

# **CBS SUNDAY MORNING**

## **June 29, 2008**

### **GONE TO SEED: Washington's National Mall needs a makeover**

Copyright 2008 CBS Worldwide Inc.  
All Rights Reserved

CBS News Transcripts  
SHOW: Sunday Morning 9:00 AM EST CBS  
June 29, 2008 Sunday  
1524 words  
Gone To Seed; Washington's National Mall needs a makeover  
RUSS MITCHELL  
CHIP REID

GONE TO SEED

RUSS MITCHELL, host:

From a distance, the National Mall in Washington is an inspiring sight. Look more closely, however, and you'll see that parts of it have gone to seed. Nearly everyone agrees the mall could use a makeover. It's raising the green to pay for it, that's the problem. Chip Reid takes us on a tour.

(Footage of people at the National Mall; National Mall monuments; fireworks; file footage of people protesting Vietnam War)

CHIP REID reporting:

(Voiceover) For more than a century, the mall in Washington has been a source of national pride. Now, stretching more than two miles, its soaring monuments and memorials bear the names of our nation's heroes. This is where America celebrates independence and it's where millions of Americans have come at times of national strife to raise their voices in protest.

Dr. MARTIN LUTHER KING Jr.: (From file footage) We'll be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old negro spiritual.

(File footage of Martin Luther King Jr. speaking)

REID: (Voiceover) And to change the course of the nation.

Dr. KING: (From file footage) Free at last, free at last, thank God almighty we are free at last.

(Footage of National Mall)

Mr. DIRK KEMPTHORNE: (Voiceover) This is the magnificent mall.

(Footage of Chip Reid with Dirk Kempthorne)

REID: (Voiceover) Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne oversees America's national parks.

Mr. KEMPTHORNE: This is where American families come to see who we are as Americans.

(Footage of National Mall)

REID: (Voiceover) In fact, 25 million tourists come here every year, more than the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone and Yosemite combined.

(Footage of monuments)

Mr. KEMPTHORNE: (Voiceover) If you want to see our sense of patriotism, come stand with us as we look at our monuments and as we read the Gettysburg Address, as we look up at the National Monument.

This is what the kids have been reading about in their history books.

(Footage of Washington Monument; tourists; mud puddles; debris; cracked steps)

REID: (Voiceover) But there's something they won't see in their history books. Look closely at the National Mall and you may be surprised, even shocked, at what you'll find.

(Footage of Constitution Gardens)

Mr. CHIP AKRIDGE: (Voiceover) This is Constitution Gardens. The signers of the Declaration of Independence are memorialized over there.

(Footage of Reid walking with Chip Akridge; dead fish in pond)

REID: (Voiceover) Washington developer Chip Akridge.

We've got dead fish, we've got algae. We've got broken pavement here.

Mr. AKRIDGE: We do.

REID: And it's been this way for how long? I mean...

Mr. AKRIDGE: Well, it's just slowly deteriorated over the last 30 years from lack of maintenance. Again...

(Footage of crumbling pathway)

REID: (Voiceover) The mall's plazas and miles of pathways are crumbling.

Weeds growing everywhere here.

Mr. AKRIDGE: We do.

(Footage of weeds; grass with bare spots)

REID: (Voiceover) Weeds have taken over on some parts of the mall and much of the mall's grass has been pounded into dust.

(Footage of deteriorated mall)

Mr. AKRIDGE: (Voiceover) The park service has not had the proper budget to do the job that needs to be done.

(Footage of tourists; patchy lawn)

Representative ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON: (Voiceover) Anybody who had a front lawn that had come to this would be ashamed of it. This is our front lawn. We should do something about it now.

(Footage of Eleanor Holmes Norton; ducks in algae filled pond)

REID: (Voiceover) Eleanor Holmes Norton represents Washington, DC, in the House of Representatives. She's been sounding the alarm about the mall for nearly two decades. How did it get to this point?

(Footage of dirty sidewalks)

Rep. NORTON: (Voiceover) Well, it got to this point because we didn't keep it up and we paid no attention to it. We took the mall for granted.

And what calls itself The National Mall, well, let's act like a National Mall, not like a lawn that we keep mowed when we can.

(Footage of Capitol)

Ms. JUDY FELDMAN: This is a priority.

(Footage of Reid with Judy Feldman)

REID: (Voiceover) Judy Feldman, who heads the National Coalition to Save Our Mall, couldn't agree more.

Ms. FELDMAN: I teach on the mall regularly. I teach American history. And when you're walking from the Capitol to the Washington Monument and the Washington Monument

to the Lincoln, there's very little in between where you can stop and say, 'Now, let's sit here for a minute and talk about this.'

(Footage of National Mall; pathway covered with weeds; monument in disrepair; Akridge with Reid talking)

REID: (Voiceover) But all of this comes down to money and with so many other important national priorities, the government simply doesn't have it. So developer Chip Akridge is stepping in.

You've already got the raw material of just a beautiful spot.

Mr. AKRIDGE: Correct. We just want to bring this place up to world class standards.

(Footage of Trust for the National Mall door; band; fund-raiser)

REID: (Voiceover) To that end, Akridge recently created the Trust for the National Mall, a joint partnership with the National Park Service, and he started raising private money.

Unidentified Man: (Dressed as Thomas Jefferson) Good morning, sir. Thomas Jefferson. Nice to make your acquaintance.

(Footage of fund-raiser)

REID: (Voiceover) This fund-raiser last month took in more than \$600,000.

Mr. AKRIDGE: You know, when I came to Washington 35 years ago, the mall didn't look like this. So I looked around the country, I tried to find an example or model that we could follow. I didn't have to go very far.

(Footage of Central Park; photo of polluted Central Park; footage of Central Park)

REID: (Voiceover) The plan is modeled after the one developed by the Central Park Conservancy in New York. Thirty years ago, half of Central Park was closed. The rest was badly run down. The conservancy raised half a billion dollars in private contributions and today Central Park is a shining example of what a public-private partnership can accomplish.

Unidentified Boy: Hi.

(Footage of algae filled pond)

REID: If it weren't for all this algae, I could envision kids out here with little sailboats like they do in Central Park.

Mr. AKRIDGE: Wading in here on a day like this would be wonderful, absolutely.

(Footage of broken sidewalk and stairs; Capitol; port-a-potties)

REID: (Voiceover) Akridge says such simple pleasures will require \$500 million over the next decade, from private donors. This being Washington, more than a dozen government agencies will get to weigh in on how the money's spent. If Akridge has his way, first on the agenda, basic amenities.

Mr. AKRIDGE: That rest room right there, the next rest room is in the Capitol building unless you go into one of the museums in which case they don't open until 10 and they close at 5, and you've got to go through a metal detector. So if Johnny's got to go to the potty now, you're in trouble, OK?

(Footage of Jefferson Memorial plaza; reflecting pool; excerpt from "Forrest Gump;" Reid walking with Akridge)

REID: (Voiceover) And if he can raise really big money, he's got some really big projects. Take the Jefferson Memorial. The plaza around it is sinking into the tidal basin at an alarming rate, at least six inches in the past year alone. And then there's the reflecting pool. Remember its pristine blue waters where Forrest Gump was reunited with Jenny? Well, that's a color-enhanced Hollywood fantasy. Chip Akridge wants to make it a reality.

Mr. AKRIDGE: We think the American people will step up.

(Footage of Reid with Feldman; Capitol)

REID: (Voiceover) Still, as big as his plans are, the National Coalition to Save Our Mall's Judy Feldman is dreaming even bigger. She's lobbying Congress to expand the mall, roughly doubling its size.

Ms. FELDMAN: The Potomac waterfront, which right now is essentially inaccessible. So you open it up with docks and with canals and with restaurants and recreational spaces.

(Footage of Potomac River)

REID: (Voiceover) A huge new island would be built extending into the Potomac River, providing room to honor future American heroes.

(Footage of Lincoln Memorial; Jefferson Memorial)

Ms. FELDMAN: (Voiceover) American history cannot end. It has to continue and we have to allow our children and grandchildren to find their place on the mall.

So it's a very far-reaching visionary thing.

Rep. NORTON: My bill is really easy.

(Footage of mud puddles in pathways; National Mall)

REID: (Voiceover) But for Congresswoman Norton, the time is now.

Rep. NORTON: We don't need to wait for \$1/2 billion to be raised. We'll make this a place we can sit down, have a sandwich, have some free entertainment, and I think we can do that this session of Congress or very soon.

(Footage of tourists; World War II Memorial)

Mr. AKRIDGE: (Voiceover) This is motherhood, apple pie and the flag.

This park should be the best park in the world.

(Footage of National Mall; tourists)

REID: (Voiceover) In the end, there is one constant. The mall needs to be restored and maintained. For today, for the future and forever.

(Footage of sun logo; Fast Draw drawing of Bill Gates)

MITCHELL: (Voiceover) Ahead, from here to philanthropy. The Fast Draw's take on Bill Gates.

(Announcements)

June 29, 2008