journalism. So that's going to change everybody.

Mr. Jones: Ed Rendell.

Mr. Rendell: I'm Ed Rendell, the former Mayor of Philadelphia and former DNC Chairman. I don't know what I am presently, but I know what I was.

(Laughter)

Mr. Rendell: It seems to me Marvin is right about journalism not only ordering the news, but interpreting the news. I thought on election night there was some very good interpretation that went on. I think Tim Russert did a very good job as the evening wore on, telling people which states Gore had to carry, if he had any chance to win as the evening wore on, which states Bush had to carry. I thought the whiteboard was almost a wonderful throwback.

But I was amazed how the networks weren't geared up to interpret and they sort of abdicated their responsibility to this news service. We were sitting in a little room somewhere in Nashville, myself and Peter Deutsch, who is a congressman from South Florida, and we had a computer which showed us the running count of each county, and how many votes were outstanding in Florida. Now, I wouldn't have known what those votes meant, I would have known them in Pennsylvania but not in Florida. Peter Deutsch told me at 2:10 what votes were out, and how many we were trailing by and I knew that it wasn't over. There was no way it should have been called if you knew where the votes were still outstanding, which counties they were outstanding from, and what the margin was. It was clear that the election shouldn't have been called at that point.

But nobody was doing the interpretation. I think the networks sort of abdicated, and you're saying well it was easy Mary, you just happened to have a South Florida congressman there. But you could set up a program which told you exactly what the prior voting histories of each of those counties were, and you could have assumed that they would have somewhat tracked their prior voting histories in presidential elections, and you would have known that the majority of votes that were outstanding were from Democratic counties, and the lead was not anywhere close to sufficient to call. But everybody contracts out to Voter News Service and nobody wants to work very hard to interpret the news. That's what it seems to me.

. . . everybody contracts out to Voter News Service and nobody wants to work very hard to interpret the news.

Mr. Jones: Interesting.

Mr. Kaplan: Let's understand that the Voter News Service is the net-

works, it's not some other company. And we also ought to understand that Voter News Service is working with models that were outmoded and obviously didn't realize it. Because of whatever budget constraints, or revenue constraints or the rest, it had the wrong technology. They knew they had bad numbers in the system at a couple of times in the evening, and they literally couldn't get them out of the system.

So the numbers that they were looking at were wrong. So when they would sit and look at a number and they'd say oh, well the guy has to carry 72 percent of the votes, and he certainly can't do that. Well that's wrong, they were off by 300,000 outstanding votes, there's a problem in the VNS system. So, and before you sink VNS, I mean I've always felt that where I wanted to spend money would be in the judgement side and the journalistic side of it.

If we're just talking about news gathering we go to what John was talking about. If we're talking about gathering numbers, you know professional football, this is not a tortured metaphor, it's a reality. Professional football has a combine, I think 16, 18 teams all sign up for it and they figure you know we don't need 16 guys holding a stopwatch and somebody running 40 yards, and so they publish a set of numbers and then the teams make up their own mind about who they want to draft and all the rest. I think that the networks ought to be chastised roundly, A, because they didn't appear to know that there were polls open in Florida, which I find a research problem of immense proportions that when they don't know how many polls are closed or open in a state, I think that my—

Mr. Jones: They didn't even know that there were two time zones there.

Mr. Kaplan: Well that's my point, and that's not the only state with two time zones. I've been working every election except for this one. I worked every election since '72, and when you've got bad numbers from a state that was it. It's kind of like the witness lied, we don't trust anything the witness says now. You start getting bad numbers out of the state, that's it, at that point count the votes, because we don't trust the numbers any more.

I think VNS has a terrific future. I don't think every network ought to go out and count the votes on their own, because for one thing, exit polling being what it is, and the number of absentee ballots which Tom is exactly right on, being what that is, we're not going to be calling races like that so much anymore anyway. In terms of actually just gathering votes, and talking about key precincts and all the rest, there are still going to be a lot of states that you can cut out of the mix. I would fund VNS but I would, if I were a network, I would fund it properly, not the way they've done it.

Mr. Jones: The topic for this Teddy White Lecture and discussion has been essentially the future of broadcast news. And I want to very, very briefly, give some very broad stroke wrap to what I think that has really been said here both last night and today.

And that is that one, broadcast news has a very important place in the

news culture and also in the social culture and the society that we live in, and it's not just a matter of getting people to do something that we want them to do, it's something that is key to the future and the success of this society if we're going to endure as an open and free and democratic one. That requires engagement and news is the key to that. And if the key to that is news then broadcast news is still of immense importance.

. . . the importance of doing the news right in the face of some economic challenges and difficulties is a genuine obligation and an opportunity to grow . . .

One of the things that has struck me most profoundly from the conversation that we've had today and yesterday is that the importance of doing the news right in the face of some economic challenges and difficulties is a genuine obligation and an opportunity to help grow the very audience that you're hoping was there in the first place.

On the other hand, using the market notion that if there is an audience for serious news, if there's an audience for news of things of importance and high quality news on television, then there will be news on television that meets that description.

I think that the points that Bob Putnam and others have made that we now have a culture that does not make that demand. Part of the obligation of the news organizations is to try to create that market anew, try to reinvigorate it, try to go and persuade in the places where these people are, which is in the schools fundamentally. People have an appetite for news that is not boring. It could create a much more fertile place for broadcast television news and news in general to thrive.

Today has been a very interesting day. I want to thank the panelists for coming and joining us. I want to thank Tom Brokaw and thank all of you for being with us today, and that's the show.