

## Freeman's Excellent Adventure Summer 1999

Late last month I received a phone call from a gentleman that introduced himself as a Producer for CBS news. He said that CBS was putting together a documentary on Y2K and they wanted to know if I would be available for an interview. He stated that the director of the show, a Dr. Walter Cheeney (I may misspell many of these names), had read some of the postings I have made to the Y2K forums on the Internet and wanted to discuss them with me for the show. The interview was to be on July 20 in the University Club (a very exclusive private club on top of the Galleria). I was flattered, of course, but at the same time mystified as to why I would be selected. I received several more calls in the pursuing weeks making sure I was available and trying to set a time for me to be interviewed. I was offered morning or afternoon interview time. I chose morning. I was told that there was a Coast Guard Admiral (it turns out it was the Captain in charge of the Houston-Galveston area, nonetheless a big cheese) who was having a schedule problem and they would have to get back to me. Last Friday they called and said that I was to be the first interview at 9 in the morning. If I could be there by 9 they would put me in makeup (MAKEUP?) and then interview me. Mr. Lohec, my boss, had encouraged me to go and do this.

Tuesday, July 20 came. I got out my best Sunday-go-to-meetin' suit and drove off to Houston. I arrived about 8:15 at the University club. The Producer that had called me was there near the reception desk, dressed very casually, like a Friday kind of dress. I introduced myself. He took me into a very large conference room where they were set up. At one end of the room was a large mantle flanked by two large built-in bookcases. They had all of the camera equipment set up there. The Coast Guard Captain, a Wayne Gusman, was setting up to be interviewed. I was introduced to another producer, who turned out to be a researcher as well. In the course of conversation he told me one of his hobbies was yacht racing. Researching must pay well. I met Dr. Cheeney. Dr. Chenney is the director and head of the project. He told me that CBS had contacted him a year or so ago about filming this documentary. He said he initially laughed at them, but then did some reading on the subject and decided it was interesting. He hired sixteen researchers to do the legwork. They filmed the first of the series of documentaries earlier in the year. The Executive Producer arrived a couple of hour later. At lunch he told me that they had started out to do one show. It was so well received (35 share) that they put together another show from the excess footage. This show was aired in 48 markets last Friday. It got a 60 share, which is unheard of for a documentary. This series is being put up for an Emmy in the documentary category.

They have interviewed Vice President Gore (ask me what they said about him), Senator Dodd, and now, Freeman Mendell. The more I saw the more I was overwhelmed.

While the Coast Guard Captain was being interviewed, I was at the other end of the room having makeup put on. It was everywhere. She worked on my shiny bald head a lot. Even my eyebrows got makeup. She put it on thick. I had to take a shower to get it all off. A second

makeup woman sat near the interviewee and would dash in and redo the makeup every few minutes. The filming was stopped if the interviewee wanted to start over on an answer or if makeup needed to be redone or if the director (who was actually doing the question asking) wanted to instruct us how to structure an answer so that it could be more easily understood. Apparently someone else will be seen asking the questions. We were asked to make a complete statement, including the question in the statement. I listened to the Coast Guard Captain for his entire interview. When it came to be my turn, they got a different chair (the crew put a big pillow behind me and another underneath me, I guess it was because I am so tall) and put it in another position. Then I sat in it and talked with the director while they adjusted the lighting. When all was ready, the director hollered "Quiet on the set", "Roll Tape". The cameraman said "Speed" when he was ready. We went through this each time we stopped for whatever reason. My portion went into three tapes. I was told by a gentleman from the Union Pacific Railroad (he and his assistant flew in from Omaha for their portion of the interview) that I was on for more than an hour.

They told me not to look at the camera. Look anywhere but the camera. They asked me a lead in question and I responded to it. I really lost track of my surroundings and could only really see the director (who was ten feet or so away, behind the lights). I was surprised by all of this. I think my responses were longer than the others were, for some reason he let me rattle and did not ask many questions. He actually listened to my suggestions for questions and followed up on all of my suggestions. In the middle of an answer, everything suddenly stopped. The makeup lady came running in and started adjusting my coat. Apparently it had started riding up in the back. We started the question over after she finished and had retouched my face and head. After it was over, the makeup lady told me that I could go to the bathroom and wash it off. I said that I might leave it on so my wife could see. She looked at me and said "Only if you are going straight home. You looked great on camera, but you do not want to be out in public like this."

I still did not know why the hell I was selected for this. I later asked one of the crew that question and they told me that if Dr. Cheeney wanted me, there was a reason, he always did very thorough research. This was flattering, of course.

As the morning wore on, more people started arriving. Silvia Garcia, the City of Houston Controller was there, she was scheduled for the afternoon. Apparently the Executive Producer brought several of his investors along as well. I had lunch with some of them. We had a private dining room in the University Club. I was told that this was the second day of three days of filming.

I do not know if I will be left on the cutting room floor or what the final outcome will be. They did say they would send me a tape of the show. We can all see if I inserted my foot too deeply into my mouth.