

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB NEWSMAKER LUNCHEON

SUBJECT: THE NEWSEUM AND THE FREE

PRESS: A SIGN OF THE TIMES

SPEAKER:

CHARLES OVERBY, CHAIRMAN, CEO AND PRESIDENT, THE FREEDOM FORUM AND
CEO OF THE NEWSEUM

MODERATOR: DONNA LEINWAND, VICE PRESIDENT, NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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MS. LEINWAND: Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Press
Club for our speaker luncheon featuring Charles Overby. My name is
Donna Leinwand, and I'm vice president of the National Press Club and
a reporter for USA Today. I'd like to welcome Club members and their
guests in the audience today, as well as those of you watching on C-
SPAN.

We're looking forward to today's speech, and afterwards I will
ask as many questions as time permits. Please hold your applause
during the speech so that we have time for as many questions as
possible. For our broadcast audience, I'd like to explain that if you
hear applause, it may be from the guests and members of the general
public who attend our luncheons and not necessarily from the working
press.

I'd now like to introduce our head table guests and ask them to

stand briefly when their names are called. From your right -- hmm. I don't have my list. (Laughs.)

Andy Alexander, Cox bureau chief -- thank you. Reverend Barbara Wright -- I mean, I'm sorry -- Reverend Barbara Reynolds. I'm sorry, I'm actually missing my list, so I apologize for that. John Cosgrove, who is the head of the -- head Hoot for the NPC Owls; Jack Hurley from the Newseum. Oh, here we go -- excellent. Chuck Lewis, the Hearst bureau chief -- now when I know everyone. Peter Prichard, president of the Newseum and a guest of the speaker.

Skipping over the podium, we have Melissa Charbonneau, CBN News and vice chair of the speakers committee. Skipping over our guest, we have Joe Anselmo, senior business editor, Aviation Week, and speakers committee member who organized today's event; Joe Urschel, executive director and senior vice president of the Newseum; Mark McQuillen -- oh, I'm sorry, he's not here. We have Susan Bennett -- you definitely don't look like Mark McQuillen -- Susan Bennett, vice president and deputy director of the Newseum, also a guest of the speaker; Michelle Katz, a health care expert who is an author, producer and local cable television host in the Washington, D.C. metro area. We have Wes Pippert, director of the Missouri Journalism Washington program and chairman of the NPC Freedom of the Press Committee. (Applause.)

Our speaker today is Charles Overby, the chairman and CEO and president of the Freedom Forum, an independent and nonprofit foundation dedicated to First Amendment issues. You have likely seen him in the news recently for his other post -- CEO of the Newseum, the interactive museum which opened to great fanfare on April 11th here in Washington.

The original Newseum opened in 1997 in an office building in Virginia on the other side of the Potomac. Off the beaten path, it drew far more visitors than ever expected and it soon outgrew its space. So Mr. Overby pitched an audacious plan to recreate the Newseum as a state-of-the-art facility in the heart of the nation's capital. He picked a prime location on Pennsylvania Avenue, in the shadow of the U.S. Capitol, and just off the National Mall.

But there was a problem. The site, thought to be worth about \$50 million, was occupied by a city government office building, and it wasn't for sale. So Mr. Overby made the city an offer it couldn't refuse -- an unsolicited bid of \$100 million. So the Newseum got its prime location.

The reincarnated Newseum, housed in a brand new 250,000-square-foot facility, features 14 exhibition galleries that display the history of the news media and how it covered major world events. But it's not without controversy. Reviewers have called it a mausoleum for news, an industry's last hurrah before its ultimate demise. And they've also called it the media's too-expensive tribute to itself.

Mr. Overby has said that the Newseum is meant to be a tribute to the First Amendment. And indeed, the Newseum is his latest accomplishment in a long career dedicated to journalism and freedom of the press. Mr. Overby began that journalism career as a Mississippi

high school student working as a sportswriter for the Jackson Daily News. That was the springboard to a series of reporting, editing and executive jobs at my company, Gannett. He went on to cover the White House, presidential campaigns, Congress and the Supreme Court.

Mr. Overby was editor of the Clarion-Ledger in Jackson in 1983 when it won the Pulitzer Prize for public service for news and editorials on education reform in Mississippi. He also served two stints in government on both sides of the aisle, as press assistant to Mississippi's Democratic Senator John Stennis and as a special assistant to Tennessee's Republican Governor Lamar Alexander.

In 1989, Mr. Overby was tapped to run the Freedom Forum, then known as the Gannett Foundation. In that capacity, he has traveled to six continents to promote freedom of the press issues.

Please join me in a National Press Club welcome for Charles Overby. (Applause.)

MR. OVERBY: Thank you. Thank you very much. And thank you, Donna, for that very generous introduction. And thank you for inviting me and my colleagues at the Newseum to the National Press Club. We're honored to be back. The Newseum and the Freedom Forum are honored to be long-time partners with the National Press Club. We've done a lot of great programs together. And now that we have a little address on Pennsylvania Avenue, we look forward to cooperating with you even more in the future. (Applause.)

I want to acknowledge and brag on my colleagues from the Newseum who are here today. I brag on them for coming to listen to me speak, but really I want to brag on them because most of the leadership team of the Newseum is here today. And I wanted them to be here today so that you could see them and know who did what I consider to be the brilliant design, building, writing of the work at the Newseum. They did a terrific job and they deserve a hand. (Applause.) Thank you.

The secret to building this Newseum has been the collegial approach that we took. Dozens of smart journalists and Newseum professionals gathered regularly to discuss content and presentation. It was like a daily page one news meeting that went on for six years. We finally got page one out.

I also want to thank my friends for being here today. You will not hear anything that you haven't heard me brag about before. And I'm especially pleased that several of the trustees of the Freedom Forum, Newseum and Diversity Institute are here as well.

On this 100-year anniversary of the National Press Club, we celebrate together the history of journalism that has taken place so vividly and so colorfully on Pennsylvania Avenue. On your next visit to the Newseum, I hope that you will take the time to read about the traditions that make Pennsylvania Avenue so special to both of our institutions. We tell visitors about Newspaper Row and a couple of other related institutions, Rum Row and the Palace of Fortune that used to be along here.

I will tell you just one story that's in the Newseum up on the

Pennsylvania Avenue Terrace about the historic newspapers along Pennsylvania Avenue. The National Intelligencer, as most of you know, was an early influential newspaper known for its support of Thomas Jefferson and its opposition to most things British. It was located at one time on Pennsylvania Avenue near our current location of 6th Street and Pennsylvania.

During the 1814 attack by the British on Washington, British Admiral George Cockburn ordered the Intelligencer's office demolished. He told his troops to be sure and destroy all the type with the letter "C" so the Intelligencer could no longer criticize him by name. (Laughter.) Oh, to live in such simpler times. (Laughter.) Perhaps George Bush could just confiscate all the "Bs." (Laughter.)

The Newseum is built on the site where the famous National Hotel was located.

The National Hotel opened in 1825 and was occupied until 1947. John Wilkes Booth spent the night there before he shot Abraham Lincoln. An incriminating note about Booth was found at the National Hotel.

When we dug the foundation for the Newseum, down around 48 feet, according to Max Page, who's here, we found a few bricks down there that we assume were from the National Hotel. I'm at least saying they are, and I have one of those bricks in my office as a historic artifact.

The connection between the press and the public and Pennsylvania Avenue is historic and interesting. But the connection between the National Press Club and the Newseum is more than simply eight blocks on Pennsylvania Avenue. We share a mission: promoting and educating people about the First Amendment and a free press.

Today I want to tell you a little bit about our Newseum in a way that I hope will encourage you to understand that people still care about the First Amendment, a free press, and news.

That confidence to the core of our decision to spend \$450 million to build the Newseum on Pennsylvania Avenue. We believe that millions of people are going to visit our Newseum over time. My colleagues and I are thrilled -- thrilled beyond measure -- to see happy faces inside the Newseum now that we've finally been able to open.

The response to the opening of the Newseum nearly two weeks ago has been overwhelming, both from the public and from the media. Thousands of people are buying tickets to come see Washington's newest museum and the world's most interactive museum.

Now, you might ask yourself -- some of you have asked me -- why are visitors paying to come to our Newseum when they can go across the street to another museum for free? Well, we're still learning the answers, but it's a legitimate question, a good one, and one that we care a lot about.

The early evidence is that Washington tourists and Washington residents are hungry for a modern, state-of-the-art experience. They

want to learn, but they want to have fun, too. They are looking for a personal connection to Washington, and the Newseum is providing that. The big screens, the games, the films, the interactive computers, and the dramatic photos add up to a "Wow!" experience.

You also have to step back and ask the question why do people travel to Washington in the first place. Twenty million tourists come to Washington every year. We thought about that question, and for the most part, we think they come to Washington as part of a pilgrimage.

They want to see the monuments of freedom and they want to see how their democracy works. We believe the Newseum is going to become a part of that pilgrimage, because it's the only place you can go to see the media at large.

The public sees the press as a big player in our democracy. Whether they like or not, they think the media is a big player. And so the visitor comment cards that come back to us say that they are glad to go somewhere where they can finally see the media writ large. Those comment cards from visitors are showing an enthusiasm that really pleases us, and we plan to work hard to keep that enthusiasm going.

A visitor from York, Pennsylvania, for instance, wrote us, "There's a lot of video and movies to see, so if you don't really like reading about stuff, you can always see it in the movies." (Laughter.) You know, we laugh at that, but that's really one of the secrets to the success of our Newseum.

A visitor from Prince Frederick, Maryland, wrote movingly about the Pulitzer Prize photo gallery, quote, "It's almost like the Vietnam Memorial. It's just so moving seeing these pictures, seeing these memories. It is very timely, interactive, and not boring." We're considering putting a sign up in front of the Newseum that says "Not boring." (Laughter.)

It does my heart good to see people standing in front of the Newseum looking at front pages. Stop the presses! The public is looking at newspapers and liking them! (Laughter.) Take note, publishers and editors.

When we ask our visitors for feedback, we get a consistent theme -- the Newseum is interesting, lively, and fun. Already we're getting stories from parents who have visited the Newseum with their children. They say their children come alive when they come in the doors of the Newseum. Many say that they have drug their children through the usual museums, and they're so relieved when they get to the Newseum to see the children actually enjoy it.

We've learned in just the last two weeks that our visitors establish an emotional connection with the Newseum and its exhibits. Now, why is that? There are a lot of reasons, probably, but a big reason is that they are given an opportunity to relive the big stories of their lives.

They remember where they were on 9/11. They remember who they were with when they learned of Princess Di's death. They remember

their personal emotions when President Kennedy was assassinated.

In addition, the Newseum puts people in touch with their memories in a dramatic way. The pervasive use of video, films, and photos sets the Newseum apart from normal museums. We have a full-time broadcast and engineering staff, and that's what it takes to run a big, interactive museum.

I will boldly say, to the dismay of some of my staff, that you will never see an "out of order" sign on any of our interactive exhibits. Now, that doesn't mean that we won't experience a technical and temporary failure, but we have a full-time staff whose job is to go out immediately and fix any glitches.

It was a daunting task to design and build 14 galleries and 15 theaters, two broadcast studios, a two-level conference center, administrative offices, a restaurant, a food court, and 135 apartments. I'm glad to see some of the residents of those apartments here today. Thank you.

But we are ecstatic with the outcome of the six years of work. People said we would never get this building built the way we wanted it because there was just too much regulation along Pennsylvania Avenue by government authorities. But Peter Pritchard, our president, and Jim Polshek, our architect, did a superb job of explaining the rationale behind the design of the building and what each aspect was supposed to do.

With the exception of a handful of critics which Donna has managed to tell you about -- (Laughter.) I always love the introductions at the National Press Club. You could go almost anywhere else and be flattered to death, but you'd better be ready for the National Press Club. (Laughter.) It's good. That's the way it should be.

Well, with the exception of a handful of critics, most writers and reviewers grasp what we are trying to do with the Newseum. Howard Kurtz in The Washington Post called the Newseum "vastly innovative and absorbing." Maria Puente of USA Today wrote, "Prepare for razzle-dazzle." Edward Rothstein of The New York Times called the Newseum "an appealing example of how a museum can both teach and entertain." Michael O'Sullivan of The Washington Post called it "a different experience every time you visit."

Now, you might say Charles, why are you standing up here bragging about what you and your folks did? I want to tell you. I'm going to interrupt myself here for just a minute.

The Smithsonian has these great museums, and it doesn't matter what they do, as long as they open the doors and turn on the lights. They're going to get 4 (million) to 5 million people every year. We have to fight for every single one of our visitors, and we will -- not fight, but try to make sure people know it. And so anytime I can get somebody else to say something good about the Newseum, I'm going to yell it from the rooftop. So that's what I'm doing right now.

George Stephanopolous and Robin Sproul at ABC understand the

specialness of the Newseum. George launched his Sunday morning show this past week at the Newseum, and it featured spectacular views of the Capitol and Washington. We are just delighted that ABC and the Newseum have signed a long-term contract to do that show every Sunday morning from the Newseum. Thank you, Robin.

Visitors love being where the action is. General David Petraeus held a news conference at the Newseum the week of our opening.

John McCain was the first guest on This Week with George Stephanopoulos. Our visitors were happy to see, up close, Sam Donaldson, George Will and Cokie Roberts.

Of course, not every person likes the Newseum, as you've heard. (Scattered laughter.) We have received a few dings along the way, and that's okay. That's what free speech and free press are all about. I was particularly struck by an e-mail we received from New Zealand when -- the week of our opening when we were on Cloud 9. "Ivan" wrote "Can you direct me to the section of the Newseum that holds the lies by you America scumbag presstitutes?" (Laughter.) You people wouldn't recognize a reporter if you fell over one. And you also have terrible, whiny accents. (Laughter.)" So we're not big in New Zealand.

A few of those critics never visited the Newseum, and were mainly against the concept of a museum about news. Most of the people in that category have a very pessimistic view of the media in general. In my opinion, they are suffering from a crisis of confidence in the press. They're entitled to that viewpoint, but don't expect the Newseum to buy into their doomsday malaise outlook. We are not a newspaperseum. We're not even a faltering mediaseum. We're a Newseum, and the public's desire to know news will continue forever. The platforms may change, but the need to know will not.

People often ask me which is my favorite gallery. I love that question. It's kind of like asking which is your favorite child -- you can brag on one one day, and one the other day. Well, it does change from day to day. One day it's the Berlin Wall gallery, the next day it's the World News gallery, Susan, with that big color-coded freedom of press map.

We have lots of important artifacts, from the broadcast tower that fell from the World Trade Center to the most pieces of the Berlin Wall outside of Germany. But we have a lot of smaller, interesting things too, such as one of Helen Thomas' many red dresses that she wore to presidential press conferences; the typewriter that Ernie Pyle used in World War II, in both the Europe and Pacific theaters. The tele -- get this -- the telephone that Rupert Murdoch used from 2000 to 2006 to make deals worth \$20 billion. Now the most interesting thing to me on that telephone is that it has 48 speed-dial buttons. Only 24 would fit on the phone, but he has an extender box that's got another 24. I've never seen that anywhere else but if you're Rupert Murdoch, you can probably figure out how to do it.

And you know who number one is -- you can read -- you can look -- if you look real closely, you can read the little writing on who number one is on Rupert Murdoch's speed dial, Roger Ailes. You learn

stuff at the Newseum.

Well, these items ranging from substantive to trivial give our visitors an insight into the real world of media and news gathering. Now I delight, Shelby, in the quotes at the Newseum. They help us tell our message throughout the Newseum, and they range from the whimsical to the serious. Consider just a few of these quotes.

From Henry Luce: "I always thought it was the business of time to make enemies and of life to make friends." From John Milton in *Areopagitica*: "He who kills a person kills a reasonable creature, but he who destroys a good book kills reason itself." From Bart Simpson: "The First Amendment does not cover burping." (Laughter) From H.L. Mencken: "I know of no human being who has a better time than an eager and energetic young reporter." From Margaret Mead: "Thanks to television, for the first time the young are seeing history being made before it is censored by their elders." From Earl Warren: "I always turn to the sport section first. The sports page records people's accomplishments. The front page has nothing but man's failures." And from that great western philosopher, Dave Barry: "TV news can only present the bare bones of a story. It takes a newspaper to present vast amounts of information to render the story truly boring." (Laughter)

Well, while our artifacts and quotes add to the visitor experience, there is no doubt what my favorite thing is overall. The 74-foot high Tennessee marble wall on the front of the building that has the 45 words of the First Amendment. Right there on Pennsylvania Avenue, many people are reading the First Amendment for the first time, or for the first time in decades. I sometimes tell people that the \$450 million that we spent on the Newseum would be worth it for the First Amendment wall alone. If there were nothing else in the whole building inside, we could justify the expense, over the lifetime of the building, just by having that First Amendment sign up there on Pennsylvania Avenue, year-in and year-out, day-in and day-out.

The Newseum has laid down the marker, right on Pennsylvania Avenue, that the First Amendment is the cornerstone to our democracy. We have lots of First Amendment messages inside the building. One thing we learned from our first Newseum over in Rosslyn was that we were too subtle when it came to the First Amendment. So we threw subtlety out the window when we moved the little 74-foot marble sign there on the front -- but we have two great First Amendment films, including one that features personalities as diverse as former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor to actor Martin Sheen, to rap singer LL Cool J.

In our First Amendment gallery, we engage our young people with interactive games and exhibits that focus on First Amendment issues.

There's one game, for instance, called "Race for Your Rights," featuring Bill O'Rights vs. Dick Tater -- (laughter). At another place in the First Amendment gallery, we have hung the crudely-crafted, paper banner with the words "Bong Hits for Jesus." That banner got an Alaskan high school student suspended. He took his case all the way to the Supreme Court and lost. But you can see that banner in the Newseum.

We try to bring the First Amendment alive for students. We ask questions like this: "Can a school restrict words on a t-shirt?" "Can a school punish a student for hairstyles or hair color?" "Can a school principal censor what is on a student's MySpace page?" Visitors can read how the courts have ruled on these and many other issues, and then they can offer their own opinions, on a whole range of subjects, on an interactive screen. Those comments are then posted so other visitors can read what previous visitors have said. In fact, we are learning that visitors want to share their opinions in a lot of our galleries, like the 9/11 gallery, and the Journalist Memorial gallery. The point of all this is to bring the First Amendment out of obscurity. One person wrote that the Newseum is like a theme park for civics. I like that. We cannot rely simply on the textbooks of civics to protect the First Amendment. We must be far more vigilant and far more aggressive.

I am concerned about the future of the First Amendment. I'm concerned that the First Amendment, as we know it today, will not exist at the end of this century, unless all of us do a better job of promoting it and protecting it. Now why do I say that? The next time you are in front of a Newseum, look up at the top of the First Amendment -- up there on the top of that marble wall -- the first line has five words, and those five words say "Congress shall make no law" 00 "Congress shall make no law." Should've put that up there twice. Congress is making laws every year relating to one or more of the five freedoms of the First Amendment. Think about it -- religion, speech, press, petition and Assembly are in the middle of many of the controversies that find their way to the halls of Congress.

I don't think Congress is going to actually repeal the First Amendment. As far as I know, they've only done that to one amendment, and that was the 18th Amendment, probably a pretty good reason to do that -- prohibition -- but I believe Congress can and will chip away at the First Amendment, if left to their own instincts. There's always somebody wanting to pass a law or a regulation about communications, or lobbying, or hate speech, or prayer in schools, or some other thing that looks worthwhile on the surface, but menacing when you dig down deeper.

I have this crazy idea; my colleagues are used to my crazy ideas. Every time Congress passes a law relating to one of the five First Amendment freedoms, we should climb up on our First Amendment wall and chip away some of the marble from the First Amendment. (Laughter.) That would show the world symbolically what is happening. It would also get me in big trouble with our architect. (Laughter.)

My point is, we can't take the First Amendment for granted. We have to work together to make sure that the First Amendment lasts at least as long as the Newseum does on Pennsylvania Avenue. And we hope that's at least 100 years.

I want to close with a birthday greeting of sorts. We made an early decision not to build the Newseum as a journalism hall of fame. Joe Herschel (sp) even had a sign that had "Hall of Fame" with a circle on it and a line through it. We do feature a lot of famous journalists who've done good things, and some not so famous. But we

do not pretend to be a hall of fame of journalism.

Nevertheless, there is one journalist who emerges in several galleries and theaters as a hero. He is Edward R. Murrow. A portrayal of him broadcasting live from London during World War II is one of the highlights of our 4-D film -- a terrific film where you put on 3-D glasses and sit in seats that shake, rattle and roll.

Well, Murrow's 100th birthday is tomorrow, Friday, April 25th. We're going to have a weekend of programs to honor him. The National Press Club has a program tomorrow honoring him, and the Smithsonian has a program tonight.

We are actually having a birthday cake for our Newseum visitors to -- Friday afternoon and Saturday afternoon, to celebrate Murrow's birthday. Imagine going to a museum and getting birthday cake -- and it only costing you \$20? (Laughter.)

Tomorrow we're going to dedicate the Edward R. Murrow alcove at 2:00 p.m. with a curator's tour, followed by the birthday cake. On Saturday, Newseum visitors will be able to attend a program with Bob Edwards and Marvin Kalb in our night broadcast studio.

Beginning tomorrow, Newseum visitors will be treated to what we're calling the "Murrow Marathon" -- four different films running from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The films are narrated by Charles Kuralt, Mike Wallace, Walter Cronkite and Dan Rather. The films

include "The McCarthy Years," and perhaps the most famous documentary ever, "Harvest of Shame," about migrant workers. We will re-run those films in our documentary theater every day through next week.

The lessons of Edward R. Murrow are apparent to our visitors every day, not just on his birthday. Visitors to the Newseum learn that Murrow set the standard for all who followed. His career also foretold the coming battles broadcast journalists would face -- accusations of bias, the price of tackling controversial subjects, and the tension between public service and corporate profits.

Visitors can see clips of Murrow interviewing Marilyn Monroe on his highly-rated "Person to Person" show, plus other famous clips. It's amazing to read, 40 or 50 years later, many of the remarks by Edward R. Murrow. It sounds like he is alive today.

One of my favorite quotes from Murrow in the Newseum relates to politicians. He said, quote, "When the politicians complain that TV turns their proceedings into a circus, it should be made plain that the circus was already there" -- (laughter) and that "TV merely demonstrated that not all performers are well-trained." (Laughter.)

Well, we want to keep that quote in mind as the Newseum tries to attract millions of people through its doors. The Newseum is not a circus. The circus was already there. The Newseum is not a performance. The performances go on up and down Pennsylvania Avenue every day.

But the Newseum is a place where visitors can view the circus and

the performers. They can see the media and the politicians. They can experience the stories of their lives -- all against the backdrop of the sign of our times, the First Amendment on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MS. LEINWAND: Now, I've been to the Newseum a few times in the last month, and I have to say my favorite part of the Newseum are the bathrooms. (Laughter.) And in the bathroom on the, on the tiled walls they have newspaper corrections. And most to them are very, very funny.

So, in the spirit of setting the record straight -- which is something that journalists have to do all the time, I'd like to make a correction to my very poor head table announcement. Reverend Barbara Reynolds is sitting there to my left -- she is the president of Reynolds News Service and a member of the NPC Speakers Committee, and someone I've known for a very long time -- so, I can't believe I got her name wrong.

But, thank you for your indulgence. And now we will start with some questions. The most popular question I got was: How can you charge \$20 for a museum that is within, you know, spitting distance of the National Archives, which is free; The National Gallery, free; Air and Space, free?

And I know you've addressed that somewhat in your speech, but people really want to know what they're going to be -- what the \$20 is paying for, considering most of the museum appears to have been funded by newspaper foundations, and television foundations and, most notably, the Freedom Forum?

MR. OVERBY: Well, thank you for that question. I'm shocked that it would be asked. (Laughter.)

Well, one of the things that we have that the Smithsonian doesn't is corrections in the bathrooms. (Laughter.) My favorite correction, I believe, is a headline that said, "Man Sentenced to Nine Months in Violin Case." (Laughter.) That may be cruel and unusual punishment.

We do not take lightly the idea that we are charging anything, let alone \$20 for adults, to the Newseum. But, let me mention two or three things: One, okay, the Smithsonian is free. But, look at your pay stub. It is not free. There are tax dollars that go into that. There are no tax dollars that go into the Newseum. It's the only museum -- certainly on Pennsylvania Avenue, and the only major museum in Washington that doesn't get tax dollars of any kind.

It cost us \$450 million to build the Newseum, and it's going to cost us \$50 million to operate it -- without any tax money. Well, I heard that somebody asked on the way up, well, that's a rich foundation, they've got a big endowment, why can't they just pay for it? We'd be a rich -- we're not a rich endowment, we'd have a big endowment for about three years if we tried to do all of that.

There are several streams of revenue, and gifts and investments from our endowment are one of those streams. Admissions are one;

apartments -- thank you very much for the rents; the great restaurant that Wolfgang Puck has -- we get a cut of that, go there and go often -- (laughter).

But, it costs a lot of money. We could have put up just an average museum of glass cases, with flat old newspapers that you could come in and look at, and hope that you had a good feeling about the media. But the state of the art exhibits were expensive, and we said we believe the visitor is looking for a good experience. And the reason we built it in a way that it was -- the economic model depended on admission, was that we think people would rather have that than something that could be free to go to, and it'd just be average.

Our consultants told us that visitors who go to paying museums value the experience more than those that are free. And if you go to any museum outside of Washington, \$20 is the best deal in town. So, maybe we ought to move to Orlando and we'd be cheap down there.

But, we -- our consultants told us another thing that's important. Charles, they said, most people are never going to your museum. And I almost threw the person out of my office when they said that. They said, just do the math. Most people will never go. So, you're not pricing it for most people.

The Smithsonian gets 4 (million) to 5 million visitors a year at all their best museums. We will be happy with their crumbs. You know, if we get a small fraction of that, we will be delighted. People ask, how many people will come to the Newseum?

Our staff knows that was a fireable offense if you answered it, because you didn't want to set up the "expectations game."

We got 500,000 visitors when we were in Rosslyn -- at a place that you could not find, and got zero drop-in traffic. It was a wonderful location, and the people in Rosslyn were very nice to us, but you really had to want to go to Rosslyn to get there. So 500,000 is kind of a base, but it was free. So what I've said is I hope we get more than that.

Now, the Spy Museum gets about 700,000, 750,000 -- somewhere in there, and they charge about \$18. So, that has emboldened us to think that we can charge, and that people will pay for an experience. It's not the cost, it's the value. And if we can get people in the door, they will see the value pretty quickly.

MS. LEINWAND: Okay, we're a little money-centric today. So, can you tell us how much money you received from Gannett, New York Times Corporation, and other media companies? And can you tell us how you can present an honest and critical picture of the media that's funding you?

MR. OVERBY: Well, I appreciate that question so much.
(Laughter.)

First of all, Gannett has given us zero. A lot of people have this impression that we are funded -- or were funded by the Gannett

Company. That's wrong. It's dead wrong. And if you leave here with any understanding that you didn't have when you came in the door, leave with that one.

Frank Gannett set up a foundation in 1935 with \$100,000 of Gannett stock. It was always independent of the Gannett Company -- even though a lot of the people who worked at the company, including me, including Joe, including Peter, including Jack, including Susan, just about everybody else in this room -- the Gannett Company was always independent of the foundation.

And so we are hopeful that the Gannett Company will give to the Newseum at some point. Their latest earnings statement doesn't make it seem to be a propitious time to go and ask -- (laughter) -- for a contribution, but the time will come.

The New York Times and the Ochs-Sulzberger family was very generous in giving us \$10 million over multiple years, and they are one of our founding partners. We have 15 founding partners -- of media companies, patriotic individuals, foundations, that have given between \$5 million and \$25 million. And they have done so in the belief that the effort to educate people about a free Press is at the core of their business, and their interests, just like it is ours.

(Staff person reminds Mr. Overby about "content.")

MR. OVERBY: Oh, content. I'm so glad you asked about the content.

First of all, there is a precedent for taking money and being objective, and it's called advertising in newspapers and on television. We thought that model worked pretty well for them, and so it could work well for us. At our dedication ceremony last week, I said that we really appreciated not one founding partner ever made one effort to influence the content.

And if you think about it, it takes -- in the daily business of advertising in media, not many people are heavy-handed enough to try to influence what goes on in newscasts. You know, we just are beyond that. So, there is an absolute wall of independence there.

It's a legitimate question to ask. And we've tried to address that in a couple places in the Newseum where we explain that the founding partners are independent of any of the content.

MS. LEINWAND: Why did you choose two historic events -- 9/11 and the Berlin Wall, to focus on in the exhibits? And what do those have to do with the First Amendment?

MR. OVERBY: Well, we are a "News-"eum. And we tried to highlight the big stories of our lives. And we have found that, in addition to the First Amendment and a free Press, where people really interact with us are on the news events.

And so, arguably, the rise and fall of the Berlin Wall was one of the big stories of the 20th Century. There's no question that 9/11 is

the big story of our lifetime. And just the early visitor's experience in both the Berlin Wall Gallery and the 9/11 Gallery validate the decision to have separate galleries.

The Berlin Wall, where people can go and actually touch it -- Susan hates it when I tell people that they touch the Berlin Wall; it may not be, it won't last a hundred years if they do that -- but people love to go there; touch that piece of history; have their picture made there; kind of relive what they know about the rise and fall of the Berlin Wall.

And, of course, 9/11 is still so raw in all of our memories. And we have boxes of tissue there at the gallery -- for the film and the tower. It's a very raw experience. But it does show the big story of our lifetime and how journalists covered it.

We may have other big stories as we move along. But we felt like, again, the organizing theme is not just the First Amendment but, more importantly, news writ large.

MS. LEINWAND: The news media ranks, in public esteem, somewhere near the members of Congress and used car salesmen. Do you think the Newseum can alter this perception? Help our cause? Hurt our cause?

MR. OVERBY: That's a good question. What we're sure of is our economic model does not depend on bringing in only the people who like the Press.

(Laughter.)

If we depended on that, we'd be out of business in about three days. We do think that the Newseum will help improve of the understanding of what's involved with the media, and how they do what they do. It doesn't mean that it's a PR device to make people like the media. I'm not sure that the history of the country is rooted in people liking the media.

But, understanding it? Yes. I hope people have a better understanding. Some of our comment cards from the first Newseum -- and already with the second Newseum, is that people do come as tourists and leave with being First Amendment advocates.

MS. LEINWAND: Are protests allowed in front of the Newseum? And, how do you expect to handle them if they do occur?

MR. OVERBY: Well, after today, I expect there'll be people climbing up on the First Amendment Wall -- (laughter) -- I hope not. Sure, I mean, out front people are free to protest. We don't -- we don't expect to have protests inside. It could happen, I suppose.

But, right there on Pennsylvania Avenue, that avenue is rich with the history of protests. And we've got a great story line of a lot of the marches and protests that have taken place. If I were organizing a protest on something today, I'd go over there and do it under that First Amendment backdrop. I'm not encouraging that. I don't even want that. (Laughter.) But, it makes sense.

MS. LEINWAND: How do you -- we have a, we have an industry that's a bit, in a bit of trouble. So, how do you justify the cost of the Newseum, when the Freedom Forum has cut its overseas training programs?

MR. OVERBY: Well, we really hated to cut our international offices and programs. We had terrific offices in London, Hong Kong, Johannesburg, Buenos Aires. And it was a sad day when we did that.

But it took a cold, sober realization that you can't go both ways. You either had to put your eggs in this basket, or be willing to try

to do a lot of good things all around the world. Neither one was cheap, and we made the decision to do this.

It was a good thing to do while it lasted, but there are some other people doing that. There's nobody else doing this Newseum. So we regretted having to end those programs.

The question kind of -- between the lines of that question is, why didn't we take that \$450 million and put it into helping newspapers? Well, I think the future of a free Press and the First Amendment is every bit as much in danger as the future of newspapers -- maybe more. And so we made -- our board made the strategic decision to put that money behind the First Amendment and the free Press effort.

Certainly nothing wrong with other foundations -- and there are foundations like the Knight Foundation that does a great job that, but everybody has to decide for themselves. And so we decided to go with the free Press and First Amendment right here in Washington.

MS. LEINWAND: You've had a long career in the news business, and you've seen -- you've been spending some time dealing with the history of the news business, so how would you rate the quality of news available to Americans today, compared with when you began your career? Was it better or worse?

MR. OVERBY: Well, you forget, I worked in Jackson, Mississippi, and the standard was fairly low down there in Jackson. We were glad to get the egg markets in the paper, Susan .

But, as a whole, I would answer it two ways. There's a lot more news now, by a large measure, than there ever was before, and I think that's good. When I was growing up in Central Time, God's time, 5:30 in the afternoon, you either saw the news or you didn't. And maybe if I had done my homework, I'd stay up and see the 10:00 o'clock news. But that was it.

Now, of course, it's the other way, and people -- a lot of my friends just hate the fact that there's 7/24 news. But I thought, don't watch it if you don't want to watch news all day, put it on something else. Watch Jeopardy -- oh, excuse me, Jeopardy's coming to the Newseum and I'm not going to criticize Jeopardy. (Laughter) Please watch Jeopardy. (Laughter.) But I would say that quantity means something. The ability to get news all the time -- I'm always -- I have eight televisions in my office, and they're all on news

stations, and I love it. And, you know, I can't have the volume up on all of them, but they have the crawls across the bottom. I think it's terrific to be able to know what's going on all the time.

Now is the quality as good? You know, Shelby Coffee is here -- he and the Los Angeles Times -- they had about one reporter for every six residents of Los Angeles -- when he was the editor, and they've cut it back now to one for every 10 residents. So for the big newspapers, it's harder times, but I would say, for a lot of the other papers around the country, smarter people working at newspapers, than, certainly, when I was there, more sophisticated means. There are probably more readers in local markets now than there ever have been, but a lot of those readers are going to the websites. And, you know, that's okay.

Newspapers have got to figure out the right economic model, but the most important thing is to keep those eyeballs looking at the profit. And so the websites -- my son takes no newspapers, but he reads several websites a day that are totally on the news. He has no television in his apartment -- sorry, Robin -- but he does watch ABC online. And so, you know, it's -- if the Newseum does anything, it shows how the delivery systems have changed over time, and how the delivery of news has changed with the technology and has done so successfully. So we have a lot of optimism there, even as newspapers and other media try to figure out the economic platforms.

MS. LEINWAND: Okay, we're going to ask you to go around the world in two minutes. Give us the status of the free press climate in the rest of the world, particularly, China, and has it changed at all because of the summer Olympics in Beijing?

MR. OVERBY: Let's see, there are 186 countries and what starts with "A?" No, I won't do it that way. (Scattered laughter.)

Let me tell you first that we have this terrific world map that's about 40 feet wide and about 20 feet high that has every country in the world, and it either is red for "not free," green for "free," or yellow for somewhere in between. And it is such a teaching moment, even for us, to go and look at that world map. You see, at a glance, that the body -- the whole world -- most of the world -- is red. Most of the world has not free press. Only a very small percentage of the world is green -- free press. And there's a number of countries that are yellow.

It was a little embarrassing, but not completely, when the wife of the Ambassador for Mexico came through on a tour, and she saw her country in yellow. And she took major exception to Mexico being listed as yellow rather than green. It was a teaching moment for all of us -- for us to understand what the impact of that map has. But for her, to hear from us, well as long as journalists are being killed in Mexico without anything happening to the perpetrators, it's going to be in yellow.

As for China, China is in red, and we'll find out in the Olympics whether it has a chance of moving to yellow or not. Freedom House does the ratings for us, and I haven't seen any evidence that Freedom House is thinking about moving China from red to yellow. Let's see

what happens with the Olympics.

MS. LEINWAND: Okay, we are almost out of time. But before asking our final question, we have a couple of important matters. First of all, let me remind our members of the future speakers. On April 28, at an NPC breakfast event, the Reverend Dr. Jeremiah Wright, senior pastor, Trinity United Church of Christ, will discuss the African American religious experience, theology and practice. Also on April 28, at lunch, we'll have Dan Glickman, Chairman and CEO of the Motion Picture Association discussing trading up movies in the global market place. On May 2, Bobby Jindal, Governor, state of Louisiana, will discuss bold reform that works.

Second, I'd like to present our guest the official centennial mug.

MR. OVERBY: Thank you very much.

MS. LEINWAND: You're very welcome. (Applause) And there's more. We have a lot of gifts today. This is a surprise gift for all the good you do, you have been enrolled in the Order of the Owl by the

Council of the Wisest Owls, a very knowledgeable group of Press Club members. The Head Hoot, John Cosgrove, requested that the president present this certificate to you. I would like to read the citation. It says: "Order of the Owl is bestowed by the Silver Owls on birds of a unique species, weathered and wise who have nested at the National Press Club and have demonstrated that they give a hoot for Washington journalism. By Order of the Council of the Wisest Owls, April 24, 2008."

And it's over here, it's this very heavy --

MR. OVERBY: Oh my. Whoa, that's beautiful. (Applause)

MS. LEINWAND: And now for our last question -- (chuckles) -- that's our Head Hoot, John Cosgrove. For our last question back when you were a reporter in Mississippi, what was your best scoop?

MS. LEINWAND: My best scoop. Well, Pulit -- okay, that's good -- it's hard to beat the Pulitzer, isn't it? (Scattered laughter.) That was not so much a scoop as it was -- but I'm going to use that. (Laughter.) The enterprise by our staff to go out and document beyond the rhetoric of poor education in Mississippi, and to document where the school buildings were bad and where education was failing in Mississippi. And then the reward of finally Mississippi becoming the last state to get public kindergartens and to have improved salaries for teachers so that for the next generation, children could benefit. That's the greatest reward I've had in journalism. (Applause)

MS. LEINWAND: The actual owl stays with the Press Club, but Mr. Overby gets a certificate. (Laughter) We'll let you come by and pet it.

I'd like to thank you all for coming today. (Laughter) I'd also like to thank the National Press Club staff members, Melinda Cooke, Pat Nelson, JoAnn Booz and Howard Rothman for organizing today's

lunch. Also, thanks to the NPC library for its research. The video archive of today's luncheon is provided by National Press Club Broadcast Operations Center. Press Club members can also access free transcripts of our luncheons at our website, www.press.org. Non-members may purchase transcripts, audio and video, by calling 1-888-343-1940. For more information about joining the Press Club, contact us at 202-662-7511.

Thank you, and we're adjourned. (Applause.)

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