

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH TED TURNER, PHILANTHROPIST AND FOUNDER OF CNN AND TNT

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MR. SALANT: Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Press Club. I'm Jonathan Salant, a reporter for Bloomberg News and president of the Press Club. I'd like to welcome club members and our guests in the audience today, as well as those of you watching on C-SPAN. Please hold your applause during the speech so we have time for as many questions as possible.

For our broadcast audience, I'd like to explain: If you hear a pause in response to a comment, it is from the members of the general public and from guests in the audience, not from the working press.

The video archive of today's luncheon is provided by ConnectLive, and is available for members only through the National Press Club's website at www.press.org. Press Club members may also get free transcripts of our luncheons at our website. Nonmembers may buy transcripts, audio tapes, and video tapes by calling 1-888-343- 1940. For more information about joining the Press Club, please call us at area code (202) 662-7511.

Before introducing our head table, I'd like to remind our members of future speakers: On October 12, Gene Karpinski, the new president of the League of Conservation Voters; on October 13, Governor Brian Schweitzer of Montana, Democrat, who will be discussing his vision for America's energy future; and on October 18, Representative Tom Reynolds of New York and Representative Rahm Emanuel of Illinois, the heads of the Republican and Democratic congressional committees, and they'll discuss the upcoming 2006 congressional elections.

If you have any questions for our speaker, please write them on the cards provided at your table and pass them up to me. I will ask as many as time permits.

I'd now like to introduce our head table guests and ask them to stand briefly when their names are called. Please hold your applause until all of the head table guests are introduced.

From your right, David Johnson, the chief technology officer with Scripps Howard News Service and formerly with WPTV Television in West Palm Beach; Marilyn Geewax, national economic correspondent for Cox Newspapers, which owns the Atlanta Journal-Constitution; Bob Carden of Carden Communications, and former reporter for CNN Business News; Carol Sargent, director of faculty publications for Georgetown University, and a former radio host at NPR's Southwestern Bureau; Catherine Crier, host of Court TV's "Catherine Crier Live," and a best-selling author; Mark Hamrick, chairman of the board of the National Press Club, and a reporter for the Associated Press Broadcast; Tim Wirth, president of the United Nations Foundation, and former U.S. Senator from Colorado; John Hughes of Bloomberg News, chair of the National Press Club Speakers Committee -- skipping over our speaker for a moment -- Shawn Bullard, president of the Duetto Group and formerly with WLOX TV in Biloxi, Mississippi; Charlie Curtis, president of the Nuclear Threat Initiative; Keri Douglas, founder of the Nine Muses International; Sam Holt, former head of programming for PBS and National Public Radio; Lee Perryman, deputy director with Associated Press Broadcast; and John Bisney, media relations for the American Petroleum Institute and spent a decade on Capitol Hill as a CNN correspondent. (Applause.)

There are many ways to describe our speaker today: visionary, entrepreneur, team owner, world-class yachtsman. Then there are these other descriptions: "Captain Outrageous" -- (laughter) -- "Mouth of the South," former husband of Jane Fonda -- (laughter) -- and baseball manager, albeit only for one game, because the commissioner stepped in. (Laughter.) Of course, we're talking about Robert Edward Turner III, known to all of us as "Ted."

He came up with the idea of putting a local Atlanta station on a satellite and beaming it nationally, creating the first superstation, WTBS, channel 17. The "T" in WTBS stood for Turner. To make sure he had enough programming, he bought the Atlanta Braves, which eventually won 14 consecutive division championships. He, of course, said there were two other reasons for buying the Braves: one, he wanted to get an autographed baseball without pleading for it, and he also wanted to get good seats at the ballpark. (Laughter.) He also owned Atlanta's basketball and hockey teams, and in fact Stan Kasten, who's in our audience today, wound up running all three of them for Ted.

Mr. Turner created another cable channel, TNT -- the first "T" standing for Turner. He won the America's Cup sailing race, underwriting the construction of an innovative aluminum-hulled boat -- courageous. He created a commercial-free, all-movie cable channel, TCM -- the "T," of course, stood for Turner. (Laughter.) And he gave us the cable news network -- the first 24-hour all-news channel, and still the gold standard.

In March, he apologized for losing control of CNN. "I had a sacred trust there, and I let it get away," he said. Today he says, "Cable news focuses more on the pervert of the day rather than serious coverage of topics such as the environment and world affairs. He sold his media empire to Time Warner in 1996, and served as the vice chairman of the company. He left the board this year, calling his decision to sell his empire the biggest mistake of his life.

He has been a strong supporter of the United Nations, giving \$1 billion to the U.N. Foundation. He is also the Ted behind Ted's Montana Grill, a restaurant chain that features bison. Mr. Turner own 45,000 head of bison on a ranch in Montana.

And Mr. Turner is no stranger to controversy. He called the Iraq war "a waste of time," and said Rupert Murdoch, the owner of the Fox Broadcasting Network, was the most dangerous man in the world. (Laughter, applause.) He also put the odds at no more than 50-50 that humankind would be nearly extinct within 50 years.

Ted Turner once said, "I know what I'm having put on my tombstone. 'I have nothing more to say.'" (Laughter.)

Well, we know he still has plenty to say now. Let's welcome Ted Turner to the National Press Club. (Applause.)

MR. TURNER: Thanks for that. Thanks for that really nice -- geez, my watch just broke -- (laughter) -- that nice introduction.

And there's one thing that was wrong in that bio, and that's the 45,000 bison are spread over 15 ranches all over the West, not on one ranch. There's no ranch in the world that's big enough to hold that many bison (Laughter.)

Anyway, it's a pleasure to be here, and I thank you all for coming out to see me and hear what I have to say. I have had a varied and very interesting career, and I enjoyed almost all of it. I really enjoyed the challenge of life. I looked at -- and I still look at life, because I haven't really changed. I may have changed jobs, but I'm still the same person at heart, although I have gone through a series of transformations. But I still enjoy life tremendously and work hard to try and stay healthy and alive for as long as I can and feel like I can make a contribution.

Back when I was in the media business not that long ago, I really enjoyed the challenge of doing things that hadn't been done before. But I always was trying deep down to make the world a better place, because I felt like that it was particularly important for people in leadership positions and particularly in the media to really have a strong sense of social responsibility and to do a good job of -- particularly in the news area -- of covering the news from an unbiased and

honest as you possibly could be without trying to revert to nationalism -- I mean, I just really wonder, during the last war, you know, what business did it have in the news sets to have the American flag flying in the background? I mean, it was like the news media covered the Iraq war, at least at the beginning of it, almost like it was a football game with us versus them.

And I can understand that for the U.S.-based media to do that, but I really -- certainly it was inappropriate, I think, for CNN to do it that way. And CNN International, which is a different feed from CNN Domestic, did cover it from a much more international perspective.

And you can't help -- if you're in the media or anywhere else, you can't help having some bias from where you're from. I mean, if you're from Washington, D.C., and you live here, you grew up here, you're going to see things -- you're going to see the world through glasses of having been raised in Washington, D.C. And it would be different than having grown up in Los Angeles or Des Moines, Iowa, or Atlanta, for instance.

And I thought having a news network based in Atlanta when all the rest were based in New York was probably good, because I knew we'd have a slightly different perspective in Atlanta than we would be if we were headquartered in New York.

Anyway, that part of my life has come to an end, and I really didn't really want to sell CNN and sell my company. In fact, I didn't -- and you mentioned that in the bio at the beginning -- I thought I was merging with Time Warner. I took all stock. I didn't take cash. And I had about 7 percent of the stock of Time Warner, which is a large block to have in a widely held public company. And it pretty well ensures that you're treated respectfully by management. It can't guarantee you that you have a job, obviously, because -- (laughter) -- because I lost -- and it was interesting. I think you probably -- I don't know that I've told this story exactly the way it is, but this is the Washington Press Club and you might be interested. (Laughter.)

I was on a ranch in New Mexico when I got the call from Jerry Levin -- and this was after we merged with AOL, and when we merged with AOL, then we got diluted down -- every Time Warner shareholder did, and I was down to about 2.5 or 3 percent of the company. And then Jerry felt like, you know, he could do what he wanted to as far as I was concerned. And he called me up and he said, "We're reorganizing the company that will take place at the merger, and you're vice chairman. That's the good news."

And I said, "Well, what's the bad news?"

He said, "The bad news is, you don't have anything to do."

And I said, "Well, Jerry, what about my contract?" Because I -- at the time that we merged with Time Warner, I obtained a five-year contract to manage the cable networks, and it still had a year and a half to go. And I said, "Jerry, I've still got a year and a half to go on my contract."

He said, "Well, we're tearing up your contract."

I said, "You're tearing up my contract?" I said, "In my whole life I've never heard of a big company abrogating on a contract." I mean, has anybody here ever had anybody say that to them? (Laughter.) Anybody in the room? Raise your hand. Not one person.

So I told Jerry, "But a contract means something." I mean --

He said, "Not this contract." He said, "If you want to --" he said, "We checked with a lawyer so you can sue us if you want to."

I said, "Sue my own company?" I mean -- (laughter).

Anyway, I didn't sue. And I accepted it because I didn't want to get in an ugly fight that would hurt the company. And of course, shortly after that he was gone, and that -- it just -- you know, you live by the sword, you die by it.

Anyway, what it's done is free up my time to work on philanthropy and trying to make the world a better place. And the first thing that I thought was one of the big problems that there was something that I could do about it was help the United Nations. And I know the United Nations isn't perfect. It's a big organization with 191 -- approximately -- a little less than 200 countries that belong to it. It's going to be inherently a little less efficient than the federal government would be.

And the federal government has plenty of problems, too. I know -- because I still watch the news a lot, and I watch CNN -- (laughter) -- read the papers. And you know, the Pentagon lost hundreds of billions of dollars. They can't -- their accounting's no good at the Pentagon. We all saw that several months ago. That was hard for me to believe because, you know, you would think that they'd keep the books properly. (Laughter.) You know, it's important. It's our money.

Anyway, that's a mess. And of course, there are a lot of other things in our own government that are a mess. I always kind of feel like that, you know, if you really work hard and get to be nearly perfect, then you can go around and tell everybody else what to do. But if you're not perfect, you shouldn't tell other people what to do. You should let them work it out for themselves to a large degree.

So anyway, the U.N. -- the United States had not paid its dues to the United Nations for approximately two years and were a billion dollars in arrears on their regular dues. And the U.N. couldn't pay their bills, and that really concerned me. And so that's why I tried to -- well, I tried at first to give the billion dollars to the U.N., and my lawyers told me you can't do that because the U.N. could not receive donations at that time. They got all their revenue from member states, and that was the way that it was. Now it's not exactly that way anymore. It's been changed some, but that was the way it was then.

So I could do that, and that's why we started the United Nations Foundation, which could work in parallel with the United Nations and make donations and help out in areas that the United Nations felt they needed additional financial assistance. And it turned out that it was a pretty good idea, because they did need financial assistance, and they needed -- they didn't have a very

strong lobbying operation, and they needed help with government relations, particularly with the United States. And so it's worked out I think quite well.

And I -- Tim Wirth, who was introduced earlier at the head table, was nice enough to leave the federal government where he was working and come over and head up the foundation when we had a chat about it. He was -- after being senator he had worked in the State Department for several years as well, so he had an incredibly good background of knowledge and experience in the field, and he's done -- he and the team over at the United Nations Foundation have done a remarkably good job. And they're headquartered right here in Washington.

And then later I -- at first we didn't -- I did not think about putting weapons of mass destruction on the agenda, because I didn't think -- I didn't know that much, and I didn't think that weapons of mass destruction was something that an NGO could do very much about. I thought that was what governments were supposed to be doing. But as we got into the United Nations Foundation and found out just how many things weren't getting done in the other areas, the thought occurred to me that maybe an NGO could help in the area of weapons of mass destruction, at least perhaps help raise the profile. And of all the bad news that we've had today, there could be some good that comes out of it.

One thing is that this is -- we've been watching, over the last few years, a certain amount of nuclear proliferation. You know, 40 years ago only one country -- well, 45 years ago, only one country had nuclear weapons: the United States. And I'm sure we were quite unhappy when Russia developed the bomb, too -- or the former Soviet Union. And then of course, we had China, Britain, and France, who all happen to be the five members of the Security Council.

At any rate, I contacted Sam Nunn, who had vast experience in the area, having been -- when he was in the Senate -- chairman of the Armed Services Committee in the Senate -- to run the nuclear threat -- we came up with that name. I think Charlie Curtis, who is the president of the Nuclear Threat Initiative, came up with that name. We kicked it around and decided that it was the best name. And we've had some success, too, and hopefully in helping to raise the issue and get it more on the agenda, because these weapons -- with all the other problems that we have in the world, particularly with the environment, with global warming and all the other environmental challenges -- the over-fishing of the oceans, the deforesting of the rain forests and the other environmental degradation that we have going on all over the world -- we're really in a challenging situation.

But at any rate, as of this morning, what happened is the proliferation is continuing on nuclear weapons.

First, India, Pakistan -- of course, Israel's had them for quite awhile. We don't know exactly how many. They've never really admitted one way or another, but we're sure that they have them. And Iran is probably trying to get them.

But there's already some good that's come out of this on the Korean situation. Both Russia and China, and most of the rest of the world, has already come out very strongly against this proliferation that North Korea represents. And in order to deal with these global problems, like

nuclear proliferation and global warming, it's going to take the whole world working together for it to happen.

And our government has made it clear, at least so far, that they look at this situation -- that it's going to have to be handled by the United Nations and in cooperation with the other great powers. And that really will be -- will really be helpful, particularly if we can sustain that position. It's very, very important.

Anyway, I look at the global situation -- the most dangerous thing is the nuclear weapons, because they can end our lives in an afternoon. The next most dangerous thing is probably global climate change or global warming. And then right behind that are overpopulation and we need to get serious about family planning and the other environmental threats that we have.

And then, also important, is trying to alleviate poverty, to get clean renewable energy -- probably with solar panels -- to the 1.5 billion people in the world that don't have access to electricity, which is an abject -- sign of abject poverty that can be fixed with a little solar panel outside the person's residence.

To deal with those problems is going to require all of us working together. We need a strong United Nations and we certainly need a United Nations with the United States taking a strong, constructive leadership position and all of us working together to make it a better world. If we do that, we'll come through this all with flying colors. If we don't, and we constantly stick to our old ways of going to war whenever somebody disagrees with us or we don't like the way they look or the way they smile, then we're in -- we don't have much of a future.

And we can see now in Iraq, and even before that in Vietnam, that war just isn't the way you get things done anymore. I mean, for instance, normally your defense department or war department is trying to protect you from invasion. But our army can't protect us from invasion. We're being invaded by a million people every year. They're coming in barefooted and they're walking across the Rio Grande or coming off boats, however they can get here, and they're looking for a job. What are you going to do, shoot them down?

You know, it's -- the only way to stop that invasion -- you know, aircraft carriers can't stop that invasion. You can't bomb these people. You can't bomb refugees very well. It wouldn't look good in the media either, you know. (Laughter.) A superpower has now decided to bomb innocent civilians. Our primary target: people -- job seekers. (Laughter.)

So it just -- it doesn't work. And even though we've got, you know, a half-a-trillion dollar defense budget, you know, we're being held up over there by a bunch of insurgents in Iraq and people that disagree with each other over there. Whether they're Sunnis or Shi'as -- it makes about as much sense -- because they're both Muslims -- as the Catholics and the Protestants going at each other over in Ireland, and that one's over.

I mean, basically, the wars are over between the First World countries, and the only wars that are really going on now are in places that are uneducated and really backward. And it's very clear, taking a look at Darfur and Somalia and Sudan and these other places where there is fighting

going on, that that's not the way to get things done. I mean, blowing up your bridges and hospitals and museums and everything, it costs a lot of money to rebuild them. And you know, it's like us over in Iraq. You know, we go in there and we bomb everything and now we've got to rebuild it all, but it's hard to do because they're shooting at our workers that are trying to rebuild the things that we bombed. (Laughter.) I mean, it's just kind of goofy.

You know that's -- and we're going to have some questions and answers, because the time for my original part of the presentation has run out, thankfully. (Laughter.) So we'll go to questions -- I just wanted to share these thoughts with you for what they're worth. You know, nobody paid me to come. (Laughter.) I don't think we charged anything for admission. So you know, you get what you pay for. (Laughter.) But I've really enjoyed being with you and it's good to see you. And I've been here before -- it's been a number of years, but I'm enjoying being back.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MR. SALANT: First question: What is your reaction to the North Korea's reported nuclear test today? And has the United States and the United Nations done enough to address the threat?

MR. TURNER: Well, obviously, I don't like to see nuclear proliferation and I'm very upset about it. And I just hope that -- I hope that the United Nations and the Security Council can come up with a peaceful way of resolving it. We don't need more violence. I don't think that is the way to deal with it, and nobody's, at this point, recommending that.

MR. SALANT: Do you think President Bush should meet with the leader in North Korea, as the North Korean leader has asked?

MR. TURNER: I'm sorry. I'm a little hard of hearing. Would you repeat that question? Go slowly.

MR. SALANT: Do you think President Bush should meet with the leader of North Korea, as the North Korean leader has asked?

MR. TURNER: If it was me, I would do it. We've normalized relations with Vietnam right after the war. And now Vietnam, even though it's still officially a communist country, we get along fine with them. And before that we've done -- I think you do better talking with people than you do not meeting with them, because I think one of the -- I'm sure -- I was in North Korea last year and I know one of the things that they want is what everybody wants, and that's to be treated with respect. And if you do that, you've got to -- I think you have a better chance of resolving problems than if you don't speak at all. (Applause.)

MR. SALANT: How do you assess the United States role at the United Nations today?

MR. TURNER: You know, I think we realize -- even the administration realizes that they need the United Nations. So one thing that the United Nations did that was really, really terrific was being able to get this war between Israel and Lebanon, Hezbollah, stopped and that's just recently. And that was a terrific accomplishment that we can all really be proud of.

MR. SALANT: In your U.N. foundation statement, you write of unprecedented need and unprecedented promise. Everything we need to change the world is within our grasp. What can and should each of us do, whatever the challenges we face?

MR. TURNER: Whatever the challenges we face?

MR. SALANT: With the challenges we face, yes.

MR. TURNER: Well, do what you can do. I mean, I know when I'm walking around in Washington or New York on the street and I see a piece of trash, I'll pick it up and carry it and put it in the waste basket. And if we all did that, we'd live in a clean world. (Applause.)

MR. SALANT: What should the United Nations do to improve humankind's 50/50 odds of surviving? And what kind of enterprise should succeed or replace the United Nations, if you think it should be replaced in the future?

MR. TURNER: Well, I think it's silly to talk about replacing it. First of all, you would have to destroy the United Nations. We already have it, and even with its imperfections -- and one of the major ones that they try to deal with is the makeup of the Security Council.

It's crazy to me that only the victors of World War II have seats on the Security Council -- permanent seats -- and have the veto. And that's, you know, the United States, Soviet Union, Germany -- not Germany -- France, Britain and China. We need to have -- the Security Council needs to be expanded. But assuming that we can get that done at some point -- I mean, there's no absolutely rush to do it; people are thinking about it -- then the United Nations will be, I think, more representative.

But it's the best thing that we have. And I think considering the resources and the amount of effort that we put into it, we get a good return for our investment in the United Nations. And I think we just ought to work to make it stronger, just like we should work to straighten out our federal government and make it stronger, because it would be silly to try and break our federal government apart and start over from scratch. It'd be nutty.

MR. SALANT: What should be done to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear bomb?

MR. TURNER: Well, I'm a strong believer that the only way that we'll ever really stop nuclear proliferation is for everybody to get rid of their nuclear weapons.

I keep a card in my wallet with a little quotation from July 1st, 1968, the Nonproliferation Treaty. And I quote -- this is what we signed. This is what every one of the members of the Security Council signed: "Each of the parties to this treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

The United States signed that. So did former Soviet Union, China -- all the countries of the world signed it. But we haven't lived up to it, and I think that's -- that we should live up to what we agreed to do and get rid of all nuclear weapons by agreement and with IAEA supervision. (Applause.)

MR. SALANT: What is in store for Cuba post-Castro? And this questioner wants to know, have you spoken with Fidel Castro since he fell ill?

MR. TURNER: I have not spoken with him since he fell ill, but I know him quite well and I think we've mishandled our relations with Cuba too.

I think we should have been talking to them all along. After all, we did with Vietnam, and we get along fine with them. But no matter what happens, I think we'll be able to get along with the Cuban people and whoever succeeds Fidel. If we normalize relations and lift our embargoes and so forth, we can have great relations with Cuba. There's no reason why we shouldn't. (Applause.)

MR. SALANT: How would you solve, as you put it in your speech, the invasion of America?

MR. TURNER: I don't know. (Laughter.) I don't know. I -- I employ -- we think everybody that works with our restaurant chain is legally here, and we check their credentials very carefully. But a lot of them have immigrated here, just like almost all of us did. Except for the few of us that are Native Americans, we all came from somewhere. And they are good workers and decent, honest people for the most part, just like we are here.

So the best thing -- I would really try to help -- as we have done with NAFTA -- to try and help improve living conditions in developing countries so that people won't want to come here because they can make a decent living where they are.

MR. SALANT: Do you support or oppose the Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern Railroad coal line project, which runs through some of your land?

MR. TURNER: Wait a minute. (Laughter.) Give me that one again?

MR. SALANT: Do you support or oppose the Dakota, Minnesota and Eastern Railroad coal line project, which runs through some of your ranch land?

MR. TURNER: I really don't know. (Laughter.)

MR. SALANT: I know it comes as no surprise to you that we do have a few media questions.

The first one: if you were still running your media empire, what are the first changes you would make?

MR. TURNER: I really hadn't given that any thought. That was a good question, but I -- in order to answer that question accurately, I would have to give that some consideration, and I haven't got time to do that right here. (Soft laughter.)

MR. SALANT: What do you see as the future vision for CNN, now that FOX is gaining in market share and popularity?

MR. TURNER: (Blows raspberry.) (Laughter, applause.) It's not the same FOX. It's a different animal. (Laughter.) It ain't -- listen, you know -- the right wingers have every right to have a network of their own, and they've got one. (Laughter.)

MR. SALANT: How do you assess the rise of Al-Jazeera and U.S. government attacks on it? Do you ever think that cable companies in the United States will carry its English language channel?

MR. TURNER: I don't know. (Laughter.)

MR. SALANT: This questioner wants to know, is good journalism good business? And why are media enterprises getting both the business concept and the big stories such as Iraq wrong?

MR. TURNER: Well, I do think that -- my -- I used to be a Rotarian, and their motto is that "he profits most who serves the best." And I believe that.

But remember, good journalism means somewhat different things to different people. You know, I'm a hard news man myself. I believe that, you know, that we shouldn't have, you know, as much emphasis as we do on the pervert of the day. I mean, as that's -- (scattered laughter) -- with 6 billion -- 6.5 billion people in the world, there's a lot of weirdos out there, you know. (Laughter.)

And it particularly bothers me when we have three stories in a row about this stuff, and then they don't even say what happened in Iraq that day. That's the wrong emphasis for me. But that's on a really bad day.

But they do -- they -- every now and then, you have those days. Thank you.

MR. SALANT: Now that you're no longer on the Time Warner board, have you thought about starting a new CNN?

MR. TURNER: It just isn't practical to do without having a big corporation behind you.

MR. Salant: Yeas ago, you predicted the demise of newspapers. Could you please revisit that thought? Do you still believe that's the case?

MR. TURNER: I mean, all you got to do is pick up the business section of any newspaper, and they're reporting on it right now. I mean, I really hate to see it. I like newspapers. But you know, I'm 67 years old. When I die, the newspapers are going to die with me, unfortunately, for the most part. I mean, the information is available on the Internet hours sooner than your newspaper, and you don't have to pay for it. I mean, it's -- you know, and if the newspapers don't give their information in the Internet, they'll die even faster.

So it's just -- it was just an inefficient way to get information to somebody. They have to print it, hours later deliver it, by hand or by truck. When you can send the same information electronically, and people can get it instantaneously, it's over for newspapers, unfortunately. I mean, I hate to see that happen.

MR. SALANT: Is there anything those -- the newspapers companies can do to change?

MR. TURNER: Well, they're all getting into the Internet, but the problem is, they're used to getting subscription fees as well as advertising, and it's hard to make money. CNN wouldn't make any money if all they had was advertising to go on. They get subscription fees and advertising revenues, just like the newspaper model.

MR. SALANT: Do you see distribution over the Internet replacing traditional cable distribution?

MR. TURNER: I don't know about that either. I don't know.

MR. Salant: Last week the head of the National Association of Broadcasters said at the Press Club that the broadcasting industry was serving the public interest. Do you agree? And why or why not?

MR. TURNER: Well, I think it's really hard to answer that on behalf of all broadcasters, because I think there are some that are and some that aren't. But on other hand, they're all providing people with entertainment or information at some time of the day. So they are serving the public interest to some extent.

The question is how much and could they do better, but then even the very good broadcasters -- we could all do better. Nobody's perfect.

MR. SALANT: What's the biggest change you'd like to see in television news today, either cable or broadcast?

MR. TURNER: That I'd like to see?

MR. SALANT: That you'd like to see.

MR. TURNER: I would say a stronger emphasis on news that we really need to know to be able to be informed and intelligent citizens of our country and world.

MR. SALANT: We have all heard about global warming. What do we need to do to bring about changes?

MR. TURNER: We have to send to Congress and to government at every level people that understand it, are willing to discuss it, and are willing to do something about it. There's no reason why it shouldn't be. I think it's going to be great for business. I think we ought to embrace it, and we ought to change over as quickly as we can. And I'm working towards that goal to encourage that, that we change over to locally produced clean, renewable energy and move away from

fossil fuels and carbon fuels as quickly as we can before the world gets so hot that it's basically uninhabitable.

MR. SALANT: What are the promising breakthroughs in sustainable energy for developing nations and the developing -- and the developed world?

MR. TURNER: Well, ones that are breaking through right now are both solar and wind and to a lesser degree, but still important, biofuels, and possibly there's some other exotic things out there -- that geothermal's really exotic. It works in some applications. But -- and of course, it's really an old technology today, but we're probably going to have to involve nuclear energy at some point too.

MR. SALANT: With countries such as China and India pose to major industrial growth, how do we get them to make the changes needed to curb global warming?

MR. TURNER: Well, we're going to need -- that's why we need a strong United Nations to help us do this, but they're both aware of it too -- both those countries are. And they -- I really believe that they'll really do their part.

MR. SALANT: On a related energy matter, will General Motors or Ford be able to stem their declines by catering to new technology?

MR. TURNER: They better or we won't have an automobile industry here in the United States.

MR. SALANT: Time Warner is selling its ball teams. Are you interested in buying them?
(Laughter.)

MR. TURNER: (Laughs.) Twenty-five years was long enough, and besides, I can't afford them anyway. (Laughter.)

MR. SALANT: This questioner wants to know, would you recommend to your friend, Stan Kasten, that he hire former Braves Manager Joe Torre of the -- now with the Yankees if he is fired?

MR. TURNER: I don't know. That might be tampering. (Laughter.) But Stan really knows what he's doing, and he'll do an excellent job. He'll hire somebody good, and if he doesn't, he'll fire him and get somebody the next time that'll be good. (Laughter.)

Stan is the room too. Yeah, Stan and I have worked together for many years, and they were all happy.

MR. SALANT: Political question for you. If the Democrats win a majority in the House or the Senate this fall, what's the first thing that they should do?

MR. TURNER: Celebrate. (Laughter.)

MR. SALANT: Anything policy-wise?

MR. TURNER: I'm sorry?

MR. SALANT: Anything policy-wise?

MR. TURNER: Start doing smart things and stop doing dumb things. (Laughter.)

MR. SALANT: I want to go back to sports a second. What's the thing you miss most about being a sports owner?

MR. TURNER: Can't think of much. (Laughter.) It was a burden to have to go to all those games. I mean, 250 games a year, that's a lot. And I used to go to the opera and the symphony and movies. But I was in the movie business, too. I liked that. I enjoyed it, but I had to do it and it was my business and my responsibility, and I tried to do as good a job as I possibly could. But it was a relief when it was over, because on Saturday afternoon I got to go fishing, you know -- (laughter) -- and do things that were relaxing. Because when you're the owner of a team and you go to the games, I mean, you sweat every pitch, and every up and down in the quarter if it's basketball team. It's a real -- it's hard work, I mean, owning a sports team. Now, if you own a football team, it's no big deal at all. You have about 15 games a year on Sunday afternoons; big deal. (Laughter.) But baseball is played six nights a week. You know, they played on Christmas Day, I mean, basketball team did some years. Hell, you can imagine spending Christmas on a basketball court and your kids aren't even playing. You know, if it's your kids, it's something else. (Laughter.)

MR. SALANT: You have accomplished so much in so many different areas. Where did your drive and abilities come from?

MR. TURNER: My society. My parents. They said, "You want to be a big success, son." My school, when I went to get an education, they said, "You got to be a big success." Even our religious institutions are saying you got to be a big success. So all I did was try to be a big success, that's all. I just did what I was told. You know? (Laughter.) I was following orders. (Laughter.)

MR. SALANT: The Argentine government has talked about taking over the properties of foreign owners such as yourself. Has the government been in contact with you? And do you think the government will be successful in nationalizing that land?

MR. TURNER: I hope not. But I knew it was a risk when I bought the property down there. I mean, you know, whenever you invest your money overseas, it can always be nationalized or expropriated. But Argentina's a pretty solid place. I don't think they'll do it, but if they do, I still got plenty of land here in the United States. (Laughter.) I got plenty of room to live.

MR. SALANT: Where do you see the demand for buffalo meat going versus traditional beef, both here and abroad?

MR. TURNER: Up, up and away.

MR. SALANT; It has not totally caught on yet. How do you --

MR. TURNER: Oh, come on, what do you mean it hasn't caught on?

MR. SALANT: (Laughs.) (Laughter.)

MR. TURNER: I'm selling all I can raise, and getting a pretty decent price for it.

MR. SALANT: What's the toughest thing about running a restaurant business?

MR. TURNER: I'll tell you, I've got a lot of respect for people in the restaurant business. But I knew what I was getting into.

I wanted to do one last entrepreneurial thing. I'm still -- I'm trying to get in the energy business, too. But, you know, in the media business, or television, which I was in, you give people entertainment and information, and in the restaurant business you give them food. And they got to have food, too. And people like to go out to restaurants, and it's one of the best things that happens to them. And I'm trying to make my experience in our restaurants, you know, the best thing that happens to you all week -- and that includes everything. Thank you. (Laughter.)

MR. SALANT: This questioner wants to know: Where's the best sailing in Montana? (Laughter.)

MR. TURNER: I don't know. I don't go out there to sail, I go out there to fish.

MR. SALANT: Many of today's businesses have been created by two or three individuals, such as Microsoft, Yahoo!, Google and Apple. Who do you talk to when developing your business ideas?

MR. TURNER: Different people. You know, I try and get as much information as I can from the media, and then -- depending on the people's area of expertise, depending on what I want to do. But it doesn't always work out, you know, just because even your most trusted, most experienced, intelligent advisers are sometimes wrong, just like -- you know, I was on the board of AOL Time Warner when we had -- went over the AOL merger. And all four of my most trusted personal advisers recommended that we go forward with the AOL transaction, and all the analysts did, and the management, and the board of directors at Time Warner all voted for it enthusiastically, and we were all wrong, you know.

So you can look like you do everything you can to be right, like you lead a real healthy life, you know, you eat well, you don't smoke, you don't drink, you don't add -- put on weight, you stay in good shape, all the things you need to do to be healthy, and you can still get cancer, right? You know, I mean, you can do everything right but you can still just be unlucky or your timing was bad, you know. It happens. It happens.

MR. SALANT: Your former wife, Jane Fonda, was vilified for her opposition to the Vietnam War. Have you -- or you've criticized the Iraq war. Have people questioned your lack of patriotism?

MR. TURNER: Not that I can say. I served in the Armed Forces of the United States, which is more than most members of the government can say today. (Laughter.) But it was back in the days when everybody served, remember? We had a draft. It didn't bother me, I enjoyed it. I was in the Coast Guard Reserve. But nobody has questioned my -- and before that, I went to military school for seven years, and I sent all three of my sons to the Citadel, and that's like being in the army. (Laughter.) But -- so I haven't had anybody question my patriotism.

Anybody in here question my patriotism? (Laughs; laughter.) Not a single one! There's several hundred people in this room! (Laughter.)

MR. SALANT: What do you think of the fact that -- well, not you, but other people have been -- when they've criticized the Iraq war or criticized the U.S. government conduct of it, their patriotism has been questioned?

MR. TURNER: Well, I don't like to see -- you know, this -- there are a lot of things about this war that disturb me, and one of them is -- one of them is the attitude, you know, that was well expressed by our president, he said it very clearly: Either you're with us or you're against us.

And I had a problem with that because I really hadn't made my mind up yet. You know, what if you haven't made your mind up? You know, what if you're thinking about it, doing some studying, doing some reading? Because it's an important decision to go to war or whether or not to go war. I mean, you're either with us or you're against us. That's pretty black and white, and, you know -- just because you disagree with me about it doesn't mean you're not a patriot, as far as I'm concerned. And I really respected the one reason that I fell in love with Jane is because she had the courage to speak out during the war. I was brought up in a family where my father served in World War II, and he really believed in my country, right or wrong. And so I believed in my country, right or wrong.

But after the Vietnam War, when I studied it and looked back on it, I said, "No. My country -- when it's right. And if it's wrong, I'll speak out against it." I'm not going to just -- if my country's wrong -- if we're torturing prisoners of war or murdering civilians, you know, that's not right, in my opinion. So it's not right or wrong. It's -- you know, I want my country to be right when it's -- when we're killing other people. I think that's an important thing. I don't want anybody killing me, and I don't want to kill anybody. I think it's an important thing, you know, when you kill somebody or hurt them.

I want to help people. That's why I started my foundation. My wife is a veteran. Why not help people? I'd rather have friends than enemies. The more you bomb people -- all it does is make them madder. You don't teach them anything by bombing them. You teach them by educating them, you know. I mean, let's build schools and not drop bombs. That's my opinion. (Applause.)

MR. SALANT: There has been talk about the U.S.'s reputation in the Arab world. What would you do to improve the reputation?

MR. TURNER: Stop bombing them. (Laughter.)

MR. SALANT: Earlier, you had mentioned -- we asked you about Fox. You said, "Well, the right wingers have their own television network." Do the left wingers have a TV station yet?

MR. TURNER: Well, according to the right wingers, all the rest are left wing, so -- (laughter) -- I guess we do. (Laughter.)

MR. SALANT: How close did CNN ever come to merging with another media company or television company before the Time Warner merger?

MR. TURNER: Well, merging -- you know, we did merge with Time Warner. I never really considered giving up hard control before, other than just as a mental exercise.

MR. SALANT: You had mentioned how nationalism has crept into the U.S. media. Do you think that's ultimately pandering, particularly when companies are eager to grab market share?

MR. TURNER: Yes. (Laughter.)

MR. SALANT: The Federal Communications Commission is once again holding hearings on whether they should increase the number of stations in a market that a single company can hold and whether their company can hold newspapers and radio and television stations in the same market. You've come out in the past against this type of consolidation. What's your feeling on it now? And do you think that -- what is your feeling about that versus localism?

MR. TURNER: I mean, it's -- localism's almost a dead issue. It's already happened. I mean, there's -- you've got just a few companies that determine just about everything of what we see and hear. And what are they? CBS-Viacom; Fox; Time Warner; General Electric with NBC and the NBC Networks; and Disney. And they pretty well -- they control 95 percent of what we see and hear everything at the national level, so it's already happened.

And I think we're poorer for it. I think that that -- because those big media companies are, for the most part, more concerned about making money than serving the public interest. And I am concerned about it.

MR. SALANT: What are we not getting either reported or television programs -- coverage we're not getting by this consolidation?

MR. TURNER: Well, I think we're not getting enough important international news, for one thing, because it's not a big ratings grabber.

MR. SALANT: Do you think the Internet is going to allow other voices out to reach the public?

MR. TURNER: I hope so.

MR. SALANT: What do you think should be done to encourage that, if anything?

MR. TURNER: I don't know. Invest in Internet companies. (Soft laughter.) Don't put everything into them. (Laughter.) There's nothing worse than being old and broke -- (laughter) -- particularly when you've been old and rich, you know. (Laughter.) Not good. Hard to get a job when you're over 65. I know. I've -- before I started the restaurant business, I went to see, and nobody made me an offer. They said, "You're too old." There is age discrimination.

But most people are retiring at 65. I would start now.

MR. SALANT: You created CNN, WTBS, TNT, TCM. Is there another cable channel, if you could, you'd like to create?

MR. TURNER: Nope. (Laughter.)

MR. SALANT: Before I ask the last question, I want to give you the National Press Club coffee mug, suitable for drinking coffee in front of any of the networks you have founded.

MR. TURNER: I'll put that with the other two that I've got.

MR. SALANT: (Chuckles.) And a certificate of appreciation.

MR. TURNER: Oh, okay. Thank you.

MR. SALANT: Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MR. TURNER: No more questions?

MR. SALANT: I have one last question.

MR. TURNER: And one last question. Thank you.

MR. SALANT: Of all of the statements that you have uttered -- and some of them you've been criticized for -- what is the one you'd most like to take back? (Scattered laughter.)

MR. TURNER: I don't know. I'd never thought of that. That's a good question, though. But I don't have an answer for it, because there are a lot of things that I've said that I wish I hadn't said. But not too many. (Laughter.)

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MR. SALANT: I'd like to thank everyone for coming today. I'd also like to thank National Press Club staff members Melinda Cooke, Pat Nelson, Jo Anne Booze and Howard Rothman for

organizing today's lunch. And thanks to the Eric Friedheim Library at the National Press Club for its research. Research is available to all club members by calling Area Code 202, 662-7523.

Good afternoon. We're adjourned. (Applause.)

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