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ABOUT THIS BLOG

The Daily Nightly began on May 31, 2005. As Brian wrote in his [first post](#) it aims to provide a narrative of the broadcast day and a window into the editorial process at NBC Nightly News. Brian weighs in every weekday and NBC News correspondents and producers post regularly.

Brian Williams became the seventh anchor and managing editor in the history of NBC Nightly News on December 2, 2004. [Read his full biography.](#)

The end of an era?

Posted: Friday, January 29, 2010 4:50 PM by Ian Sager

Filed Under: [Brian Williams](#)

Brian Williams, anchor and managing editor



During the State of the Union, I turned to David Gregory and Andrea Mitchell and blurted out the obvious: I could never be president. The specific reason I gave was that I'd bankrupt the nation by re-starting an all-out push into space – back to the moon, to Mars and beyond.

I mention this (and we will tonight on the broadcast) because of the report out today (a preview of more on Monday) saying the American "manned space flight era" is about to come to an end, for the foreseeable future. For all of us romantics of a certain age, there has always been a space program. Despite the setbacks and the loss of life, we've still pushed onward. We kept going. Much of the technology in my Chevy SUV is thanks to the space program. That feeling you get at the end of "The Right Stuff"?

When you look at the old pictures of the Mercury Seven in their crew cuts and flat-tops -- and realize the courage it took to fly in the X-1, the X-15, Mercury, Gemini, Apollo and the Shuttle? That feeling, it helped make us great in the post-war era. It gave young boys of the era heroes to look up to. This is a new era, and choices must be made – but what about us old romantics? Anybody out there?

On that wistful note: have a good weekend. We sure hope you can join us tonight.

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 **Comments**

...as I was driving home today, I watched the snow drift past, and realized that nothing in the world could ever be as clean, and as pure ever again...and has it ever? We all constantly dream about an era past, inklings from our imaginations, but has it been perfect like that, ever?

Also, I'm just curious-- do you ever read the comments to your blog, seeming as there are always so many, good and "evil", as you said?

~ Julia

Julia, Port Washington, NY (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 5:02 PM)

Mr Williams,

I may have missed it on the broadcast, or maybe the "west coast" edition did not get to see it, but did Nightly News do any coverage or segment on the passing of Howard Zinn? I think he has certainly had enough impact on our society to be mentioned on the broadcast. I realize there are many stories to cover on any given night. I just hope he becomes one of those stories.

In terms of space, I think we are, and have been shifting into the "what have you done for me lately?" mode, wanting to see practical applications for anything science is moving toward. It reminds me of the West Wing episode that discusses the Superconducting Super Collider, and the Large Hadron Collider we know today: "Discovery, that's what its for".

As far as the iPad you mentioned a few days ago, someone I know referred to it as a glorified iPhone. There seems to be more negative reviews than positive ones, which is unfortunate, because apple was on such a roll the last few years. I dont doubt the next product they make will break even more ground.

Matt, 21, San Diego (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 5:26 PM)

Happy Friday, Brian!

I know exactly (maybe) how you feel. I am so nostalgic, to the point where I probably bug my friends and family. Now, I wasn't around during that amazing era - since I was only born on the day of the 20th anniversary of the first moon landing - but I know what you mean. It's very sad that it's unlikely at this point we'll be sending our "boys" to the moon any time soon. I would LOVE to be able to see that, and cheer them on. It's a darn shame, and I bet it's a huge disappointment to the astronauts themselves.

I just saw Lisa's second post from this morning to your blog you wrote last night. I chatted a little with Stephanie Howell via Twitter to tell her about your shout out to her last night, and turns out ML Flynn beat me to it! She said she about had a <3 attack! :) She also sent out a message that Capt. Jimmy Howell is now MAJOR Jimmy Howell! What a huge honor for Major Howell and his family. He's truly very deserving of the honor. My warm congratulations to him and the Howell family! Truly a remarkable family.

Sure am looking forward to joining you soon, and hope you have a great weekend!

Take good care,
-Cary

P.S. I was bombarded with homework the night of President Obama's State of the Union, so didn't have the time to comment on it afterwards. I thought it was exceptional, and it was such a thrill to watch - especially since he's such a brilliant speaker. As for our new Governor of Virginia...it was special to have our Governor follow the President, but I thought it was a bad choice since he's only been Governor for 11 days. The setup was hilarious, and Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert seem to agree!

[Cary Skelton 20, Roanoke, Virginia.](#) (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 5:26 PM)

Never say never:o)

Phylli Kunz Louisville,Ky. (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 5:49 PM)

Woah, I just realized in the post I sent here earlier I referred to the astronauts as "boys". That is totally inaccurate! I apologize! That was pretty stupid of me...

[Cary Skelton 20, Roanoke, Virginia.](#) (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 5:52 PM)

Re: The end of manned space flight... BALDERDASH! Maybe we should put some administration folks and a couple of Congressmen on a rocket with a short fuse and give them a ride??

Dennis Jackson (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 6:03 PM)

I have come to the conclusion that newspapers shouldn't allow comments to news articles. The comments are so often outrageous. The comments on this blog seem mild in comparison. They are not anywhere near as evil as what I see on the New Haven Register or Hartford Courant websites every single day.

J. Ainsworth, Guilford, CT (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 6:18 PM)

I, too, heard that news with a shock and "what?" We've always been going into space, being the leader of the space programs and reaping the spinoff benefits of the technology.

I realize choices have to be made, times are hard, priorities must be considered, but I think this is a short-sighted decision.

The generation that grew up on Arthur C. Clarke, Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov (that's including me) are shaking our heads in dismay.

Judith

Judith Lasker (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 6:21 PM)

It's incredible to me that the US would give serious consideration to killing a program that has brought us hope, discovery, and inspiration for 50 years. Look at 1968, the assassination of political figures, the protests of the Vietnam War, and the civil unrest in America. What a horrible year... except for the journey of the Apollo astronauts around the moon at Christmas. Manned space exploration should be continued, and the decision to eliminate it from NASA's mission is short-sighted and regrettable.

David, Starkville, MS (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 7:01 PM)

I couldn't believe what I was hearing tonight! I am 30. I have always been fascinated and intrigued by the space program. It was what motivated me to attend and complete college. I am now an Aerospace Engineer. Now that I have 2 small children I take them to the Space center every chance I get. To know that they may never see a human return to space, or that they may never reach for it themselves, saddens me deeply. I hope this is reconsidered.

Michelle Edwards, Blue Ridge, GA (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 7:06 PM)

I watched Brian tonight and couldn't believe my ears. "End of an Era?" I grew up with the space program and had the unreasonable dream of being an astronaut. I still marvel at the accomplishments we as a nation have made to this end.

Alan O. Bornmueller, Greenville, SC (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 7:10 PM)

Good Evening Mr. Williams, Another fine broadcast this evening. I agree with you that manned missions in space took such courage for the astronauts and it will certainly not be same without it. It was always exciting to see launches of rockets and the space shuttle because it seemed to take someone so special to fly in those missions. It is the "End of an Era."

Now on to the broadcast.

First of all the report by Mr. Sanders from Haiti concerning the adoption process of so many orphaned children. Getting the Prime Minister's signature for confirmation is not easy and requires many things. It was good to see some paperwork of records on the children were recovered at one of the orphanages, but there are still a huge number that need to find homes, but may not have any paperwork. It is heartbreaking to see all the babies and older children who want homes. And the teenage boy who wants so much to come to the United States. It is a heartwrenching process for all.

The report by Andrea Mitchell showing how many calls are coming into the State Department certainly reveal there are many parents wanting to adopt these children. One can understand finding out if they have relatives in Haiti is the first and foremost, but if they cannot find any relatives then the process begins to help couples in the United States with adopting them.

It will take many years for everything to be worked out, but one must take one day at a time.

On another note the report by Janet Shamlian on the winter storm showed it caused many problems especially in the State of Oklahoma. Seeing the iced over vehicles and people chopping away at the ice made me shiver. It seems to have shutdown the State and now it is moving East. It is already cold here in Georgia considering it was around in the 60's a few days ago. It changes so fast. I hope everyone keeps warm and safe!

The "Making A Difference" segment by Michelle Kosinski was truly heartwarming and a little sad. The nurse has been taking care of the little boy and he related to her so well. It was hard to see them try to explain she had to return to the United States. Even though he doesn't say anything aloud, the eyes usually tell everything. She will always be there for him.

Thank You for the broadcast Mr. Williams. Hope you have a wonderful weekend. See you on Monday!
Peace to You and to All!

Lots of Love to Laurel, Jackie, Stephanie, Claudia, Celine, Anna, Lori, Cary and Matt!
Be Well Always!
Keep Warm and Safe Everyone!

Stay Extra,Extra Safe And Well Richard!
XOXO

Lisa McNeil,Alpharetta,Georgia (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 7:32 PM)

This has little to do with "end of an era" but could be the "beginning of a new era" instead. There's been tons and tons and tons of talk about Haiti, caring for the children, the adults, the people...and even more news of feeding the hungry and caring for the sick and poor. Which is great! Focus on the poor and needy nations. And even more news on how Haiti is a 3rd world county so close to the US. However, there has been no talk/discussion on how to rebuild the country. Is habitat for humanity going to build homes in the country? They can't live in tents forever. Are they going to rebuild the buildings or move the people to the rural areas and re-teach them how to grow food on farms, dig wells for fresh water? Maybe it's too soon to think like this, but will the news channels still follow Haiti in February, March, April (especially if there are no further earthquakes)? We need to focus some attention on making Haiti a sustainable country that can feed and care for its people. Fresh water is a gift and before the earth quake, much of the country did not have fresh water or food or adequate housing. Will they ever? Will they be cared for after this life changing event. I hope so.

Jon, Salem, MA (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 7:32 PM)

Are we going to concede our role in space to the Russians? A few decades ago such a thought would never have been conceived.

The White House may not have funded for a new heavy lift vehicle that will take us back to the moon in their version of the budget, there are some in Congress who still think the battles of the 60s are still being fought. Though the WH proposes the budget Congress is still the one writing the checks and I think (hope) there still is a chance this era will continue.

Even if this era does end I believe national pride will commit us to continuing manned space flights once the LET'S CUT SPENDING AT ALL COST mentality had been replaced by THE ____ ARE GOING TO SEND A MANNED MISSION TO MARS WHILE WE SIT HERE ON OUR A's AS SPECTATORS? NOT ON MY WATCH! mentality.

We need to move, as a corporate mentality, from being Scrooge before Marley's visit to being Scrooge when he wakes up after Marley's visit.

Congress has to wake up to the fact that ME FIRST for corporations, CEO's, PACs and their party is destructive and instead of ME FIRST it must be COUNTRY FIRST.

Creating pork projects (that only helps billionaires) so the Congresspeople can go back home to point at to win votes may get them reelected but someone, like you, Brian, must point out the cost to the country.

And if another country goes back to the moon and onto Mars without us then the Starship Enterprise, Captain Kirk and Mister Spock will always remain a fantasy.

Dewey Quong, Reno, NV (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 8:01 PM)

Yes, we Americans are in need of a unifying driving dream, or two. The first would be to stop one of the six largest extinction episodes in earth's history and live within ecological limits. For example, fewer strip malls, more woodlands--what's not to like? The second would be to establish a colony on Mars, no matter how slowly and cost-effectively we would have to inch forward. The boldness and clarity of it would create a building excitement and momentum that would keep pushing it forward.

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Border Enforcement + Immigration Moratorium = job, Crime and Eco Sanity.

[tma, Sierra Nevada foothills](#) (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 8:10 PM)

Good evening again, Brian!

First off, after watching the broadcast I realized what you meant be "end of an era". This is awful! This isn't only the end of an era, but the end of a dream. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I know there are so many broken hearts out there tonight after hearing this report. I loved your dedication at the end of the broadcast to those who've walked the surface of the moon. Maybe if President Obama was watching during dinner he'll change his mind. I know he'll be getting some of that "evil" e-mail over this one...

Speaking of the President, I missed the Q&A that took place today so I can't say much, but it's airing on C-SPAN now – so I'm catching up.

It's wonderful what Bill Gates is doing! He's always been so generous, and that's what I like about him. I don't know if you caught that video I linked last night, but he sure has changed since '95! Just amazing how quick things have changed. At the end of that report from Tom Brokaw he says something about how the

internet will be taking people's jobs away – little did he know, that new technology would create even more jobs! I also thought that Tom Brokaw at that age in the report kind of reminds me of you now. That's totally a compliment!

I continue to greatly admire the way all of you at NBC Nightly News are still covering Haiti. Kerry Sanders, Michelle Kosinski, and Andrea Mitchell all offered terrific reports. It's just heartbreaking how difficult it is for these big-hearted people to adopt these beautiful Haitian children. I wish it were easier, but that probably wouldn't be good either based on how careful you have to be to have a safe and trustworthy adoption.

Michelle Kosinski's report on the nurse who cared and loved for the quiet little boy we've all been following so closely made my heart heavy. It's just amazing what these doctors and nurses are doing for the Haitian people. It warms my heart to see it, and it's hard to see them have to leave the one's they've connected so closely with. I hope these two in Michelle's report will be able to stay in touch.

Rest in Peace, the Tuskegee Airman, Lee Archer. It's always sad to see these great, brave men pass away, but it's always wonderful to hear their story. I still think a special show or documentary on all of the still living Medal of Honor recipients and veterans hosted by you would be a wonderful way of remembering and honoring them before their passing. Just a suggestion.

Thank you for the broadcast tonight, Brian!
Hope you enjoy the weekend, while we're socker-punched with yet another snowstorm! I feel so bad for our neighboring states that are getting hammered with ice and snow.

Wishing all of the readers a good weekend!

Take care,
-Cary

[Cary Skelton 20, Roanoke, Virginia](#) (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 8:14 PM)

America's future in space is actually a complex case right now ... and some might well make the case that this is not so much the "end of an era" as the beginning of an era.

This could be an era in which private ventures work with government to open wider access to the final frontier. Most people who are excited about that frontier, no doubt including Brian, have been looking forward to the day when commercial spaceliners and space freighters ply "this new ocean" - and the shift in NASA's vision could bring that day closer. At least that's what the White House is aiming for.

How will all this play out? Members of Congress are likely to resist any effort to step back from the Constellation Program. America's future in space may even become (gasp!) a matter of higher public interest and sharper political debate. In any case, this will be an interesting story to watch, on Monday and in the months and years to come.

Alan Boyle (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 8:17 PM)

I don't understand the President wanting to do away with a complete industry when we are trying to save and increase jobs. Why does he so easily consider giving away one of America's last true areas of world leadership? NASA contributes to so many segments of society including the small start up businesses.

People have heard of the big businesses, like Lockheed Martin, but what about the small 50 employee company that would be effected. We have shipped off manufacturing, telemarketing, and other industries that have employed Americans. Does he want us all to be fed and taken care of by the government? What is he thinking? I hope Congress will step up and not allow us to lose one more thing that Americans once were known for and proud of.

Kim Hayes, Longmont, CO (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 8:32 PM)

Several years ago, I read Failure Is Not An Option by Gene Kranz. What impressed me the most was the realization that all the moon landings came close to ending in disaster. If not for redundant systems and assistance from earth, we might have had stranded astronauts on the moon. There is minimal margin for error once we launch people into space. That risk may be offset by advances in technology, but I am not aware of any significant discoveries that have come from years of having a manned space station. Perhaps if there had been advances in manufacturing medicines in microgravity or something that would significantly benefit society as a whole, would I advocate a continued presence in outer space. Currently, we are trashing our oceans and over-fishing, not to speak of green house gases. Our planet is where our future lies, and thus should be our focus.

Mark Cannon (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 8:43 PM)

You and me both, Brian. People do not fully appreciate what the space program gave us. Everything from velcro to microwave ovens to cell phones. A full court press on space would be a pride builder and has every potential of bringing us even more life-changing and life-improving technology. Sounds like a good feature story. Hope to see that soon.

Brian Graves, Harriman, TN (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 8:48 PM)

U.S rocket technology is so common that even Iran can launch them. What we need is new propulsion technology. We must turn to research and development for a decade or two. A trip to Mars taking two years is just too long to expect that our current systems technology would remain reliable. For now, its a case of too much been there, done that in regards to our space program.

I dearly care about NASA, ever since I was little and drank my glass of Tang as I watched and listened to Walter Cronkite detail everything about the Gemini and Apollo programs. Returning to an Apollo type program as the Constellation program is just too bland. We need new technology, and I'm not talking Ipad.

Clent, Texarkana, Texas (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 8:49 PM)

Brian, the space program does not bankrupt the nation. The expenditures it requires are very small compared to the Billions that were spent on the stimulus package. It is an investment that will encourage education and lift the nation to higher ideals. It is not dead. There are currently many Nasa engineers working on a less costly, more sustainable alternative called Direct 3.0. That and hopefully a pro-space congress after the next election season will give new life to the space program.

Brent, Provo, Utah (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 8:54 PM)

No worry Brian the Supreme Court made sure you nor anyone would be elected so your safe.

I learned as a freshman in high school don't discuss an issue you have no knowledge of. Now the mistake the GOP made was going live with their Q&A with a smart President. I know it was easy with Bush as most of the time the Media had to explain his now found words and excused his english. But watching today made it clear our elected officials aren't smart and clearly have no idea what to discuss. It was so sad and embarassing to watch and pray it wasn't shown internationally. Fox News did the right thing and cut it off it was so bad. If this Q&A were a paid event people would want a refund.

Tony Blair spoke and would illegal invade Iraq again. Little spoken about the discussions of invading Iraq between Bush/Blair in 1999. Blair said he was proud of his decision and that makes you really wonder about him. I know he couldn't tell the truth in fear of being charged but one thing is clear the lies might be ok here but God knows the truth and He isn't going to be fooled.

Well I expect to hear it was Bush/Cheney who made the Economy Recover. Yes when good things happen the GOP praising Bush when things go bad it's Obama's fault. It's like we have forgotten 8 years and this Recession started on Jan. 20, 2009. Well it makes sence as people believe the War of the Worlds announcement on the radio. Stocks were down it's Geithner's fault now Stocks are up and it's Hank Paulson's doing.

Brian I've been watching Obama like a hawk and I'm being to see who he really is behind that cute smile and big ears. He's a smart one that Barack. He will succeed in his mission to end the Wars and recover the American Dream for all. First he forced Karzai to included the Taliban in the Govenment. Now Bush and the Taliban were friends but he never had them settle the differences. Next the Health Care and US Debt will have help with the money we wont be sending to Iraq/Afghanistan and end the spending spree by contractors. Yes while everyone is fighting over silly stuff Obama has been a busy bee.

Note: Look for big headlines with the Corruption done by Banks and the flood of lawsuits. I called the US Treasury to explain the fuss of AIG. It was explained that AIG was the trunk of the tree and the many many branches were banks/investment companies. Each American in someway had a part of AIG. It got to big because of the many branches. I read how President Reagan deregulation helped the banks and business go hog wild with no checks or reviews. What will soon come to light is the swaps made and many homeowners will be suprised that the bank listed on their legal home papers isn't the bank that now holds their deed. The swaps included mortgages with no notification to those paying the mortgage. Brian look for CEO to suddenly retire as we see Law Makers quickly bailing out before their names come up in investigation of crimes committed.

see you same time same place

Jackie Rawlings Riverside California (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 8:58 PM)

Brian,

I, too am sad to see the era of manned space exploration come to an end. I have found that little stimulates my science students more than exploration and discovery. And nothing embodies exploration and discovery more than manned space exploration.

It disturbs me that our country, once at the forefront of space travel has decided to leave it to other countries. Now we will watch as others discover, grow and advance.

Thank you, Brian, for highlighting this important story on the national news.

[Walt Owen, Riverside, California](#) (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 10:09 PM)

I was wondering if there is a website listing which senators and representatives are for or against supporting NASA? It would be very nice to know at election time. I would definitely vote for the NASA supporter. I am very disappointed in the current president.

John Doe, Fargo, ND (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 10:09 PM)

I'm astonished, but I shouldn't be. The great majority of the comments here reflect the belief that "NASA = space = NASA," and that the cancellation of already moribund government exploration program is somehow a disaster.

Far from it. This is the Obama Administration's public recognition that "NASA = space = NASA" is no longer true. NASA is not the only outfit that can put humans into low Earth orbit. They're certainly not the most cost effective.

So Obama is giving the job to the people who can do it cost effectively: private industry. A NASA astronaut's day should start when they get to orbit, not when they get to the Cape. With NASA astronauts riding commercial capsules to work at ISS, that's what will happen.

This does not mean NASA human space exploration will stop. It means that exploration can start, because NASA will not bankrupt themselves trying to build Apollo On Steroids.

Randall Clague, Mojave, CA (Sent Friday, January 29, 2010 10:51 PM)

I was very distressed to hear about the end of constellation. I hear someone say that the glory is gone. The spirit of adventure and exploration has sadly declined. It is a sad and depressing time to live in. I think you would be a good president.

johnny (Sent Saturday, January 30, 2010 12:10 AM)

The announcement that we will not be returning to the moon saddens me, I grew up near to Edwards air force base where my brother-in-law works and have seen many shuttle landings there and have always had it in my mind that we would return to the moon, just like every little boy growing up I wanted to be an astronaut and thought that someday I could be someone who walks on the moon. For all of President Obama's talk of the US needing to lead the world with math and science this announcement shatters the dreams of lots of children who would be engineers and scientists who would go on to work towards that lofty goal...what goal do we have now? Maybe go to Mars..maybe, maybe go to an asteroid...again maybe..we need no more maybes we need a clear goal that is relevant to all humankind..

Matthew Ryan Burlington, VT (Sent Saturday, January 30, 2010 1:36 AM)

Brian: I just read a snippet--I work at night, so I don't get the news as often as I should. When I read that the Space Program and the Manned Missions to the Moon were ending, I was quite saddened to see the end of a great era. I hope it is NOT! Like a lot of people posting messages, I am one of those romantic nostalgics and I do hate to see an era such as the Space Age end. It was a dream made reality and we can go and maybe colonize the moon, Mars and beyond for PEACE and brotherhood someday with better technology to get us there so it wouldn't take us as long as it does. I hope to see that day. I hope Obama will NOT kill this dream of every young American boy and girl!

Jane Feld, Tampa, FL (Sent Saturday, January 30, 2010 1:47 AM)

As an engineer who worked at Kennedy Space Center for 17 years, I say shut down NASA once and for all, and good riddance to bad garbage.

There are no workers left at NASA, only political hacks and yes-boys.

The "next-generation" crewed space vehicles have been in the works for TWENTY-FIVE YEARS, passed from desk to desk by GS-15s sitting on their rears and waiting for their "high-three" retirement without having to actually do anything.

Screw NASA. And while we're at it, let's end this nonsense of six-figure retirements for government managers. They should have to apply for unemployment like all the workers they fired.

DK, Cocoa, Florida (Sent Saturday, January 30, 2010 5:45 AM)

Can someone please buy Brian Williams a calculator? During Tuesday's story about the President's proposed spending freeze, Brian informed us that after exempting defense, medicare, social security and the other untouchable departments, "That leaves just 17% of a \$3.5 trillion budget subject to this spending freeze...." An accompanying pie chart graphic gave us the same information: The \$3.5 trillion budget "pie" had a slice sticking out that was labeled "17%" and "\$477 billion". If Brian had bothered to check his math, he would have realized that 17% of \$3.5 trillion is \$595 billion, not \$477 billion. Any third grader with a

calculator could have figured that out. My advice to the Nightly News producers: Go out and hire a third grader with a calculator.

And can someone also buy Brian a dictionary? At the 7-minute mark of Wednesday's broadcast, Brian gave us "one last reminder" about NBC's coverage of the State of the Union speech later that night. Then, at the 28-minute mark, Brian again gave us "one last reminder" about the State of the Union. If Brian doesn't understand the meaning of the word "last", he should check with Mr. Webster.

Finally, someone should buy the Nightly News producers some eyeglasses. On Friday's story about the Toyota recall, we saw an interview with Matt DeLorenzo, who was identified as the "Road And Track Editor-In-Chief". Meanwhile, the wallpaper behind DeLorenzo clearly read "Road & Track". If the company chooses to use an ampersand as part of their title, the Nightly News producers should use one, too.

Norman Charles, NYC (Sent Saturday, January 30, 2010 7:07 AM)

One of the most important and fascinating stories of the week, the month and perhaps the year is former Prime Minister Tony Blair's testimony on Friday at an official inquiry into Britain's role in the Iraq war.

But Nightly News did not even mention Blair's testimony. They were too busy bringing us three stories (taking up almost seven minutes) about Haitian orphans. What is happening in Haiti is extremely important.

But Nightly News is not covering important stories. Instead of reporting actual news from Haiti, Nightly News is reporting feel-good tear-jerker stories that resemble the plot of a Lifetime movie. Friday's "Making A Difference" story was about a California nurse who had a hard time leaving Haiti and the orphan she bonded with. That's not news, that's a soap opera. Friday's other two Haiti stories were also about orphans, and were designed to strike an emotional chord with viewers, not to convey information. Apparently, the producers have determined that orphans equal ratings. This is a frequent tactic on Nightly News. By showing stories that reach viewers emotionally (but that have no news value), the producers attract large audiences, gain high ratings and ultimately earn more advertising dollars. And although Brian Williams did not have enough time to report on the Tony Blair story, he did have enough time to tell us about the retirement of quarterback Kurt Warner and the ice storm in Oklahoma. On his Tuesday blog, Brian wrote, "While other legitimate stories compete for our time and attention, I'm proud that our coverage of Haiti on tonight's broadcast -- and this week in general -- is about at the same level its (sic) been for days."

Unfortunately, that level is quite low. Brian continues, "(A)nd I hope those previously unfamiliar with Haiti and Haitians learn something from this tragedy: about their work ethic, their faith, their stoicism and seemingly endless capacity to endure." Give me a break. That drips with insincerity. Brian should just be honest and admit that his goal is to earn high ratings, not to report news. Perhaps if Tony Blair was an orphan, Brian Williams would have reported on him.

Norman Charles, NYC (Sent Saturday, January 30, 2010 8:40 AM)

Mr. Williams,

I was heartbroken to hear the news. The first trip to the moon will remain a Kodak moment for me - I hope even when I have alzheimers. In the 60s in 2nd grade, the (female) teacher laughed when I said I wanted to be an astronaut. I went with social work but never missed a launch or landing via TV and NASA's website was one of the first I bookmarked before most people even had PCs - along with the Library of Congress. When my son was five, he said he'd fly me to Mars when he grew up. I'm not sure how many people know what kind of technology comes from the research done but I share info from NASA's site frequently - especially APOD - and sadly, my friends still wonder what is wrong with me and why my head is above the clouds...

Colleen Whipple, Latitude=35.63, Longitude=-97.47, OK (Sent Saturday, January 30, 2010 10:00 AM)

Mr. Williams, End of an Era is so true. I grew up around the US manned space flight program near Cape Canaveral, Florida. My dad was a contractor for NASA and was part of the vast number of Americans who poured their life and passion into getting to the moon. His passion and dream for a better future led his three children to become engineers, all of them currently working at aerospace companies, directly related to space access.

People perform better when given a stretch goal, going to the moon or mars is just that type of goal. During the space race, workers would purchase station wagons(yes it was a while ago) so when they had a break, they could nap in the car instead of driving home to sleep. The commute would take valuable time away from their job.

As a direct result of the US space program, our country is safer, more technologically advanced and these benefits cannot be underestimated. Once we stop advancing our technology we will be playing catch-up to those who continued to invest. Relying on another country to transport Americans into space just doesn't seem right.

Concerned American (Sent Saturday, January 30, 2010 10:08 AM)

Reading takes you on an adventure.

I visited and explored faraway places without leaving my room.

A quiet corner, open a book and escape.

Friday's "Today" took me back to my era where all that mattered were books such as "Nancy Drew."

The iPad will be successful.

It will be the next BIG thing.

Hopefully, one day, technology will allow us to-

"carry around and not have to power up."

The question was asked: "End of An Era?"

My answer: No

Looking forward to sharing Black History Month with "Nightly."

A sincere thank you for the Teddy Pendergrass tribute.

"You are my latest, greatest inspiration."

Beautiful- in every way.

Michelle, Coral Springs, Florida (Sent Saturday, January 30, 2010 10:17 AM)

Cary:

Why do you find it necessary to include your age after your name?

Robin Weston (Sent Saturday, January 30, 2010 10:32 AM)

I was 12 years old when Apollo 11 landed on the moon, it was one of those moments you can never forget.

It was the fulfillment of John F. Kennedy's directive and the moment we won the space race. The whole world was proud...There was also the riveting drama of Apollo 13. After that, each successive mission seemed more routine, and people just lost interest in it. The funding was cut. That era came to an end with Apollo 17.

Hopefully exploration will continue, even if the missions are un-manned. I think the landing of the Huygens probe on Titan was almost a huge as the moonwalk. (for me anyway) :)

Dave, Detroit, Michigan (Sent Saturday, January 30, 2010 12:03 PM)

Brian Williams,

As I was growing up I never thought there would be a day when I would communicate with Walter Cronkite. Now, anyone in the world can easily reach anyone else if they want to be reached.

The Internet works today because private citizens took the opportunity to expand what was provided seed funding by the government. Space activities have received their seed funding and now private citizens are taking their initial steps into building a space industry.

Presidents always talk about the importance of mathematics and science. What they fail to do is sufficiently fund projects that require lots of mathematicians and scientists. Perhaps they think Wal-Mart needs lots of math and science students? NOT!

What needs to happen is pushing the envelope in a productive way. For example, we already know we can land and return from the moon. We already know we can land on Mars - often successfully. What government seed funding do we need to provide now?

There is a whole list of big projects that need government seed funding. Unfortunately politics too often gets in the way. Billions and billions of dollars flow to buy votes indirectly. Perhaps what is needed is a major corporation to itself become a "Christopher Columbus" and propose a project to King Obama or the next King elected - no matter which of the impotent parties achieves that goal? That corporation would need to focus on a final frontier project that would require massive employment throughout the next century and centuries ahead. Good jobs and well paying jobs that spin off technologies that build more and more businesses should be the goal.

Or, I guess we can just divide and conquer. You know, give money to teachers, firefighters, and policemen while the rest of us just sit here and wonder whether the recovery will kick in gear before I lose my home. It sure would help if Obama would say nice things about the stock market. But, I guess that is not the voters (almost retired folks like me) he is targeting.

My favorite "big project" is building a bigger Mars by mining the Kuiper belt. Just think of the opportunities! Sure there is lots of science and math and engineering but there is so much more. A whole new currency needs to be created - "Mars dollars". Everyone on Earth would receive an equal number of Mars currency. If Osama wants his share he must come out from whatever rat hole he is hiding.

The real-estate folks will have a field day getting folks to buy and sell Mars property. The Mars government in exile will have fun collecting tax. The gambling casinos can handle bets on Mars changes over time as each new Kuiper belt object crashes into Mars. And, all those folks will be buying and buying

and buying things on Earth that make their life easier. Janitors will be able to pay cash for the latest all-electric Prius.

Or, we can just sit here not paying our teachers enough and expect them to be capable of creating our next generation of math and science students to work for Wal-Mart.

Thanks Brian, I wish you and all the rest of you left-wing liberals well.

Jeff, Atlanta, GA (Sent Saturday, January 30, 2010 12:46 PM)

I am not aware of any strategies that suggest that NASA's purpose is to amuse us or excite us. Surely, our future in space exploration has some practical reason to be. Otherwise, we could just turn it over to James Cameron...

Brock in Dallas (Sent Saturday, January 30, 2010 2:21 PM)

It seems to me that Mr. Obama has never had "The Right Stuff."

Kurt Gibson, Virginia Beach, VA (Sent Saturday, January 30, 2010 2:26 PM)

Simply more fodder for my "Brian Williams should be in charge of everything" argument.

I'll spare you my impassioned speech about space exploration, and too big to fail/too important to end budget breakdown, that my NASA employee friend had to suffer upon breaking the news to me. I'll simply say it isn't limited to those of a certain age or from a certain era. I'm 31, and my earliest memory of the space program is watching the Challenger disaster unfold live on TV. I was 7. I am a romantic from a generation of cynics, I guess.

Meredith, Columbia, SC (Sent Saturday, January 30, 2010 2:45 PM)

Just what does define the greatness of a nation, and can we regain it if have we lost it? We are too often a country divided and have lost that pioneer spirit, that spirit of adventure, which led to new frontiers, new discoveries and are now too settled in our ways.

Tony Rotz Zimmerman, Mn. (Sent Saturday, January 30, 2010 5:06 PM)

Brian:

I entirely agree. It is our American spirit:
"Give me a tall ship, and a star to steer her by."
Space exploration is what we, as a nation, do.

What NASA needs are realistic long-term goals, such as exploration and settlement of the solar system, and a guaranteed, realistic budget that we, as a nation, can afford. Let the scientists and engineers take it from there without being battered by selfish politicians, dragged around by diplomats, or cheated by short-sighted accountants.

Let NASA dictate and update the timelines, rather than allow the imposition of artificial deadlines. What matters is that we establish and maintain continuous momentum. No more dead end missions. Each step will lead us further towards our destinations.

We can look forward to so many years of flight tests, milestones, and accomplishments that will continue to inspire us.

Nelson Bridwell (Sent Saturday, January 30, 2010 5:14 PM)

How disappointing,

However it's not believable that informed Americans would allow it for long. Here we sit; pecking away at micro-computing systems whose miniaturization was started by NASA. Using communications satellites to disseminate our ideas, and in my case alive due to medical imaging technologies, the grand children of the innovation at NASA. The list goes on forever.

Turning our noses up at the unforeseen advances inspired by the technological challenges our space program unblinkingly engages, is as unthinkable as turning our backs on the relatively free and clean energy source that mining the moon for non-radioactive Helium-3, fuel for fusion power plants could provide. The budgetary costs of keep those kinds of advances and the educational inspiration going is minimal. The benefit in new industries and jobs resulting from publicly sponsored innovation more than offsets the costs.

Perhaps, we should grant NASA 5% of the profits from every industry spin-off resulting from their

research, my guess would be that they would be largely self sufficient. Maybe a small percentage of the monies spent on energy as an investment towards the hope of their success in mining the white gold of the moon and other "dead" space bodies. Japan and other forward thinking nations should be applauded in light of their discipline and forward thinking willingness to invest hard earned money towards their future. Why do we find it so hard to accept the need to keep OUR bridges safe as well?

Or perhaps it really is in our best interest to throw in the towel, repeat the mistake made by Portugal a couple hundred years ago, to watch others claim the prize. Or worse, just accept the idea that human kind is doomed to end, limited to one small speck of sand in the sky, where not even wooden clubs seem a sustainable technology.

Crazy old Indian ...

Vern Campbell, Moses Lake, Wa (Sent Saturday, January 30, 2010 6:42 PM)

Manned spaceflight has been dead since Apollo ended.

dominick Lombardi, Goodyear AZ (Sent Saturday, January 30, 2010 7:54 PM)

start another space race. Tokyo seems to have the right stuff this time. MODIFY the ROCKET and you might not even need one. NASA needs a LONG DUE OVERHAUL, Id say.Its not so much about budget as how willing are people in supporting it. Would YOU EACH donate \$1 directly to help fund NASA? Or are corporations like m\$(heaven forbid) and Intel and the like going to own the stars with company owned vehicles that are consumer made? Are we going to EVER outsource NASA or not? Thats what we have to look at.

The tech has been there for a few centuries. When are we going to use something CUTTING EDGE to get us out of orbit? Do you know how old a rocket is? Really...we can do far better. I dont need a multibillio expense to test a rocket thoery, either. Thats what R&D labs are for. If it costs you 2 million to install a toilet seat, you aren't doing something right.

richard jasmin,san diego,ca (Sent Saturday, January 30, 2010 10:10 PM)

Ah, but Brian, you wouldn't have to bankrupt the country! We sent men to land on the Moon for less than 5% of the federal budget.

Currently? NASA's budget is 0.5% of the federal budget (that's HALF a PERCENT).

Jenni, Los Angeles, CA (Sent Saturday, January 30, 2010 11:30 PM)

Ending the manned flight program is a bad idea in so many ways....including the single one given as the reason for doing so. Economics.

I hope very much this inarguably hurtful course of inaction can be reversed.

Mike Parks (Sent Sunday, January 31, 2010 3:06 AM)

5 words sum up my thoughts: Brian Williams for President 2013!!!

Chas (Sent Sunday, January 31, 2010 11:49 AM)

The decision by Obama just shows his short- sighted, aganeda driven little mind. He would forsake his own children if it got him any farther down the path of global leader.

Next, he will pull the plug on any kind of exploration of space. He will again sacrifice the jobs of a few to feed the ego trip he's on and create more handout programs for those who provide no service, no benefit, no productive effort to society.

I grew up in the last half of the 20th century, and space exploration was my escape from reality. It was a dream of mankind then, to reach out and explore.

Just imagine, if you will, a government like this back in the late 1400s.

Mike, Shreveport, louisiana (Sent Sunday, January 31, 2010 12:34 PM)

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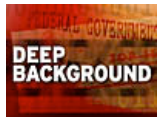
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