

**Life & Times Transcript****11/12/01**

LC011112

VAL&gt;&gt; TONIGHT ON LIFE AND TIMES --

JESS>> RARE FOOTAGE FROM INSIDE AFGHANISTAN AND WE'LL TALK WITH A DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER JUST BACK FROM AFGHANISTAN WHO'S BEEN FOLLOWING RELIEF EFFORTS THERE.

EDWARD ARTIS>> IF THESE PEOPLE DON'T GO UNDER CANVAS SOON, THEY'RE GOING TO FREEZE TO DEATH. YOU KNOW HOW COLD IT'S BEEN HERE THE LAST COUPLE OF NIGHTS AND NOW WE GOT RAIN AND THE NEXT THING IS GOING TO BE SNOW. WE'RE GOING TO START LOSING WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND THOSE ELDERLY MEN THAT WE MET THE OTHER DAY IN THAT CAMP WILL DIE SOON TOO.

VAL>> AND IT WAS ANOTHER TRAGIC CASE OF A CHILD DYING IN FOSTER CARE. A BABY STARVED TO DEATH LAST APRIL. HOW CAN WE GET MORE OF THESE CHILDREN ADOPTED INTO SAFE HOMES? JUDGE KEVIN ROSS TELLS US ABOUT AN ANNUAL ADOPTION EVENT THAT CUTS THROUGH RED TAPE.

JESS>> IT'S A BREAKTHROUGH EYE TEST THAT TAKES FIVE MINUTES AND HELPS PREVENT BLINDNESS. IT'S DONE WITH A LAPTOP COMPUTER AND EVEN WORKS IN OUTER SPACE. IN FACT, IT WAS DEVELOPED TO CHECK THE VISION OF ASTRONAUTS, BUT IT WORKS ON EARTH TOO.

VAL&gt;&gt; THESE STORIES COMING UP NEXT ON LIFE AND TIMES TONIGHT.

LIFE AND TIMES TONIGHT IS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE FOLLOWING FOUNDATIONS:

THE L.K. WHITTIER FOUNDATION  
DEDICATED TO IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE BY SUPPORTING INNOVATIVE ENDEAVORS IN THE FIELDS OF MEDICINE, HEALTH, SCIENCE AND EDUCATION.

VAL&gt;&gt; GOOD EVENING, I'M VAL ZAVALA.

JESS&gt;&gt; AND I'M JESS MARLOW.

TONIGHT WE TAKE YOU INTO AFGHANISTAN THROUGH THE EYES OF A DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER. HE'S JUST RETURNED FROM CENTRAL ASIA WHERE HE WAS VIDEOTAPING THE EFFORTS OF A HUMANITARIAN RELIEF ORGANIZATION.

VAL>> ADRIAN BELIC JOINS US NOW TO GIVE US HIS FIRSHTHAND IMPRESSIONS OF WHAT IT'S LIKE IN THIS WAR-TORN REGION AND TO SHOW US SOME OF THE FOOTAGE THAT HE SHOT. ADRIAN BELIC, WELCOME TO LIFE AND TIMES.

ADRIAN BELIC&gt;&gt; THANK YOU.

JESS&gt;&gt; ADRIAN, WE, OF COURSE, HAVE HAD ED ARTIS ON THIS BROADCAST AND HE'S BEEN

GIVING US TELEPHONED ACCOUNTS OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES THERE, BUT YOU BRING IT TO US WITH EYES AND EARS. WHAT IS THE SITUATION?

ADRIAN BELIC>> IT'S REALLY GRAVE. THERE ARE TENS OF THOUSANDS OF REFUGEES. EVERY DAY IT'S GETTING WORSE. THE BIG PROBLEM IS THAT RELIEF AGENCIES CANNOT GET IN. A LOT OF BIG RELIEF AGENCIES ARE STYMIED BECAUSE THERE IS SO MUCH PRESS IN THERE RIGHT NOW. ALL THE JOURNALISTS ARE REALLY CRAMMING THE FEW ENTRY POINTS INTO AFGHANISTAN.

VAL>> LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT SOME OF THE FOOTAGE THAT YOU SHOT FOLLOWING THE HUMANITARIAN RELIEF EFFORTS OF ED ARTIS WHO WAS ONE OF THE FEW TO BE ABLE TO GET IN, YES?

ADRIAN BELIC>> YEAH. I MEAN, ED IS TRULY LIKE -- HE'S AN ALL-AMERICAN HERO. HIM, JIM LAWS AND WALT RATTERMAN WERE ABLE, JUST THE THREE OF THEM, TO BRING IN SIXTY TONS OF FOOD ON SIX TEN-TON TRUCKS.

VAL>> IS THIS THE CAMP HERE?

ADRIAN BELIC>> NO, THIS IS IN KHOJOBABLDDEEN JUST ACROSS THE BORDER. THIS IS ONE OF THE MARKETS AND THIS IS ACTUALLY QUITE A FRUITFUL MARKET WITH GRAINS, ANIMALS THAT YOU CAN BUY, BUT AS YOU CAN SEE --

VAL>> -- SO THIS IS A LARGE CITY OR TOWN OR SMALL TOWN?

ADRIAN BELIC>> IT'S A FAIRLY SMALL TOWN IN THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE TERRITORY AREA AND IT'S ALSO A STAGING AREA FOR THE WORLD'S PRESS. ONCE YOU COME IN FROM TAJIKISTAN, THIS IS WHERE YOU STAGE AND THEN YOU TRY AND FIND A CAR, A DONKEY, A HELICOPTER IF YOU'RE LUCKY, TO GET FURTHER INTO KANDAHAR OR IN KABUL OR PANJSHER.

VAL>> SO IS THERE A FAIR AMOUNT OF, SAY, MONEY BEING BROUGHT INTO THIS AREA BECAUSE OF THE JOURNALISTS?

ADRIAN BELIC>> YEAH, THAT'S ONE OF THE THINGS THAT'S RIGHT NOW DISTORTING THE MARKET IS THE JOURNALISTS ARE JUST THROWING MONEY AT THIS PLACE AND IT'S MAKING IT VERY DIFFICULT FOR THE LOCAL PEOPLE TO PURCHASE THINGS BECAUSE PRICES ARE GOING UP VERY QUICKLY.

JESS>> IT LOOKED AS THOUGH THERE WAS AN ABUNDANCE OF GRAIN THERE AT THE TIME.

ADRIAN BELIC>> THERE IS, BUT WHEN YOU REALIZE THAT THERE ARE TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE OUTSIDE THAT CITY WITH NO MEANS TO NOT ONLY GET TO THE GRAIN, BUT PURCHASE THE GRAIN OR COOK THE GRAIN. YOU HAVE TO REALIZE YOU NEED COOKING OIL TO COOK THE GRAIN AND THAT'S A VERY HARD-TO-GET-TO COMMODITY.

VAL>> LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT ANOTHER CLIP THAT YOU BROUGHT HERE. MAYBE YOU CAN TELL US WHAT WE'RE SEEING NOW.

ADRIAN BELIC>> THIS IS A FIFTEEN-TON TRUCK THAT ED ARTIS MANAGED TO BRING FROM UZBEKISTAN THROUGH TAJIKISTAN AND INTO AFGHANISTAN. WE CAME ACROSS THE DAY BEFORE ABOUT 300 TO 400 FAMILIES, ABOUT 1,500 PEOPLE, AND WE CAME BACK THE NEXT DAY AND JUST DELIVERED GRAIN. IT WAS AMAZING HOW THE PEOPLE WERE CRYING BECAUSE THE FIRST TIME THEY SAW US, THEY NEVER THOUGHT THAT THEY WOULD SEE US AGAIN. THEY THOUGHT WE WERE JUST THERE TO COUNT THEM AND THAT WOULD BE IT. AND WHEN WE ACTUALLY ARRIVED WITH GRAIN, I MEAN, THERE WERE PEOPLE JUST STUNNED THAT WE CAME.

VAL>> NOW DO YOU JUST GIVE GRAIN TO THE PEOPLE AS YOU ENCOUNTER THEM?

ADRIAN BELIC>> NO, NO. WHAT WE DO IS, FIRST WE CAME, WE SAW IT WAS A SQUATTER CAMP. IT WASN'T AN OFFICIAL CAMP. WE ASSESSED WHAT THEY NEEDED AND WHAT WE FOUND WAS THAT THEY NOT ONLY NEEDED FOOD, BUT TENTS AS WELL, SO WE ALSO MANAGED TO GET TEN TENTS. SO WE ASSESS WHAT THE NEED IS, WE GO BACK AND GET THE FOOD AND HAND-DELIVER IT. YOU KNOW, THIS STUFF ISN'T DROPPED FROM AIRPLANES. IT'S HAND-DELIVERED IN A HUMANITARIAN HUMAN WAY.

JESS>> NOW THIS IS THE WORK OF KNIGHTSBRIDGE?

ADRIAN BELIC>> YEAH, KNIGHTSBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL. IT'S BASICALLY TWO AMERICAN EX-SOLDIERS AND AN EXTRAORDINARY ELECTRICAL TECHNICIAN WHO HEARD ABOUT THEIR WORK AND WANTED TO COME AND VOLUNTEER. KNIGHTSBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL -- EVERY SINGLE PENNY THAT COMES TO THAT ORGANIZATION GOES STRAIGHT FOR FOOD. ALL OF US THAT GO ALONG TO

DOLE OUT THE FOOD PAY ALL OUR OWN WAYS, EVERYTHING. IT'S LIKE ROBIN HOOD MEETS AMERICAN KNOW-HOW AND MILITARY PRECISION IN A VERY HUMANITARIAN WAY.

JESS>> WHEN WE TALKED WITH ED ARTIS LAST WEEK, HE WAS CRITICAL OF THE U.S. FOOD AID DROP.

ADRIAN BELIC>> YEAH.

JESS>> HE DID NOT SEEM TO THINK IT WAS AN APPROPRIATE WAY TO DO IT NOR AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO DO IT.

ADRIAN BELIC>> WELL, I DON'T THINK ANY OF US WOULD WANT TO HAVE FOOD THROWN AT US FROM A FEW THOUSAND FEET. IT'S JUST NOT --

JESS>> -- IF YOU WERE HUNGRY ENOUGH, YOU'D CERTAINLY RATHER HAVE THAT THAN STARVATION.

ADRIAN BELIC>> IT'S TRUE, BUT THE THING IS, IT'S UNNECESSARY. THEY CAN --

JESS>> -- STARVATION IS NOT A REALITY?

ADRIAN BELIC>> STARVATION IS A REALITY, BUT THAT WE NEED TO THROW IT FROM -- LOOK, ED JUST BROUGHT IN SIXTY TONS OF FOOD BY TRUCK. THREE GUYS.

VAL>> YES, BUT THEY CAN'T GET ALL THE WAY IN THROUGH ALL PARTS OF AFGHANISTAN. THEY CAN'T GO WHERE PLANES CAN GO, CAN THEY?

ADRIAN BELIC>> IT WOULD BE GREAT TO GET HELICOPTERS AND PLANES, BUT WHY DON'T YOU LAND THEM AND GIVE OUT THE FOOD? IT'S JUST A DIFFERENT WAY OF LOOKING AT IT. I MEAN, DEFINITELY THERE'S A NEED THERE. ANY FOOD IS BETTER THAN NO FOOD. BUT ED ARTIS AND KNIGHTSBRIDGE BELIEVE THAT YOU SHOULD ALSO GIVE IT IN A HUMANITARIAN WAY.

VAL>> NOW YOU ALSO TAKE CARE OF SHELTER AND WE'RE GOING TO TAKE A LOOK AT A CLIP NOW OF ED ARTIS SIZING UP THE SHELTER NEEDS HERE.

EDWARD ARTIS>> WE ONLY HAVE FIVE TENTS RIGHT NOW. WE'RE TRYING TO PICK FIVE OF THE NEEDIEST PEOPLE HERE WITH THE MOST NUMBER OF KIDS THAT ARE AT RISK AND WE'RE GOING TO GIVE THOSE FIVE TENTS TO THOSE FAMILIES. WE HAVE FIVE MORE TENTS TOMORROW. HOPEFULLY, WE'LL GET MORE TENTS.

JESS>> AND WITH WINTER COMING ON, THAT'S THE GREATEST NEED, ISN'T IT?

ADRIAN BELIC>> YEAH, I MEAN, IT WAS COLD. WE STAYED IN A HOUSE WITH NO HEATING, NO PLUMBING, NO ELECTRICITY AND WE SLEPT LIKE KINGS AND QUEENS. EVERY NIGHT WE THOUGHT WHAT IT MUST BE LIKE FOR THOSE PEOPLE OUT THERE WHO LITERALLY SLEPT, MANY OF THEM, IN JUST THATCHED ROOFS WITH ONE BLANKET. IN THE MORNING THERE WOULD BE FROST ON THE GROUND AND IT'S ONLY GOING TO GET COLDER.

VAL>> AND THEY HAD TO CHOOSE THE MOST NEEDY FAMILIES. HOW DO YOU CHOOSE?

ADRIAN BELIC>> I DON'T KNOW. THAT WAS ONE OF THE TOUGHEST MOMENTS WE EVER HAD IS TO LOOK AT THOSE PEOPLE AND BE ABLE TO JUST CHOOSE FIVE FAMILIES. BUT ALSO, YOU KNOW THAT THERE'S GOING TO BE MORE THAN FIVE FAMILIES IN THOSE TENTS, YOU KNOW.

VAL>> THAT'S TRUE, THAT'S TRUE. NOW ARE THERE ACTUALLY ENOUGH TENTS? DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO THE SUPPLIES OR IS THERE JUST A LACK OF SUPPLIES, LACK OF TENTS?

ADRIAN BELIC>> YEAH, THERE'S A GROSS LACK OF SUPPLIES WITHIN AFGHANISTAN, SO WE BOUGHT UP AS MANY TENTS AS COULD FIND AND THEN WE'RE HAVING MORE OF THEM SHIPPED IN FROM UZBEKISTAN THROUGH TAJIKISTAN. THOSE SHOULD BE ARRIVING IN ABOUT THE NEXT WEEK TO TEN DAYS. THAT'S WHY ED AND WALT RATTERMAN STAYED BEHIND TO MAKE SURE THAT THOSE TENTS WERE BROUGHT TO THE PEOPLE WHO NEED THEM.

JESS>> NOW YOU'RE DEALING WITH THE PEOPLE WHO ARE IN THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE?

ADRIAN BELIC>> WELL, THESE WERE MEN WHO CAME FROM THE TALIBAN AREAS INTO THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE.

VAL>> OH, HERE'S -- NOW IS THIS PROBABLY ONE OF THE PACKETS? THE PEANUT BUTTER THAT THE YOUNG -- WHERE DID THAT PEANUT BUTTER COME FROM?

ADRIAN BELIC>> YEAH, THAT PEANUT BUTTER CAME FROM ONE OF THESE. THIS IS AN ACTUAL PACKET THAT WAS DROPPED OVER THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE AREAS AND ACTUALLY WE'LL OPEN IT UP AND YOU GUYS CAN SEE.

JESS>> SAYS "HUMANITARIAN DAILY RATION, MENU NO. 1".

ADRIAN BELIC>> MENU NO. 1.

JESS>> BUT IT ALSO SAYS "UNITED STATES OF AMERICA" AND "FOOD GIFT FROM THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA".

ADRIAN BELIC>> YEP.

VAL>> AND THE AMERICAN FLAG.

ADRIAN BELIC>> SO YOU CAN OPEN THIS -- SEE, THIS IS ONE OF THE PROBLEMS FROM WHEN IT GETS DROPPED FROM HIGH ABOVE. THIS ACTUALLY HAS BROKEN A BIT AND IS A BIT SLIMY AND GREASY.

JESS>> THERE'S THE PEANUT BUTTER.

ADRIAN BELIC>> THERE'S THE PEANUT BUTTER.

JESS>> RIGHT.

ADRIAN BELIC>> HERE WE HAVE A FRUIT PASTRY, WHICH IS DEHYDRATED, SO YOU JUST PLACE IT IN YOUR MOUTH AND IT JUST CREATES A LITTLE PIECE OF FRUIT. ANOTHER FRUIT PASTRY. PEANUT BUTTER. A CRACKER. THEN IN FOOD NO. 1, WE GET A VEGETABLE BARLEY STEW AND LINTEL STEW.

VAL>> BUT, AGAIN, IN A PINCH, YOU'RE GRATEFUL FOR THIS, NO?

ADRIAN BELIC>> MOST DEFINITELY.

JESS>> I WOULD THINK THIS WOULD BE PREFERABLE TO WHEAT BOILED IN OIL.

ADRIAN BELIC>> YEAH. FOR WESTERNERS, DEFINITELY, EVEN THOUGH WE ONLY ATE ONE OF THESE PACKETS. WE SURVIVED ON TEA AND BREAD.

VAL>> IN FACT, TALK A LITTLE BIT ABOUT IT, BECAUSE YOU ACTUALLY GOT TO KNOW SOME OF THE MEMBERS OF THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE.

ADRIAN BELIC>> YEAH, WE ACTUALLY STAYED WITH SOLDIERS. WE STAYED IN A SAFE HOUSE WITH BETWEEN 20 AND 25 SOLDIERS THAT WERE EITHER COMING OFF THE FRONT LINES AND HEADING HOME OR COMING FROM THEIR HOME PRIMARILY IN PANJSHER AND GOING TO THE FRONT LINES.

JESS>> ARE THEY GOING TO BE ABLE TO DEFEAT THE TALIBAN?

ADRIAN BELIC>> THEY'RE GOING TO NEED A LOT OF HELP.

VAL>> WHAT WERE THEY LIKE? YOU GOT TO KNOW THEM A LITTLE.

ADRIAN BELIC>> THEY'RE FABULOUS HUMAN BEINGS. YOU KNOW, THEY'RE PEOPLE WHO ARE JUST -- THEY HAVE TO DO WHAT THEY HAVE TO DO, LIKE ANYBODY ELSE. YOU KNOW, THEY'RE IN A TOUGH SITUATION AND THEIR ONLY OPTION --

JESS>> -- THAT'S NOT THE INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION OF THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE, OF BEING FABULOUS HUMAN BEINGS.

ADRIAN BELIC>> WELL, YOU KNOW, I CAN ONLY TELL IT FROM MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE. YOU KNOW, THEY DEFINITELY HAVE SOME REPUTATIONS OF HAVING SORT OF AN ORNERY CHARACTERISTIC WHEN IT COMES TO WARFARE AND DEALING WITH THEIR ENEMY, BUT FOR US, THEY WERE GREAT HUMAN BEINGS. YOU KNOW, THEY WERE INSISTING THAT WE SHARE THREE MEALS A DAY WITH THEM. IT WAS BREAD AND TEA FOR BREAKFAST, BREAD AND TEA FOR LUNCH AND WE SORT OF EUPHEMISTICALLY CALLED "BETTER THAN NOTHING" WAS DINNER. (LAUGHTER) BUT WE HAD A GREAT TIME. WE SET UP A VOLLEYBALL NET AND --

VAL>> IT'S ALSO VERY DIFFERENT MEETING PEOPLE ONE ON ONE --

ADRIAN BELIC>> -- MOST DEFINITELY.

VAL>> -- AND THEN LOOKING AT THEIR RECORD POLITICALLY AS A GROUP OVER TIME. THOSE ARE TWO VERY DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES.

ADRIAN BELIC>> WELL, THAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PROPAGANDA AND DIPLOMACY. YOU KNOW, YOU HAVE TO GET DOWN THERE, YOU GOT TO MEET THE PEOPLE AND YOU GOT TO LEARN WHAT ARE THEIR NEEDS AND WHAT ARE THEIR DESIRES. ONLY THROUGH DIALOG CAN YOU REALLY COME UP WITH SOME SORT OF A SOLUTION TO THIS PROBLEM.

JESS>> ISN'T THE CONFLICT MORE TRIBAL THAN ANYTHING ELSE?

ADRIAN BELIC>> THERE'S DEFINITELY HUGE TRIBAL ISSUES. THAT'S WHY THE IDEA THAT THE NORTHERN ALLIANCE IS GOING TO BE THE ANSWER TO THE ENTIRE AFGHANISTAN IS WRONG. I MEAN, YOU HAVE THE PASHTUN PEOPLE. THE VAST MAJORITY ARE THE SOUTHERN AFGHANIS. NORTHERN AFGHANISTAN IS MADE UP OF THE TAJIKS AND UZBEKS, SO THERE'S A LOT OF ISSUES THAT HAVE TO BE DEALT WITH, NOT JUST ONE SOLUTION FOR EVERYBODY.

JESS>> AND BEFORE THEY SOLVE THE POLITICS, THEY'VE GOT TO SOLVE THE HUNGER.

ADRIAN BELIC>> YEAH, YEAH. BUT IT'S AN INCREDIBLE EXPERIENCE AND, YOU KNOW, I WISH THEM WELL.

VAL>> IT MUST BE INCREDIBLE. ADRIAN BELIC, WE THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR BRINGING IN THAT EXCLUSIVE AND WONDERFUL FOOTAGE. WE HOPE THAT YOU'LL VISIT AGAIN IF YOU HAVE MORE TO SHOW.

ADRIAN BELIC>> THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.

VAL>> AND BEST OF LUCK TO YOU AND KNIGHTSBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL.

ADRIAN BELIC>> YEAH. THANK YOU.

VAL>> TOMORROW NIGHT, CAN SCIENCE KEEP US SAFE FROM BIOTERRORISM? WE'LL TAKE A LOOK AT THE ROLE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE FIGHT AGAINST BIOLOGICAL THREATS. THAT'S TOMORROW, TUESDAY, ON LIFE AND TIMES AT 7:00 P.M.

JESS>> IT WAS ANOTHER TRAGIC STORY OF A BABY DYING WHILE UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY FOSTER CARE. THE BABY STARVED TO DEATH LAST APRIL. AS THE L.A. TIMES REPORTED, HE WAS ELEVEN MONTHS OLD, BUT WEIGHED ONLY ELEVEN POUNDS, ABOUT AS MUCH AS A TWO-MONTH-OLD. HIS CARETAKER, BEING PAID AS A FOSTER PARENT, WAS HIS GRANDMOTHER. SHE IS NOW IN PRISON.

VAL>> WELL, PART OF THE SOLUTION TO THESE PROBLEMS LIES IN GETTING MORE OF THESE FOSTER CHILDREN INTO PERMANENT ADOPTIVE HOMES. AND WITH THAT IN MIND, EACH YEAR THE COURTS CUT THROUGH RED TAPE IN WHAT'S CALLED THE NATION'S BIGGEST ADOPTION DAY. IT'S HAPPENING THIS SATURDAY IN LOS ANGELES AND HERE TO TELL US MORE ARE SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE, KEVIN ROSS, AND JUDGE MICHAEL NASH FROM THE L.A. COUNTY JUVENILE DEPENDENCY COURT. WELCOME, GENTLEMEN, TO LIFE AND TIMES.

JESS>> JUDGE ROSS, HOW MANY CHILDREN WILL BE ADOPTED AS A RESULT OF ADOPTION DAY?

KEVIN ROSS>> WELL, WHEN YOU LOOK IN TERMS OF THE NATION, THEY'RE LOOKING AT ABOUT 1500 OR 1600 FAMILIES THAT WILL BE CONNECTED WITH ADOPTIVE CHILDREN. IN LOS ANGELES ALONE, YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE ABOUT A THIRD OF THAT COMING FROM THIS CITY. THERE ARE GOING TO BE SIXTEEN CITIES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY IN STATES INCLUDING TEXAS, UTAH, IOWA, PENNSYLVANIA, OUR NATION'S CAPITOL. SO IT'S A VERY EXCITING PROGRAM THAT EVEN JUDGE NASH WAS THERE FROM ITS INCEPTION. IT STARTED LAST YEAR. THIS IS THE SECOND ANNUAL EVENT.

VAL>> NOW EXPLAIN A LITTLE BIT ABOUT WHAT IT IS AND WHY IT'S ABLE TO SPEED UP WHAT OTHERWISE WOULD BE A LENGTHY PROCESS.

JUDGE MICHAEL NASH>> WHAT WE'VE DONE IS PUT TOGETHER A PARTNERSHIP, A PRIVATE PUBLIC PARTNERSHIP, THAT INVOLVES OUR COURTS, THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES AND HUNDREDS OF VOLUNTEER ATTORNEYS THROUGHOUT LOS ANGELES WHO WERE RECRUITED AND ORGANIZED BY TWO ADVOCACY GROUPS, THE ALLIANCE FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND PUBLIC COUNCIL LAW CENTER. THIS WAS DONE TO MAKE UP FOR SOME INSTITUTIONAL INERTIA THAT HAD INCURRED OVER YEARS.

WE FOUND THAT A LOT OF ENERGY WAS DEVOTED TO GETTING TO THE POINT IN OUR SYSTEM WHERE CHILDREN WERE FREED FOR ADOPTION IN OUR FOSTER CARE SYSTEM AND THEN WE FOUND THAT LESS ENERGY WAS PLACED UPON COMPLETING THE ADOPTION PROCESS. KIDS WOULD LANGUISH IN -- WELL, WAITING FOR ADOPTIONS FOR SOME TWO OR THREE YEARS. SO WHAT WE NEEDED TO DO WAS INJECT RESOURCES FOR ALL OF THESE GROUPS SO THAT WE COULD SPEED UP THIS PROCESS.

VAL>> WHAT HAPPENS IS, EVERYBODY COMES TOGETHER UNDER ONE ROOF?

KEVIN ROSS>> RIGHT, EVERYONE COMES TOGETHER. I HAD A CHANCE TO DO IT BACK IN JULY AND JUDGE NASH AND I WERE TALKING ABOUT IT. IT WAS THE BEST EXPERIENCE SINCE I'VE BEEN ON THE BENCH. OTHER THAN GETTING INDIVIDUALS MARRIED, WHICH EVEN WITH THOSE OUTCOMES, SOMETIMES, YOU KNOW, WITH THE 50-50 DIVORCE RATE (LAUGHTER), THAT'S WHAT WE WERE JOKING ABOUT. BUT WITH THESE SITUATIONS, EVERYONE'S HAPPY.

I MEAN, YOU SEE THE KIDS -- I WAS SAYING THERE WAS ONE FAMILY THAT ADOPTED TWIN DWARFS. THEY WERE LITTLE GIRLS. JUST TO SEE THAT THEY WERE EXCITED AND THEY WERE HAPPY AND THE KIDS WERE HAPPY, IT WAS SUCH A PLEASURE. MOST OF THE JUDGES, AS WELL AS ALL THE OTHER PEOPLE THAT ARE INVOLVED -- AND JUDGE NASH CAN SPEAK ABOUT THIS -- ARE REALLY GIVING UP THEIR OWN TIME AND RESOURCES TO BE INVOLVED IN THIS EVENT THIS SATURDAY.

JESS>> AS REPORTERS, WE ALWAYS ENJOYED COVERING THAT ADOPTION EVENT AND ALSO THE CITIZENSHIP SWEARING-IN. THOSE WERE ALWAYS GREAT TIMES. BUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT ADOPTION AND WE'RE TALKING ABOUT FOSTER CARE, FOSTER CARE IS, IN THE MINDS OF SOME PEOPLE, AN ABSOLUTE DISASTER. THE ALLIANCE FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS, THEIR STATISTICS, 600,000 CHILDREN CURRENTLY IN FOSTER CARE IN THE U.S., BARELY 127,000 OF THEM ELIGIBLE FOR ADOPTION. 20 TO 25 PERCENT OF ALL FOSTER CHILDREN AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION WILL LEAVE FOSTER CARE AND THE REST WILL NOT. IT'S A TRAGEDY, ISN'T IT?

JUDGE MICHAEL NASH>> IT IS VERY SAD. THESE COURTS WERE DESIGNED TO PROTECT CHILDREN AFTER THE FACT OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT BY THEIR PARENTS OR GUARDIANS.

JESS>> THOSE ARE THE ONES YOU SEE EVERY DAY IN YOUR COURTROOM?

JUDGE MICHAEL NASH>> ABSOLUTELY, AND THIS ADOPTION PROJECT, WHICH WILL RESULT THIS YEAR IN ALMOST 3,000 CHILDREN BEING ADOPTED, ARE ALL CHILDREN WHO CAME INTO THE SYSTEM AS A RESULT OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT BY THEIR PARENTS OR GUARDIANS.

VAL>> WHAT'S THE SOLUTION? BECAUSE WE ALWAYS HEAR ABOUT SOCIAL WORKERS BEING OVERLOADED, NOT ENOUGH FOSTER PARENTS IN THE FIRST PLACE, NOT ENOUGH ADOPTIVE PARENTS. ARE WE JUST FACING A SOCIETY THAT'S TOO BUSY TO TAKE ON CHILDREN OR WOMEN ARE WORKING NOW AND THERE JUST ISN'T ENOUGH ROOM IN HOMES OR WHAT?

JUDGE MICHAEL NASH>> IF I COULD GIVE YOU THE SOLUTION IN ONE MINUTE, WE'D ALL BE MUCH BETTER FOR IT. THE ANSWERS, OF COURSE, ARE ALL OF THE ABOVE. BUT REALLY, THE PROBLEM ISN'T ONE WITH THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM AND THE COURTS IN AND OF ITSELF. IT'S A PROBLEM OF OUR WHOLE COMMUNITY. IF WE HAD A BETTER EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM, IF WE HAD LESS POVERTY, IF WE HAD MORE PEOPLE WHO HAD BETTER OPPORTUNITIES IN LIFE, WE PROBABLY WOULD SEE LESS ABUSE AND NEGLECT OF CHILDREN AND, AS A RESULT, THERE'D BE LESS OF A NEED FOR COURTS, FOR FOSTER HOMES, FOR ADOPTION SATURDAYS.

JESS>> BUT THE PROGRAM WE'RE ALL LOOKING FORWARD TO ON THIS ADOPTION DAY IS TO HELP RELIEVE SOME OF THAT GREAT TRAGEDY.

KEVIN ROSS>> ABSOLUTELY. AND I CAN SPEAK, ESPECIALLY, YOU KNOW, TODAY BEING VETERAN'S DAY, YOU KNOW, WE'RE CELEBRATING THE MEMORY OF OUR VETERANS AND THEIR VALOR AND YOU SEE A LOT OF FLAG-WAVING RIGHT NOW. AT THE SAME TIME, PEOPLE ARE STILL IN THAT FUNK, SO THEY'RE TRYING TO COME OUT OF IT. THIS, TO ME, IS A CLEAR EXAMPLE OF PATRIOTISM AT ITS BEST IN TERMS OF INDIVIDUALS SAYING "I WILL TAKE RESPONSIBILITY AND HELP RAISE A CHILD."

THE STATISTICS THAT I SAW WERE REALLY DISTURBING AS AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN MAN TO SEE THE NUMBER OF YOUNG BLACK BOYS AND LATINO BOYS. ABOUT NINETY PERCENT OF THE KIDS WHO ARE GOING TO BE ADOPTED EITHER COME FROM THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY OR THE LATINO COMMUNITY AND WE KNOW THAT THOSE COMMUNITIES HAVE INDIVIDUALS WHO MAY HAVE THE RESOURCES OR THE MEANS TO TAKE CARE OF THESE CHILDREN. IT REALLY IS GOING TO COME DOWN TO THOSE COMMUNITIES STEPPING UP AND ACTUALLY ADOPTING THESE KIDS.

VAL>> THANK YOU SO MUCH. WE HOPE THAT SOME PEOPLE OUT THERE HAVE HEARD THE MESSAGE AND WILL RESPOND.

KEVIN ROSS>> I HOPE SO.

VAL>> JUDGE KEVIN ROSS AND JUDGE MICHAEL NASH, THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR BEING HERE. WE REALLY APPRECIATE IT.

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VAL>> IT SOUNDS LIKE SCIENCE FICTION, AS AN ASTRONAUT ORBITING THE PLANET STARES INTO A LAPTOP COMPUTER. MINUTES LATER DOWN ON EARTH, A DOCTOR CAN TELL IF HE OR SHE HAS DEVELOPED SERIOUS EYE DISEASE LIKE GLAUCOMA.

JESS>> NOW YOU MAY BE THINKING, "GREAT. NEXT TIME I'M IN OUTER SPACE, I'LL GET MY EYES CHECKED", BUT THE GOOD NEWS IS, THIS FIVE-MINUTE NON-INVASIVE TEST WORKS ON EARTH TOO AND CAN HELP PREVENT BLINDNESS.

VAL>> AND HERE WITH THE TALE IS DR. WOLFGANG FINK. HE IS A PHYSICIST WITH NASA'S JET PROPULSION LABORATORY IN PASADENA. WELCOME TO LIFE AND TIMES.

DR. WOLFGANG FINK>> THANK YOU.

JESS>> WAS THE INITIAL CONCERN THAT MEN AND WOMEN IN SPACE, PARTICULARLY FOR PROLONGED PERIODS OF TIME, WOULD SUFFER EYE DETERIORATION?

DR. WOLFGANG FINK>> NO, ACTUALLY, THAT WAS NOT THE PRIMARY CONCERN. THE PRIMARY CONCERN FOR NASA WOULD BE DUE TO THE MICRO-GRAVITY ENVIRONMENT BECAUSE THERE'S NO GRAVITY IN SPACE. ONCE YOU'RE IN ORBIT, YOU WOULD HAVE ELEVATED INTRACRANIAL PRESSURE, WHICH MEANS THE PRESSURE INSIDE YOUR BRAIN WOULD BE --

JESS>> -- CLASSIC GLAUCOMA, HUH?

DR. WOLFGANG FINK>> NOT QUITE. THAT WOULD BE IN YOUR EYE. BUT YOUR BRAIN WOULD BE ELEVATED AND THEREFORE YOU COULD SUFFER FROM TEMPORARY VISUAL FIELD DEFECTS OR COULD SUFFER FROM STROKE-LIKE CONDITIONS.

VAL>> SO THAT WAS THEIR CONCERN, SO WHAT LED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS TEST?

DR. WOLFGANG FINK>> WELL, IN ORDER TO NOT ONLY CHECK FOR THOSE CONDITIONS, WE ALSO DEVELOPED A TEST IN ORDER TO CHECK FOR DISEASES LIKE GLAUCOMA AND, FOR EXAMPLE, MACULAR DEGENERATION WHICH AFFECTS YOUR CENTRAL PART OF VISION. GLAUCOMA AND MACULAR DEGENERATION ARE THE TWO LEADING CAUSES OF BLINDNESS. THEREFORE, IT'S VERY IMPORTANT TO CATCH THOSE DISEASES VERY EARLY ON AND JUST BECAUSE OF THE FACT THAT YOU CHECK OUT ASTRONAUTS ON EARTH DOESN'T MEAN THAT, AT EXTENDED STAYS IN SPACE, THEY WOULDN'T DEVELOP THOSE DISEASES.

VAL>> I SEE.

JESS>> BUT ARE THESE TESTS BEING EMPLOYED ON EARTH?

DR. WOLFGANG FINK>> YES, VERY MUCH SO. ACTUALLY, SINCE APRIL OF LAST YEAR, WE HAVE UNDERGONE CLINICAL TRIALS AT THE DOHENY EYE INSTITUTE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA.

VAL>> AND HERE IT IS. YOU ACTUALLY JUST LOOK INTO A LAPTOP COMPUTER SCREEN.

DR. WOLFGANG FINK>> THAT IS CORRECT.

VAL>> AND THERE'S A GRID AND YOU POINT -- WHERE DO YOU POINT TO?

DR. WOLFGANG FINK>> EXACTLY. WHAT YOU DO IS, YOU SEE THIS FIXATION MARK IN THE CENTER OF THE SCREEN. THE PATIENT SITS IN FRONT OF THE COMPUTER SCREEN, OUTLINES THE AREA OF THIS GRID WHICH HE IS ABLE TO SEE --

VAL>> -- WHICH HE'S ABLE TO SEE.

DR. WOLFGANG FINK>> WHICH HE'S ABLE TO SEE. THE COMPUTER THEN RECORDS THOSE TRACINGS AND, AS YOU SEE, AFTER TYPICALLY FIVE EXAMINATION LEVELS WHICH TAKE ON THE ORDER OF FOUR TO FIVE MINUTES TOTAL, YOU THEN END UP WITH A THREE-DIMENSIONAL DEPICTION OF THE VISUAL FIELD OF THE PATIENT.

VAL>> SO IT ACTUALLY IS ABLE TO SHOW IN GRAPH FORM THE ACTUAL AREA THAT THE PATIENT CAN SEE?

DR. WOLFGANG FINK>> CAN SEE OR CAN'T SEE, BECAUSE EVERYTHING WHICH IS DOWN IN THE VALLEY IS GONE IN TERMS OF VISION AND EVERYTHING WHICH IS UP ON THE PLATEAU IS PRESERVED.

JESS>> FAR CRY FROM THE TEST AT THE DWP.

VAL>> SO YOU'RE SAYING THAT THIS IS AVAILABLE? IT'S NOT SOMETHING THAT MOST OPHTHALMOLOGISTS ARE USING, IS IT?

DR. WOLFGANG FINK>> NO. ACTUALLY, MOST OPHTHALMOLOGISTS USE A VERY SIMPLIFIED VERSION OF IT WHICH IS KNOWN AS THE AMSLER GRID, WHICH IS JUST A PIECE OF PAPER WITH A GRID PAINTED ON IT AND PEOPLE ARE JUST HOLDING THE GRID IN FRONT OF THEM AND TRYING TO OUTLINE AREAS. BUT THAT'S FAR LESS SOPHISTICATED THAN WHAT WE HAVE BECAUSE WE CAN CHANGE THE CONTRAST LEVELS AND THEREFORE GET THE THIRD DIMENSION WHICH IS THE CONTRAST SENSITIVITY OF THE RETINA.

VAL>> INTERESTING. HOW --

JESS>> -- I SAID DWP. I MEAN, DMV. THAT'S WHERE WE GOT THE EYE TEST, RIGHT? (LAUGHTER)

VAL>> (LAUGHTER) DMV. THAT'S WHERE WE GOT THE EYE TEST. THAT'S RIGHT. AND IT ALSO TESTS FOR MACULAR DEGENERATION, WHICH YOU MIGHT EXPLAIN TO PEOPLE IS WHEN --

DR. WOLFGANG FINK>> -- SURE. I WILL ACTUALLY COMPARE GLAUCOMA AND MACULAR DEGENERATION TO EACH OTHER. GLAUCOMA WOULD BE AN IMPAIRMENT OF YOUR PERIPHERAL VISION. IT'S A DISEASE WHICH SNEAKS UP UPON YOU --

VAL>> -- SO THE BLINDNESS SORT OF SNEAKS UP ON YOU, OKAY.

DR. WOLFGANG FINK>> ONCE PEOPLE START COMPLAINING ABOUT REDUCED VISUAL FIELD, THEN THEY GO TO THE DOCTOR AND THAT'S WHEN IT'S ALREADY TOO LATE BECAUSE THE VISION WHICH IS GONE, OR THE AREAS WHICH ARE GONE IN TERMS OF VISION, ARE IRREVERSIBLY GONE. THEREFORE, YOU HAVE TO CATCH IT VERY EARLY ON. MACULAR DEGENERATION IS JUST THE OPPOSITE. IT'S A DISEASE WHICH AFFECTS THE CENTRAL PART OF YOUR VISION WHICH YOU USE FOR READING, DRIVING AND SO FORTH.

JESS>> VICTIMS, THEN, HAVE JUST PERIPHERAL VISION?

DR. WOLFGANG FINK>> THEY HAVE JUST PERIPHERAL VISION LEFT AND, UNFORTUNATELY, THE DISEASE IS SO FAR INCURABLE SO THERE'S NO CURE. ONLY IN CERTAIN CASES, YOU CAN ACTUALLY DO SOME TREATMENT, BUT THE MAJORITY OF THE PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES ARE WORKING ON TREATMENT. THEREFORE, ONCE TREATMENT IS ACTUALLY AVAILABLE, THEN YOU WANT TO BE ABLE TO CATCH IT VERY EARLY ON.

JESS>> THESE DISEASES ARE USUALLY PRODUCTS OF AGING, ARE THEY NOT?

DR. WOLFGANG FINK>> YES, IT'S ALSO KNOWN AS AGE-RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION. THAT'S CORRECT. GLAUCOMA CAN ALSO HAPPEN.

JESS>> BUT ONCE IT'S DIAGNOSED, CAN YOU STOP IT OR CAN YOU --

DR. WOLFGANG FINK>> -- YOU CAN CERTAINLY TRY TO PREVENT FURTHER LOSS, IN PARTICULAR WITH GLAUCOMA. IN THAT CASE, IT'S ACTUALLY --



JESS>> -- NO RESTORATION IN SIGHT, BUT JUST STOP THE LOSS?

DR. WOLFGANG FINK>> YOU CAN STOP THE LOSS, YES. IN GLAUCOMA, YOU CAN STOP THE LOSS. IN MACULAR DEGENERATION, YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO SLOW DOWN THE PROGRESSION FOR NOW, BUT WE HOPE FOR TREATMENT.

VAL>> SO THIS TEST WAS DEVELOPED BY NASA AND JPL FOR USE IN OUTER SPACE?

DR. WOLFGANG FINK>> YES. WE ARE ACTUALLY IN CONTACT WITH THE JOHNSON SPACE CENTER AND WE WANT TO NOW ACTUALLY LOOK INTO THIS INTRACRANIAL PRESSURE STUDY, WHICH MEANS WE LOOK AT PATIENTS, ALSO AT STROKE PATIENTS, TO SEE WHETHER A STROKE HAS AFFECTED THE VISUAL FIELD OF A PERSON.

JESS>> THAT'S TERRIFIC. DR. WOLFGANG FINK OF JPL, THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR JOINING US.

DR. WOLFGANG FINK>> THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

VAL>> THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

AND DON'T FORGET TRANSCRIPTS OF PAST LIFE AND TIMES PROGRAMS ARE AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE. JUST GO TO KCET.ORG AND CLICK ON LIFE AND TIMES.

JESS>> AND THAT'S OUR PROGRAM FOR TONIGHT. FOR ALL OF US HERE AT LIFE AND TIMES, HAVE A GREAT EVENING.

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