

## **MEDIA LAW RESOURCE CENTER, INC.**



Photos by Julienne Schaer

## **TRANSCRIPT OF THE MLRC ANNUAL DINNER NOVEMBER 17, 2004**



**HAL FUSON:** It's my immediate task to tell you that tonight we're going to present for the 10th time the William J. Brennan Defense of Freedom Award. We're going to present it to Ted Turner. Now don't get excited, don't get excited because we want you to have a full appreciation of Ted Turner and why he deserves this award. First, we're going to let Tom Johnson—Tom, who was the publisher of the Los Angeles Times during the brief period in the early '80s when I was one of the lawyers there, went on to become the president of CNN, and Tom worked for Ted for 11 years and he's going to tell you about what great fun it was and how important a good owner is to the success of a journalistic organization. And I'm going to present the award to Ted after Tom makes that presentation. And then Tom Brokaw, who has managed to find his way over here from Rockefeller Center, will interview his friend, Ted Turner, and give you even more background on why this award makes as much sense as it does. Tom, where are you? Tom Johnson. Tom—you'll be able to tell when you hear Tom talk that he's not from Minnesota, but as an upper Midwesterner myself, I don't hold that against him.

**TOM JOHNSON:** I know that we've got a lot of interference from just the fact we're all trying to talk, but if you would just take a minute give me a pause because some of this you will not have heard before. First, I want to thank Hal for the opportunity to introduce Ted. Hal and I had a very good run together at the Los Angeles Times before he jumped ship for much higher compensation at Copley. Ted Turner hired me in 1990 when former CNN president, Burt Reinhardt, was nearing age 70. Burt stayed on as vice chairman of CNN for 10 more years. At Burt's 80th birthday, while he was still going very strong, Ted said to me, "Tom, had I known that Burt was going to live this long I sure as hell would not have needed you." We've had a wonderful relationship for now almost 15 years. We're all going through a period of time now where we are evaluating trends in journalism, especially the issues of quality or the absence of quality. I submit to you tonight my conviction that it is the owner of the news organization who actually determines the standard of quality in our profession. That is true of a newspaper, it's true of a television station, it's true of a news network, it's true with a chain of radio and T.V. stations. It is the owner who ultimately determines the size of our news budgets—for that matter the size of our law departments—the size of our news home, the size of news staffing, the compensation level of our journalists, and the news editorial standards of our organization. If you think about it, it is the owner who selects the editor. It is the owner or the representative of the owner who chooses the president of the news division, and it is the owner who chooses the head of a news channel. And as with the owners of sports franchises, there are bad owners and there are good owners. Ted had a hard and fast rule for us at CNN, a rule that he broke from time to time himself, which was: Do not knock the competition. I will reluctantly comply with that rule out of respect for him tonight. However, in our world of journalism the names of a few owners are legendary: Pulitzer, Hearst, Knight, Graham, Sulzberger, Frank Stanton, Rupert Murdoch, Cox, Lord Conrad Black, Chandler, Newhart, Copley, McCormick, and Ted Turner. The record of each of these owners is there for better qualified critics than I, including most of you, to evaluate. But I'll just say this about Ted. When he founded CNN in 1980 he made his editorial

policy very clear to his staff. Two words: Be fair. During my job interview with Ted in 1990 I asked him what he expected of his new president of CNN. His response: I would like you to make CNN the best news service on the planet. What else, I asked. He said, that's it pal. Well, while Ted was captain of the CNN ship, we really tried to do just that. After Saddam Hussein had invaded Kuwait in 1990 CNN needed to be prepared for a possible invasion of Iraq and Kuwait by U.S. and coalition forces. We had a range of estimates on the cost over budget of what it would take to be prepared. The lowest cost over budget was \$6 million; the highest cost was \$35 million. I went with great reluctance to Ted's office on the 14th floor. I'll never forget my words to him or his words to me. I said, Ted, to cover the war with Iraq, it will cost CNN somewhere between about \$5 million and \$35 million, all over budget. What am I authorized to spend? His answer, exact quote, "You spend whatever you think it takes, pal." I knew then that I worked for an owner who supported good journalism, and in my judgment Ted exemplified the best in an owner, like a Graham, both Phil and Don, and Kate; a Sulzberger like Arthur and his dad, Punch; as a Chandler, particularly Otis Chandler. As all of you know, Ted created 17 news services in multiple languages; he leased transponders to cover every footprint on the face of the earth in multiple languages, reaching over a billion people. He expanded our news staff. We covered the positions of not just the White House, but we staffed Baghdad all the way through. We went repeatedly to Pyongyang. We covered the anti-apartheid Mandela voices into South Africa, and we really tried to be a network that did not present the news through any ideological prism. In any case, under Ted Turner, CNN became the most respected name in news. He authorized the opening of every single bureau that we asked him to approve around the world. In fact, as he probably will tell you tonight, he actually wanted a bureau in every country, and that was why we also were making record profits. Never once—and I swear to you this—never once in 11 years did he ever ask me to pull any journalistic punches; not for his friends, not for Jane Fonda, not for the cable operators, not for the advertisers, not for his board of directors. And just so you know, when our anchor, Bernard Shaw, was coming up on retirement, Ted, first, and in my case, second, went and offered Tom Brokaw \$7 million at a time, we understand, that Tom Brokaw was not making \$7 million. And just a word about Tom. There is no finer man and no more respected anchor in the history of television than Tom Brokaw. He exemplifies the very best in our profession. He has never let us down in his personal or in his professional life. It is inexplicable to me how Gerry Levin, then chairman of our company, made a decision to remove Ted from oversight of the media company he created and built, especially that of CNN. I asked Gerry two weeks ago to explain why he did, and he said he really did not want to reopen that box. Perhaps one day the actual story of that terribly bad decision will be written. Just as Ted had changed the world of television news, his ouster changed the world for those of us who consider him, then as now, one of the giants of American journalism, in short a very good owner. Ladies and gentlemen, Ted Turner.

**HAL FUSON:** We give this award for extraordinary achievement in the advancement of freedom of expression. Tom Johnson has told you the kind of owner that Ted Turner

represented. We've given this award to owners in the past: Sulzberger, Graham, Tim Hayes. But tonight this award goes to someone—I wanted to say, for unprecedented zeal in the exercise of his own right of free speech, which we may see demonstrated here in a minute—but more important, we honor Ted Turner tonight for vision and courage in the invention of CNN. Let me just quote two sentences from Christiane Amanpour, “The idea of 24-hour news and global news is his creation. That has changed the world.”

**TOM BROKAW:** We have a room full of lawyers, so if you don't mind, I'm going to exercise one moment of personal privilege and ask them to all take off their— My instructions only were to all these lawyers in the room is that they now have to turn off their meters. We don't want to be responsible for them suing us at the end of this evening. Let me just say a quick word if I can about Ted. In fact, we did meet when he began to court me. It was one of the greatest courtships I've ever been through. It had a little something to do with the figure that Tom Johnson mentioned, but mostly it had to do with the fact that I got to spend as much time with Ted. I'm sorry that we didn't get to work together, but I am privileged to have emerged from that courtship as his friend because we share so many interests, so many passions about the West and conservation and the environment, and no one, I can assure you, is better company than my friend, Ted Turner, who is not just a great journalist, he's a great citizen, and that's what people must keep in mind. He's a great model for young people because of his inventive mind and his great heart about the welfare of, not just of his company, but people everywhere in this country and around the world. So, getting to know Ted has been for me, at least, one of the great benefits of my later years, and the two of us are going to spend a lot of time in Cloud Springs and bird hunting, I hope, in the days to come. Right, Ted?

**TED TURNER:** You got it.

**TOM BROKAW:** Okay. Well, having said all that, Ted, when you invented CNN and 24-hour cable news all the time, is what we have now what you had in mind?

**TED TURNER:** It's so—it was 25, 26, 27 years ago, and so much has gone through my mind at that time and since, it's really, really hard to tell, but I had very high hopes for it. I saw the potential for it, first domestically, and then a little later, internationally. But it's really hard because it was such a—it wasn't just one day; I thought about it for many, many years. In fact, for 25 years I was constantly trying to upgrade my thinking and expand our horizons as that became possible to do. You have to remember I wasn't just doing CNN then; we did five or six major entertainment networks through TNT, TBS, the Braves, we were doing the Goodwill Games, we were doing so many different—Cartoon Network, Turner Classic Movies, we were doing so many different things, making movies, *Gettysburg*, *Lord of the Rings*, that it was really—it's kind of hard—it's kind of like my mind is like alphabet soup; it's really hard to remember, everything is all mixed up and the little alphabet letters are floating around.

**TOM BROKAW:** But as you look now across the cable landscape, of not just at CNN and Headline News, but also at Fox and MSNBC, and all the other competition, and both the tone and the content of what you're seeing, are you proud that you had a big role in starting all that?

**TED TURNER:** Yes. Absolutely. I mean television was a very limited medium with three or four channels when we started, and now there's 100. So not all of it is really better, but it is choice, and there is some better stuff there. I mean you've got the History Channel, you have some of the all news channels; you do have a difference over a choice from stupid reality shows—I think they're stupid—and there's nothing really wrong with them if people want to watch stupid stuff, that's okay. But remember, you are what you eat and you are what you watch. If you watch a bunch of stupid shows, you're going to be a stupid person. I mean I have never seen a brilliant person that watched stupid shows regularly and vice versa.

**TOM BROKAW:** I knew I was going to have to struggle to get him to express his opinion here tonight, and now you see the challenge that's before me.

**TED TURNER:** Well, I might as well be honest tonight because if I can't tell the lawyers who can I tell? First Amendment Lawyers.

**TOM BROKAW:** Are we moving to an all cable universe in television?

**TED TURNER:** We already have. Between cable and satellite, it's been close to 90% of the households right now, and it's an average of about a \$40 tab, so people have voted with their pocketbooks, and a lot more people have cable T.V. than voted for either candidate for president.

**TOM BROKAW:** You at one time really wanted to have a network.

**TED TURNER:** I did. Well, I wanted to have all the networks; my real dream was like in Monopoly where you can own every hotel on the board, but I didn't quite get there. And I'm against monopoly, unless you have it, and the government's supposed to stop you. I always figured my objective was to get big and strong enough to where the government would break me up because then I could quit because the game's over when you win everything.

**TOM BROKAW:** If you were still active in the business, would you want a network now?

**TED TURNER:** Not as much, but I'd still want one, yeah. You know, I'd like to have GE and Fox and TimeWarner. It'd be a very powerful company. And Viacom.

**TOM BROKAW:** But you're the guy who has been very critical of the concentration of media ownership.

**TED TURNER:** Absolutely. Just because you want something, doesn't make it right, you know? Basically—you want to be more specific about the question? But basically I have no problem with that. I was playing by the rules as they were; the rules were wrong, but when you see the loopholes in the rules, you're supposed to fill them, and then the government's supposed to take corrective action if you get too powerful. That's the way I see it, but you should push the limits and go as far as you can. You should climb Mt. Everest. When I was a boy I wanted to go to the top and I wanted to go there in a hurry. And I did. I accomplished what I intended to do. And I really feel like, in a way, that it's a blessing that they pushed me out at TimeWarner because it has allowed me, with the strength that I have, to devote myself to things that I have not been successful at yet. The first one: world peace, a more equitable fairer and kinder and generous world, a world where people take care of and respect the environment and the resource base of which we all depend for our livelihood, and I'm working on those things, but it's a very big job, and I'm really concerned. I really feel like humanity—it'll either make it or not in the next 50 years, and right now it looks like we're not making as many right choices as we need to to successfully survive. And I'm concerned about the nuclear weapons and terrorism, but we'll get into that, I guess, I'm going too far. You have to ask me something.

**TOM BROKAW:** Before we get into that let me get back to this business about media concentration. A lot of people would say look, you're just being hypocritical. You're the guy who really did want to have the networks and you just -

**TED TURNER:** [interposing] No but, of course, but as I'm saying now is the guys—you play by the rules and if the rules have a lot of loopholes in them, which they do now, the Fairness Doctrine was done away with—I believed in the Fairness Doctrine. We practiced the Fairness Doctrine even when there wasn't one at CNN. If somebody was attacked by CNN and the opposition didn't get a—we normally went to the other side and asked them to speak before they demanded time from us. I believe that you're best served by having both sides of the critical issues aired, and then let the viewers make up their own mind without editorial guidance from the news leaders. As much as I wanted you, we had a policy at CNN that I put in that the news readers—we had opinion shows like *Crossfire* and *Capital Gang*, but we also had the news shows, and I told the news readers, even Bernie Shaw, that I did not want them to intersperse their personal opinions with the delivery of the news.

**TOM BROKAW:** What do you think about the Fox News cable?

**TED TURNER:** It's awful. I mean, all you have to do is see *Outfoxed*; it's on a video or CD. It was done totally independent; I had nothing to do with it. I don't appear in it. I didn't put any money up—well, I wish I had—no, I'm glad I didn't because this is an

independent look at Rupert's operation, and it's really scary. How many of you have seen it? Everyone in here should see it, please—I'm asking you, even if you're a right-winged kook. It won't change your opinion, you know, if you're one of those people.

**TOM BROKAW:** Why do you think Fox is so popular?

**TED TURNER:** Because they're the only network—all the rest of the networks are pretty much middle of the road. We can be called liberal if you want to. I like the word progressive better than liberal because nobody knows what that means. But I do, and that way you can't get tagged with a bunch of losers, you know? The liberals—right now liberal is equated LL, Loser Loser, liberal losers. But progressives nobody knows about them yet; it's kind of a newer deal, right? I wanted to start a party a few years ago called the "Smart Party," the idea being, you either vote smart or you vote the other way, you know? It would make a good bumper sticker: Vote Smart.

**TOM BROKAW:** Do you think that Rupert Murdoch is a danger to the republic?

**TED TURNER:** I think he's a danger to the world, but fortunately he's getting real old, and I don't think he's going to be able to take over the world before the Lord calls him. He might though, but I don't consider him the greatest risk. Nuclear annihilation is ahead of Rupert on the danger list, but he's probably in the top three or four things.

**TOM BROKAW:** About the media consolidation, which is of interest to these people...

**TED TURNER:** He's near the top of the list. He's up there with biological peril, or poison gas, chemical weapons. I put him more in the chemical weapon category.

**TOM BROKAW:** I was literally once at a dinner where Ted was being honored, and we said to him beforehand, this is an important New York audience for you, Ted, and this is a chance for them to see the other side of you and know how thoughtful you are about the business. He says, yeah, yeah, I get it. And I introduced him and went on at some great length, as Tom Johnson did here tonight, and Ted got up and looked at the audience and said, I know why you're all here. You want to know what I think about Rupert Murdoch. He said, I think I'm going to have to shoot him. And the air went out of the room and he said, oh, I know but I can get off by reason of insanity. Just today in the New York Post they had me in a straight jacket, they've already proved that I'm—have you had any communication with Rupert Murdoch in the last five years?

**TED TURNER:** Yes. I shook his hand at the Academy Awards; he was at the next table, and I just thought, since I was accidentally forced into his company, that I would be gracious and gentlemanly. What I wanted to do is punch him in the nose, but he's older than me.

**TOM BROKAW:** Do you think that Fox's success will hurt CNN in the long haul?

**TED TURNER:** I hope not. It'll only hurt CNN if CNN—which they were doing under the—there have been a couple of management changes. They brought in the boys from the Warner network, from Hollywood, to spruce up CNN, and that's where Connie Chung's show came from. And it was so awful I was ashamed enough of it to go public and criticize it, and they took it off a month or so later, and then they got rid of all those guys from the West Coast, and they turned CNN back over to the younger generation of CNNers that were there, and I think it's much, much better. I think it's basically okay. I don't like the fact they've cut back on international news. I hate the global minute. I saw it on Headline News, but to try and just put the world into a minute, it just trivializes it, and they completely let go of the environmental unit and they've cut way back on environmental news, which I think is one of the great ongoing stories of our time. We either save the environment or we're extinct because the environment supports us all, and if we let the environment go down the crapper, we're going down with it. The world won't be able to support six billion people. You'll have three or four billion people starve to death, and that, with global warming and all the other—that's what I'm concerned about, if we don't blow ourselves up with our nuclear arsenals, that we destroy our environment so badly, degrade it so badly that it can't support us. Those are the two things that worry me the most. But other than that I got a lot of other things that bother me too, you know. I don't like the fact that people are still mean to each other. There's no excuse for being mean to other people, and if we all treated each other like—Martin Luther King said it best. He said, we're all going to learn to live together as brothers or we're all going to perish together like a bunch of fools. And that is absolutely true; it's right. We shouldn't be starting wars. We should be stopping wars, not starting wars. We've got to put war behind us. War is obsolete and it doesn't work anyway. You know, 100 years ago people on this world—in many parts of the world were under informed, and those people would accept being slaves. But today nobody will be a slave. The Arabs will not be slaves; the Iraqis will not be slaves to the United States. If another country had invaded New York and the United States, and then we'd all be terrorists too, we'd be killing them and blowing them up too. I'm not going to accept any foreign troops on my soil. Is anybody else in here going to do it? Well, why are we different than any other country in the world? All people feel the same; nobody wants to be invaded and conquered and have somebody else's government form a government imposed on them, you know, by force. That's a bunch of BS. It's wrong; and also it's dangerous because wars have a way with spinning out of control. This war, by all means, should've been over a long time ago, but nobody surrenders anymore. The Vietnamese didn't surrender. Remember World War II—the Japanese officials on the Battleship Missouri surrendering to MacArthur? No, the lawyers were there, you know, they drew up the contract. And the German general staff surrendered in Europe. But the Vietnamese didn't surrender, and the Iraqis haven't surrendered either, you know? People don't surrender anymore, and the war keeps going on until they kick you out, and eventually you'll get tired and go home because we have no reason to be over there with

military possession all over the world. Why is the United States spending more on the military than all the rest of the countries in the world combined? Is the whole world against us? What are we doing? What's the plan? Are we going to conquer the world like the Roman Empire? Well, if we think we're going to do that, we're making a big mistake.

**TOM BROKAW:** Do you think terrorism is a real threat for America?

**TED TURNER:** Well, of course it's a threat, but just remember this: It's not only foreign terrorism. The second greatest act of terror in the United States after 9/11 was the Oklahoma bombing and that was done by a discharged honorable veteran of the United States, an American, Timothy McVeigh. So mostly terrorism is caused by nuts, and there's not much you can do about them because there are a lot of them.

**TOM BROKAW:** Do you think we're creating more all the time?

**TED TURNER:** I think we're making nutty people angry, you know, and that's a bad combination. It's one thing to be nutty and a lover, you know, I mean like me. Or you can be real nutty and real dangerous. That's like a murderer, you know, or a terrorist or something.

**TOM BROKAW:** Were you surprised by the election results?

**TED TURNER:** I was—no, I wasn't really surprised. I don't let myself be surprised as a news man very much. I was fearful that this was going to happen, and the great thing about it—the sad thing about it in my opinion—just me, my own opinion—is the opportunity that's lost. When we need to be doing everything right, we re-elected a very personable guy with an attractive, loyal wife, who has a lot of good ideas. I really admire a lot of things about our president, but I just don't think he's the right man at this time because he's not as much of a future—he's an oil man and so is Cheney, the vice president. We need a whiz kid running the country now, somebody like Bezos or Gates, or somebody that's looking ahead and that's in high technology, not somebody that's in the oil and gas business. I just think we need to be looking ahead, not behind, and we need to be moving away from a fossil fuel economy. We need to be doing everything right, and we're going to probably keep doing a lot of things wrong. We'll be doing some things right because you can't be wrong all the time.

**TOM BROKAW:** What did you think of the Sinclair broadcasting decision to air the documentary—

**TED TURNER:** [Interposing] I thought that it was a bad move to get—but it's no worse than what Rupert's doing with Fox News. And once again, you have to see *Outfoxed*. But don't take my word for it. View an independently made film. But Sinclair—I guess

those guys are on the far right. Now I understand the far right because I was born into a family that was—my father was on the far right, and I grew up thinking that Truman and Roosevelt were communists. I was a grown man before I realized they were heroes, at least to me. I thought they were both real good people for the country, but my dad thought they were communists.

**TOM BROKAW:** And what about the decision of some ABC affiliates not to carry *Private Ryan* because they were worried about not getting their licenses renewed?

**TED TURNER:** I haven't studied that one as close. I think it's unfortunate. I think that Spielberg should've allowed them to bleep the profanity out. I don't see why you have to—I'm offended by all the profanity that's around us today.

**TOM BROKAW:** You don't think there's ever a context for profanity?

**TED TURNER:** I'm sorry?

**TOM BROKAW:** Do you think there's not context for profanity? The reason he left it in, he felt very strongly this was about the landing in Normandy and—

**TED TURNER:** [Interposing] Right, I saw the movie. Not on ABC, I saw it in a theatre—

**TOM BROKAW:** Right.

**TED TURNER:** - six or seven years ago.

**TOM BROKAW:** And you made a choice to go see that.

**TED TURNER:** I don't remember all the foul language though. I can't remember. I just remembered so many people were getting killed at the beginning that I had to cover my eyes with my hands. It was really scary, but it was beautifully done, and it was certainly an anti-war film. I liked that.

**TOM BROKAW:** But you feel strongly about war—

**TED TURNER:** Yes, I do.

**TOM BROKAW:** —and that the people need to know the real nature of war, and so by putting on *Private Ryan*—

**TED TURNER:** [Interposing] But you still can bleep the cussing. So good, everybody knows what they're saying. Bleep.

**TOM BROKAW:** We choose not to bleep you ever, Ted.

**TED TURNER:** I've been bleeped.

**TOM BROKAW:** So you don't think that there's a case to be made for over the air artistic integrity if it includes profanity.

**TED TURNER:** It's not a big issue. When you're worried about nuclear annihilation, whether something gets bleeped or not doesn't really bother me much one way or the other. I try and keep my mind focused on the really important issues and let the trivial issues be handled by the local newscast, not the network newscast.

**TOM BROKAW:** Do you watch HBO?

**TED TURNER:** Do I what?

**TOM BROKAW:** Watch HBO?

**TED TURNER:** No, I don't watch any television except CNN, and occasionally I'll watch a Braves game, and everything else I see on video because I can't make appointments. I can't be there at 8 o'clock to watch something, and I go to bed at 8:30. It takes me usually three or four nights to watch a movie on CD or DVD or whatever it is, and so I have to be able to turn it on when I want to and turn it off when I want to, and I never watch network programming. I don't watch much T.V. I read a lot, and I try and think a lot. And too much T.V. viewing will rot your mind, in my opinion.

**TOM BROKAW:** Ted, why is there an absence of civility in our society? Why are people mean to each other? Why are people mean to each other? Why is there an absence of—

**TED TURNER:** [Interposing] Because I think we're—you know what?

**TOM BROKAW:** Do we reward it?

**TED TURNER:** I think overall we're definitely nicer to each other today than we were 200 years ago. We don't have gladiators any more. We're don't watch people deliberately kill each other; we watch them hurt each other on Sunday afternoons in football and boxing, but we don't deliberately kill each other. There's no more slavery. Most of the women in the world have more rights than they had—we are a kinder world than we were before, and I think communications and education and just the growth of civilization have led to that. The question is, right now what with nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction that we have now, we can't afford to have the possibility of an Adolf Hitler come to power anywhere in the world. Graham Allison, who is one of the

top people at Harvard on the nuclear issue, thinks that the odds are better than 50/50, and he said this just recently, better than 50/50, that there will be a nuclear—a nuclear terrorist will get and detonate a nuclear device in one of the major cities in the world within the next 10 years, and it will probably be New York—that's what they hit last time—and if they have enough fissionable material for two bombs, they'll hit Washington and New York in the same day and level both cities and set us back hundreds of years almost into the dark ages. We'll be without a government and without a financial capital.

**TOM BROKAW:** Is there any doubt in your mind that if Saddam Hussein had remained in power that he would've attempted to do just that?

**TED TURNER:** No. He was crazy, but he wasn't dumb. He's a nut. I mean, we spent \$200 billion to find a nut who has got prostate cancer in a fox hole. What—the dumbest thing I've ever—we spent \$100 billion to destroy the place, now we've got to pledge to spend \$100 billion to rebuild it. I'm telling you, to get one guy, that is bad business. You make many deals like—if I made one deal like that or even close to that, I wouldn't be here today, I'd be sleeping...

**TOM BROKAW:** You were trying to get me for just \$7 million. I mean, if we'd gone to \$200 billion, we might've had a deal.

**TED TURNER:** GE would've matched it.

**TOM BROKAW:** Not under Jack Welsh, it wouldn't have matched it.

**TED TURNER:** Yes, they would've. They did match it. They matched the seven.

**TOM BROKAW:** They did okay.

**TED TURNER:** Pretty quickly too. Otherwise you would've been with me. But we did the same thing for Rather and Jennings, so we got everybody's salaries up. If I couldn't have it, at least they could cost our competitors more, and they'd have less money for bureaus.

**TOM BROKAW:** Why do you think the country does not get aroused about environmental issues generally? This is something that you and I both care about, and it's hard frankly—I was just in California -

**TED TURNER:** [Interposing] Well, I'll tell you. I put a great deal of the blame for our failure of our society on the media. I know that stuff like this jerk, Peterson, I mean I just mentally tune out. I don't know what Peterson—how many of you—but people follow that stuff and I have to admit CNN did some of it too. We had the cameras on O.J.'s car all day long like everybody, but it was not our proudest hour, and I think the media needs

to write the important stories or produce them for television irregardless of what the ratings are. I think that, first of all, I believe the media should be supported by a combination of subscription and advertising; not advertising alone because if you are supported by advertising alone then your only source of income is high ratings. But if you're supported with quality journalism as well for which the viewer or subscriber pays a fee, and advertising only carries a portion of the load, you can, as the owner of the media company, you could look at it and say it's important that I do a public service, that it's important that the citizens to this country are well informed about the really important issues—and you can define them any way you want—rather than the trivial stuff, you know, the *Star*, the *National Enquirer*, *People Magazine*, all the fluff about who's sleeping with who in Hollywood. And who gives a chubby rat's ass?

**TOM BROKAW:** If you were starting all over again, would you go into the subscription cable business? Pay per television? Would you spend more of your time trying to develop those kinds of channels on cable?

**TED TURNER:** Pay channels?

**TOM BROKAW:** Pay channels.

**TED TURNER:** Like HBO?

**TOM BROKAW:** Yeah.

**TED TURNER:** No, I would've tried to do both and all like I did. HBO filled that niche very quickly and Showtime flanked them, and then Encore came along and flanked Showtime. Clearly that market was saturated early on and there was no point in trying to—although with Turner Classic Movies we took a nip at them because Turner Classic Movies doesn't have any advertising; it's 100% a pay channel. So we did have one.

**TOM BROKAW:** Is that where we're going though in television?

**TED TURNER:** Who knows where we're going?

**TOM BROKAW:** Well, you're our visionary here tonight, that's why we've gone to all this trouble.

**TED TURNER:** But I don't know everything, and once again, I don't spend much time thinking about the future of television anymore. I spend a little, but not much. I'm thinking more about the future of mankind. And I was in television for 30 years, 35, whatever, and I'm kind of glad not to have to read the ratings every morning. I really don't give a goddamn what's the number one story in the country; I ain't watching it. I'm thinking about what we're going to do about getting rid of nuclear weapons.

**TOM BROKAW:** And who is helping you with that?

**TED TURNER:** A lot of people.

**TOM BROKAW:** Besides Sam Nunn.

**TED TURNER:** Sam Nunn. One is Sam Nunn, the Nuclear Threat Initiative. We have two sitting members of the Duma, the Russian Duma, on the board. We have a representative from China. We have two U.S. senators, both republicans, Senator Domenici, from New Mexico, and Senator Lugar, who was the architect of the Dick Lugar Bill; he's a good friend of Sam's, as you know, and he's very active with us, and he would like to see the danger of—but we have an excellent board of directors at the U.N. Foundation and the Nuclear Threat Initiative and at the Turner Foundation. I spend most of my time trying to figure out how I can use what little bit of money I have left to help save humanity.

**TOM BROKAW:** Ted, I was in Pakistan last March when it was announced that A. Q. Khan had been arrested by the [off mic].

**TED TURNER:** This is why the nuclear weapons scare us so; they say they're safe, but they're on hair trigger alert, and what if they have the same kind of problems with them we're having with the microphone? It might launch accidentally, and then it's good-bye.

**TOM BROKAW:** These microphones have more safeguards than they do in Russia. I was in Pakistan last March when they arrested A. Q. Khan, who was the father of the nuclear bomb in Pakistan. He had been peddling that stuff all over the subcontinent and all the way through the Middle East as well.

**TED TURNER:** I know.

**TOM BROKAW:** And they were cheering him in the streets.

**TED TURNER:** Why?

**TOM BROKAW:** Because he was -

**TED TURNER:** [Interposing] I know why.

**TOM BROKAW:** They put him on the map—he put them on the map.

**TED TURNER:** Right. Well -

**TOM BROKAW:** [Interposing] They gave him national pride.

**TED TURNER:** Do you know who's responsible? The people who are responsible are the nuclear powers, who signed a treaty in 1964 saying that we would immediately do everything in our power to reduce and eliminate the nuclear stockpiles, and it was another one of the treaties the United States and Russia lied about, and we've never done a thing to—we have glamorized—the third world countries or developing world countries look at the United States, the most powerful nation on earth, and they say we want to be like them, just like children want to be like their fathers, like adults. We're the ones that have glamorized the ownership of nuclear weapons. We threaten everybody with ours all the time. The very fact that we keep them and have them, and we can bomb anybody anytime we want to terrifies, and yet it causes admiration all over the rest of the world, and the Pakistanis and the Indians and the Israelis and the Russians, and everybody, the Iranians and the Koreans, they all want to be like us and be rich and powerful and have nuclear weapons. If we want the rest of the world not to have nuclear weapons, we've got to get rid of ours too. Everybody has to. We got to all get rid of them and quickly before something goes badly wrong. We're lucky that we haven't had a fatal accident so far, and during the Cuban Missile Crisis, if you'd seen the *Cold War*, which I made, you will see that we came within minutes, if not almost no time left, for humanity; we came that close to nuclear war. And during the Berlin Crisis, the same thing. We're lucky to be here, but we can't expect to stay lucky forever. We've got to get rid of those weapons before they get rid of us.

**TOM BROKAW:** The Russians announced today that they're -

**TED TURNER:** [Interposing] Yes.

**TOM BROKAW:** - developing a new nuclear weapon and missiles.

**TED TURNER:** [Interposing] I saw it on CNN right before I came over here. I had to turn the news on because I knew you'd ask me—I knew you were going to do the news tonight, and you'd have all the latest stuff. So far the new Russian announcement doesn't necessarily be threatening to us. We don't know enough yet, but I can't imagine my friend Putin would do anything right now to escalate a nuclear arms race with the United States. It will be a catastrophe if that happens.

**TOM BROKAW:** Well I think the much greater danger there is the absence of safeguards on the nuclear material that they have all over the country.

**TED TURNER:** Well we're working hard on that with Nunn, Lugar, and the Nuclear Threat Initiative. We're working hard on that to make sure that the money's available, and that's absolutely true; it's a great problem, and probably if the terrorists get their hands on nuclear material—in the United States it's much better guarded here; it'll probably be obtained from Russia, and God knows where it'll be used or how.

**TOM BROKAW:** Let's take a moment or two to talk about the environment, and I want to talk about your new venture. When you look out over the next 50 years about environmental degradation in this country...

**TED TURNER:** What kind of segregation?

**TOM BROKAW:** Environmental degradation.

**TED TURNER:** Oh, degradation. I'm hard of hearing, in case you couldn't tell.

**TOM BROKAW:** What concerns you most? Is it the water, the air, or the disappearance of wild and virginal lands?

**TED TURNER:** Everything, all of the above, every bit of it—CO2 build-up, heat, warming, polar ice caps melting, which is already occurring at an unbelievably rapid rate. If you save the water and lose the air, you're still dead. The planet is like a human body and it's very complex, and if one part of it dies the rest of it got a good chance of dying too. If you lose your liver, a human being dies; if we lose the air, we all die; if we lose the ocean; if we lose the forest. But we're in danger of degrading the planet so badly because there's so many of us with high technology using so much stuff that the planet is collapsing underneath it, and if we allow that to occur—we have to save it all. We have to save the whole human race. It's not going to be just Americans—the rich people are not going to be the ones that just survive. The developing world will drag us down—8,000 illegal immigrants enter the United States every day; that's several million people a year. We are going to be overwhelmed and overrun. There's no place to hide. We are going to have to save everything and everyone or we're all going to go. There's not going to—we're on one ship, the planet earth and if we don't take care of it and if we don't take care of each other, and starting immediately, we're headed for total disaster. In fact, we're on the road to it. I mean the glaciers and the ice caps are melting at such a rate now, New York is going to be under water—that movie that came out about a year ago with New York 40 feet under water? That's going to happen.

**TOM BROKAW:** Senator Inhofe who is from Oklahoma, the Republican Chairman of the Senate, Environmental and Public Works Committee, says that global warming is the greatest hoax ever perpetuated.

**TED TURNER:** Well, that's what the cigarette companies said too about smoking, you know, at the beginning. But the overwhelming, overwhelming, amount of scientific knowledge now corroborates that global warming is real and is coming faster than ever before thought. But there's always a few nuts that are going to say—there's still people that believe the world is flat, and some people don't—in our government— don't believe in what is it?—in evolution, don't believe in evolution they believe that—

**TOM BROKAW:** [Interposing] Creationism.

**TED TURNER:** - yeah, creation.

**TOM BROKAW:** Where does Ted's Montana Grill chain fit in to it all?

**TED TURNER:** Fit in? Well, I had to have something to do. I'm an entrepreneur, I'm a business man. I like that, and I've started a restaurant chain. I have 29 restaurants and I'm building 15 more next year, me and my partners. And they're doing pretty well, not great, but well enough to where I'm encouraged and I'm absolutely sure they're going to be successful. We'll get one in New York one of these days. We're going to open one in Connecticut and Rhode Island some time this year. We're getting here slowly -

**TOM BROKAW:** Well, tell them what's on the menu. These people don't know what's on the menu.

**TED TURNER:** I don't either. I didn't look at the menu. Is bison on the menu here?

**TOM BROKAW:** Well, no, but we hope that it's going to be a big thing.

**TED TURNER:** [Interposing] It's already a big thing.

**TOM BROKAW:** You've talked me into raising bison.

**TED TURNER:** I know and prices have been going up, too, worldwide. You got in at the right time. But basically, you know, I got let go, and I lost so much money, and I'm really worried about the safety of the Social Security program. I just went on Social Security this year—I figured I had to have another job, and it's very hard for somebody 65 to get another job. Nobody wants you because you're too old and your insurance payments are too high, so I had to go out and start this company because I'm worried about my security. I want to have some income when I get older. I might lose my health or something, and I don't have any of—TimeWarner's cut me off from the health benefits.

**TOM BROKAW:** Ted, I'll make you a deal. If you run out of money I'll call this group, and they'll pay to come hear you again. Thank you very much.

**TED TURNER:** All right, it's fun.

Applause. [END TRANSCRIPT]