

# Dan Rather Reports

**Episode Number:** 433

**Episode Title:** Queen of the Road

**Description:** Thousands of new truckers are hitting the road every year. Are they properly trained to handle the big rigs? Plus, scientists go deep, literally, to find healthy coral in the Caribbean.

**TEASE:**

DAN RATHER (VOICE OVER)

TONIGHT...TRUCKING DOWN THE HIGHWAY...OUT OF A JOB ELSEWHERE, THOUSANDS TAKE TO TRUCKING AND THE LURE OF THE OPEN ROAD....BUT ARE THEY READY TO BE SEMI-TOUGH ?

DESIREE WOOD, WOMAN NEWCOMER TO TRUCKING, BLOGGER of "A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A LADY TRUCKER"

They're gonna give you the keys and you're gonna start driving. But I don't know how to drive. I never drove before. I only drove around the block.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

PLUS...THIS MAN SPEAKS OUT FOR THE FIRST TIME ABOUT SAFETY AND HIS EXPERIENCES TRAINING TRUCKER WANNA-BE'S

TOM HANSEN, FORMER DRIVER TRAINING MANAGER & TERMINAL MANAGER FOR CRST VAN EXPEDITED

There are a lot of good, productive, solid people out there driving trucks. But there are also a lot of people who come to truck driving because it's their last resort. If it wasn't for the truck, they would be homeless.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND FROM THE DEEP...THE SEARCH FOR HEALTHY CORAL REEFS IN THE CARIBBEAN.

ROY ARMSTRONG, SCIENTIST, UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO

The deeper reefs that we're studying could be a reservoir of biodiversity in times of- of global climate change.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WE'LL BRING YOU THE NEWS, NEXT ON DAN RATHER REPORTS.

**QUEEN OF THE ROAD:**

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

GOOD EVENING. TONIGHT, AN INVESTIGATION INTO TRUCKERS AND WHO'S TRAINING THEM TO DRIVE BIG RIGS. EVERY YEAR TENS OF THOUSANDS OF NEW TRUCKERS HIT THE ROAD...AND YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW IT BUT THOSE RIGS YOU PASS ON THE HIGHWAY CAN WEIGH UP TO 80-THOUSAND POUNDS...OR MORE THAN 20 CARS. SO YOU WOULD HOPE THAT WHOEVER'S IN COMMAND OF THE 18-WHEELER IS AN EXPERIENCED, WELL-TRAINED DRIVER. OUR REPORTING HAS FOUND THAT MANY TIMES THAT'S NOT THE CASE. A CONTINUAL DRIVER SHORTAGE HAS LED COMPANIES TO RECRUIT AND EMPLOY A WIDE RANGE OF CANDIDATES... ALL SORTS OF PEOPLE YOU'D NEVER EXPECT -- FORMER FACTORY WORKERS AND BANKERS, RETIREES AND HOUSEWIVES -- ARE LURED WITH PROMISES OF FREE TRAINING, A STEADY PAYCHECK, AND A CHANCE FOR A NEW LIFE ON THE OPEN ROAD.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

TRUCKING WAS A ONCE A DOMAIN RULED BY A CAVALRY OF BOOT-KICKIN, JERKY-CHEWIN' MARLBORO MEN. YOU DIDN'T USE TO SEE TOO MANY WOMEN MANHANDLING THE INNARDS OF A BIG RIG.

DESIREE WOOD, WOMAN NEWCOMER TO TRUCKING, BLOGGER of "A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A LADY TRUCKER"

I got a pink toolbox on principal 'cause people try to make it seem like you have to be really really really tough to operate a truck safely and that's just not true.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THERE ARE NOW SOME TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND LADY LONG HAUL DRIVERS OUT ON THE ROAD. DESIREE WOOD IS ONE OF THE NEW BREED.

WOOD

I like to be casual. I didn't really particularly want to wear pantyhose anywhere. I know that kind of sounds like a weird reason to be a trucker...

RATHER

A 45 -YEAR OLD SINGLE MOM WHO ADMITS SHE'S HAD HER SHARE OF HARD KNOCKS, SHE NEVER GAVE ONE IOTA OF THOUGHT TO TRUCKING UNTIL TWO YEARS AGO. ALL AT ONCE, HER RELATIONSHIP TURNED SOUR, HER CAREER PATH HIT A POTHOLE, AND HER CASH-FLOW DRIED UP. SO SHE SET OUT TO FIND A NEW ROUTE IN LIFE....

WOOD

In my 20's and 30's, I took a lot of cross country road trips with my dogs and my friends. It seemed like when we got to the other side of the country, I was like, "Now what?" What if they-you're on a road trip forever?

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE OPEN ROAD HAS ALWAYS LURED ITS SHARE OF DREAMERS...AND WITH THE TRUCKING INDUSTRY'S CHRONIC DRIVER SHORTAGE -- IT WAS AN EASY MATCH FOR DESIREE WOOD. THE FIRST STEP WAS TO LEARN HOW TO DRIVE THE SEMIS AND TO GET A COMMERCIAL DRIVER'S LICENSE. THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF TRUCK DRIVING SCHOOLS ACROSS THE COUNTRY THAT OFFER EVERYTHING FROM WEEKS OF BEHIND-THE-WHEEL TRAINING TO A QUICK WEB TUTORIAL. DESIREE WOOD CHOSE A THREE-WEEK COURSE OFFERED BY THE CDL SCHOOL IN MIAMI.

PROMOTIONAL VIDEO FROM "THE CDL SCHOOL" WEBSITE

"Are you in a dead end job and looking for a new career - would you like to double your salary in just three weeks. Then the CDL school is just what you are look for..."

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

TRUCK DRIVER TRAINING HAS ALSO PROVEN TO BE IN CONTINUOUS DEMAND - EVEN IN THIS ECONOMY TRUCKING SCHOOLS ACROSS THE COUNTRY ARE REPORTING SPIKES IN APPLICATIONS: REFUGEES FROM THE RECESSION, TRANSPLANTS FROM CUBICLES AND PEOPLE LIKE DESIREE WOOD, WHO ARE SIMPLY LOOKING FOR A FRESH START.

RATHER

So, how did you wind up choosing to go to trucking school? Seems an odd choice.

WOOD

I mostly did not want to work in an office I wanted to go somewhere where I was gonna do my job and be left alone.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT HERE AT THE MIAMI CAMPUS OF THE CDL SCHOOL, WOOD SAYS SHE DIDN'T EXPECT TO BE LEFT ALONE QUITE SO MUCH... SHE SAYS SHE PAID MORE THAN FIFTY-FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS AND SHE WANTED TO LEARN HOW TO DRIVE A TRUCK. INSTEAD, SHE SAYS SHE SPENT MOST OF THE TIME CRUSHING CONES ON THE DRIVING COURSE.

RATHER

Well did you have a lot of driving practice? Did they get-- give you a lot of driving school experience?

WOOD

No. They-- my school, we-- we got our-- our written part out of the way the first week. Then we go to the driving course. And basically they would drop us off there and they'd be like, "There's the trucks. We'll pick you up at seven."

RATHER

Well surely you had- had a driving instructor sit second seat with you or something?

WOOD

They had a guy that would come and get us in like groups of five. And he would take us around the block kind of. And we'd all get a chance to drive like a mile. And then the other four of us would be sitting in the back seat. And he would actually shift for us. And-- he would you know, tell us, "You know, one two, to do the double clutching. One, two."

RATHER

Before you went to this driving school, did you know what double clutch was?

WOOD

(LAUGHTER) I never heard of it.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WOOD SAYS SHE DISCOVERED PRETTY QUICKLY THAT THE ABC'S OF TRUCKING ARE NOT AS EASY AS S-U-V....

JERRY DONALDSON, RESEARCH DIRECTOR - ADVOCATED FOR HIGHWAY & AUTO SAFETY

Driving a tractor trailer rig is not like driving a car.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

JERRY DONALDSON IS THE RESEARCH DIRECTOR OF A WATCHDOG GROUP BASED IN WASHINGTON, DC. CALLED ADVOCATES FOR HIGHWAY & AUTO SAFETY.

DONALDSON

It is very crucial to learn exactly how to control your speeds in relationship to what gear you're in, to handle the truck going around curves. And an inexperienced driver only needs to make one crucial mistake and the death and injury toll will be very high.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

NEARLY FIVE THOUSAND PEOPLE ON AVERAGE EACH YEAR ARE KILLED IN CRASHES INVOLVING BIG TRUCKS. NOBODY KNOWS HOW MANY OF THOSE INVOLVE ROOKIE TRUCKERS, BUT PILOTING A 75-FOOT, FULLY-LOADED RIG AT HIGH SPEEDS IS NOT THE KIND OF THING DESIREE WOOD THINKS YOU CAN LEARN ON A DRIVING COURSE. BUT AT THE CDL SCHOOL IN MIAMI, SHE SAYS, ACTUAL ROAD TIME WAS VERY LIMITED. IN THREE WEEKS, SHE SAYS SHE DROVE THE STUDENT TRUCK ON THE STREET ONLY TWICE...

WOOD

I only got two times. You're supposed to go three. But the last day I was like begging 'em like, "I haven't gone out very much, can I go?"

RATHER

Well, you know that a lot of people will hear this and say, "You mean to tell me she went to what is supposed to be trucking school, and she actually only drove the truck, more or less, around the block?"

WOOD

Uh-huh (AFFIRM). Yeah.

RATHER

Well, what are we to think of that?

WOOD

It's unsafe.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SAFE OR NOT, IT'S NEITHER UNUSUAL NOR ILLEGAL ACCORDING TO JERRY DONALDSON.

DONALDSON

The states don't require any training. The federal government requires no training. There are many trucking training facilities out there which are nothing more than certificate mills.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AS IT STANDS, HE SAYS TRAINING FOR NEW TRUCKERS IS PURELY OPTIONAL AND THE TESTING IS OFTEN A CRAPSHOOT. IN FLORIDA, FOR EXAMPLE, THERE ARE MORE THAN 40 THIRD-PARTY OUTFITS CERTIFIED TO ADMINISTER STATE EXAMS - INCLUDING THE CDL SCHOOL IN MIAMI. THAT WAS WHERE DESIREE WOOD SAYS SHE TOOK HER TEST.

WOOD

I went on my final driving test in an automatic. And so I didn't have to worry about shifting. I just had to worry about not hitting any corners.

RATHER

Well, do you think or not that new drivers who've gotten their CDL, a Commercial Drivers License, when they start driving, are they really ready to drive a big rig, what 80,000 pounds-- on the highway?

WOOD

No. They're not. I mean, they-- they're putting these people out on the highway that-- some of 'em are inappropriate to ever sit in this seat and they're pushing 'em through these schools until they...

RATHER

It's a business.

WOOD

Yes, it's a business. It's an industry in itself, these students.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE STUDENT TRUCKING BUSINESS IS BOOMING AT THE CDL SCHOOL. THE OWNER DECLINED REPEATED REQUESTS FOR AN INTERVIEW, BUT THE VIDEO ON THE COMPANIES WEBSITE SPELLS OUT HE PERKS.

PROMOTIONAL VIDEO FROM "THE CDL SCHOOL" WEBSITE

“The CDL school offers intensive hands-on and classroom training in our fully equipped facilities. Our goal is to help you improve your future and obtain a solid career in one of the fasted growing job markets in the U.S. ...”

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE CDL SCHOOL DID PUT DESIREE WOOD ON THE FAST TRACK... IN JUST THREE WEEKS, SHE'D EARNED A COMMERCIAL DRIVERS LICENSE AND LANDED A JOB WITH A MAJOR TRUCKING COMPANY. READY OR NOT, SHE HEADED UP TO ORIENTATION....

WOOD

I felt like I really did not learn enough to go off to a company. I knew I was going to go to a company in three days and be driving in the winter as a real truck driver. You know, I-- this-- I didn't get into this so that I could die.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

...DESIREE WOOD. NOW STRAIGHT AHEAD, A MAN WHO TRAINED ROOKIES SPEAKS OUT FOR THE FIRST TIME ABOUT WHO'S BEHIND THE WHEEL OF SOME OF THOSE BIG RIGS.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

IN RECENT YEARS, FEDERAL INVESTIGATORS UNCOVERED CDL FRAUD SCHEMES IN NEARLY TWO DOZEN STATES THAT INVOLVED MORE THAN 16-THOUSAND TRUCKERS LICENSED THROUGH ILLEGITIMATE MEANS. THE MOST NOTORIOUS PROBE LED TO THE DOWNFALL OF GEORGE RYAN, THE FORMER GOVERNOR OF ILLINOIS. RYAN'S UNDERLINGS WERE TAKING BRIBES FROM CDL SCHOOLS IN EXCHANGE FOR ISSUING LICENSES TO UNQUALIFIED TRUCKERS. SAFETY EXPERTS THINK IT'S STILL A WIDESPREAD PROBLEM... NOT SO ACCORDING TO THE AMERICAN

TRUCKING ASSOCIATIONS, WHICH REPRESENTS MORE THAN 37,000 TRUCKING CARRIERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

DAVE OSIECKI, VICE PRESIDENT OF SAFETY, SECURITY & OPERATIONS FOR THE A-T-A.

If a state is licensing a person who can't operate a truck safely, shame on the state.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DAVE OSIECKI IS VICE PRESIDENT OF SAFETY FOR THE A-T-A, AFTER A LONG DAY OF MEETINGS AT THE ASSOCIATION'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN LAS VEGAS, HE CARVED OUT TIME TO ANSWER OUR QUESTIONS.

OSIECKI

The circumstance where a person can go and take a one hour, two hour, eight hour training course, operate a truck around the block and then go pass a test --that's a problem in oversight.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

OSIECKI SAYS THE TRAINING AND TESTING MISADVENTURES DESIREE WOOD DESCRIBES ARE UNUSUAL. AND HE SAYS NEW DRIVERS ARE TYPICALLY HIRED BY COMPANIES THAT HAVE SPECIAL ON-THE-JOB TRAINING PROGRAMS OF THEIR OWN KNOWN AS FINISHING SCHOOLS.

OSIECKI

Some companies have these finishing programs where they're willing to take on the risk because they're willing to finish the-- the driver's training and get them some experience in-- in a lower-risk environment.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

LOWER RISK, HE SAYS, BECAUSE ROOKIES ARE SENT OUT ON TEAM TRUCKS WITH TRAINERS OR CO-DRIVERS WHO ARE SUPPOSED TO SHOW THEM THE ROPES. ONE OF THE INDUSTRY'S BIGGEST TRAINING COMPANIES IS CRST VAN EXPEDITED.

TOM HANSEN, FORMER DRIVER TRAINING MANAGER & TERMINAL MANAGER FOR CRST VAN EXPEDITED

When I see a truck from the former company I worked for, I give them a lot of space because I'm not so sure of that person's skills.



RATHER (VOICE OVER)

UNTIL VERY RECENTLY, TOM HANSEN WORKED AS A MANAGER HERE AT CRST'S TERMINAL IN OKLAHOMA CITY. EVERY MONDAY MORNING FOR FIVE YEARS, HANSEN SAYS HE GOT 30 TO 40 NEW RECRUITS WHO HE'D PUT THROUGH A BATTERY OF CHECKS AND TESTS TO ENSURE THEY QUALIFIED FOR CRST'S FINISHING SCHOOL.

HANSEN

When this brand-new student got there, did they pass the qualifications that we gave them? Could they write their name more than once? Could they read a map? Could they pass a road test without hitting four curbs, or bein' able shift a truck?

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HANSEN IS SPEAKING OUT FOR THE FIRST TIME TONIGHT. HE SAYS MANY OF THE ROOKIES WERE FINISHED BEFORE FINISHING SCHOOL.

HANSEN

I know from personal experience, doing thousands of road tests, at least in the last seven years, literally thousands-- that's not an exaggeration—there's a lot of 'em who probably shouldn't be doing this business. They probably should stick to maybe you know drywalling or roofing or whatever they weve doing in the past.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ALL OF THE NEW RECRUITS HAD ALREADY EARNED THEIR COMMERCIAL DRIVERS' LICENSES AND WERE DAYS AWAY FROM CRISS-CROSSING THE COUNTRY IN LOADED SEMI'S. SO, HANSEN SAYS, CRST'S ROAD TEST -- WHICH CONSISTED OF A TOTAL OF ABOUT THREE MILES AND FOUR RIGHT TURNS -- SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN A PROBLEM. BUT HANSEN SAYS EVEN WITH TWO TRIES -- TYPICALLY AT LEAST 10 PERCENT OF EVERY CLASS FAILED AND GOT SENT HOME.

HANSEN

I- I felt good about having a ten percent failure rate. That means that those ten out of 100 people that I was keeping out of the trucks were not gonna be out there, where my mother, my (LAUGHTER) daughter, my sons are out on the roads.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT HANSEN SAYS SENDING SO MANY NEW HIRES PACKING WAS EXPENSIVE BECAUSE CRST HAD ALREADY PAID FOR THEIR ORIENTATION EXPENSES AND OFTEN THE TUITION FOR THEIR CDL SCHOOLS.

HANSEN

The company decided that the costs per hire was getting too high, so, "We need to change. What are you doing wrong," meaning me. My road test was too hard. "Change your road test."

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HANSEN SAYS THAT HIS THREE MILE TEST ROUTE WAS REDUCED TO ABOUT THREE-QUARTERS OF A MILE, INCLUDING JUST TWO RIGHT TURNS. AND THE NEW RECRUITS, HE SAYS, WERE STILL FAILING.

HANSEN

They'd hit a curb leaving the yard or they'd hit a curb turning into the truck stop. They wouldn't be able to shift, they'd stall out multiple times trying to take off at one of the stoplights. I had one lady about three weeks ago that just stood up in the middle of the street and said, "I can't do this." I had to take over the truck right away. It was- it got pretty frustrating even on such a short road test...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

CRST DECLINED MULTIPLE REQUESTS FOR AN INTERVIEW, BUT IN DOCUMENTS FILED WITH FEDERAL REGULATORS, THE COMPANY SAYS ITS FINISHING SCHOOL IS A VITAL PART OF ITS "TEAM BUSINESS MODEL." IT SAYS THAT WHILE "EXPERIENCED DRIVERS DO NOT WISH TO RUN IN A TEAM," ROOKIES ARE WILLING TO WORK ON TEAM TRUCKS. IN OTHER WORDS LIVE CHEEK-TO-JOWL WITH A STRANGER 24/7. THAT MEANS THE COMPANY CAN RUN TRUCKS LONGER, MOVE FREIGHT FASTER... AND EARN MORE MONEY. ACCORDING TO CRST'S FILING, OF THE 5,400 NEW DRIVERS THE COMPANY HIRED IN 2007, NEARLY 70 PERCENT WERE STUDENTS. DESIREE WOOD WAS STILL A STUDENT AT THE CDL SCHOOL IN MIAMI WHEN SHE LANDED A JOB WITH ANOTHER TRAINING COMPANY -- CALLED COVENANT TRANSPORT.

WOOD

I just remember that first week, I was like, you don't even really have a good gauge of where is this thing staying between the lanes. Nobody teaches you that.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WEEK ONE: ALL THE NEW HIRES WERE ASSIGNED TRAINERS, COVENANT'S SENIOR CO-DRIVERS WHO -- ACCORDING TO HER COMPANY HANDBOOK -- ARE EXPECTED TO BE QUOTE "THE SAFEST, BEST-TRAINED, BEST EQUIPPED DRIVERS POSSIBLE."

WOOD

They tell you right in the orientation, your trainer's probably gonna show up, they've been driving all night, they're tired, so you expect that they're gonna give you the keys and you're gonna start driving. So everybody's like, "but I don't know how to drive. I never drove before. I only drove around the block."

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

OVER AT CRST, THE STORY OF ONE DRIVER AND HIS TRAINER HAS BECOME THE STUFF OF TRUCKING LEGEND, EXCEPT THIS IS NO LEGEND. IT'S TRUE.

HANSEN

The student was behind the wheel and couldn't wake his lead driver up, so he drove all the way to Santa Rosa, parked for the night. Couldn't get his lead driver up the next morning, and drove into Oklahoma City. Walked up to me, me and a friend, who was a safety trainer at the time, and said, "I want a new lead driver. My lead driver won't wake up." So my friend John walks out to the truck. And he comes back with this really funny look on his face and says, "Man, that dude ain't sleeping. He's dead." That just absolutely a true story. Drove through three states with his lead driver dead in the bunk, and didn't realize it.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE CORONER DETERMINED THAT THE LEAD DRIVER DIED OF NATURAL CAUSES. BUT IN A WAY THE 48 -YEAR OLD MAN WAS ALSO A CASUALTY OF THE LONG-HAUL LIFE. THE DEMANDS CAN BE BRUTAL, THE STRESS HARROWING. AT ONE TIME, CRST REQUIRED TRAINERS TO HAVE AT LEAST EIGHT MONTHS OF DRIVING EXPERIENCE, HANSEN SAYS, BUT WHEN THERE WEREN'T ENOUGH TRAINERS, HE SAYS THE COMPANY DECIDED TO CHANGE THE STANDARDS....

HANSEN

All of a sudden, we are allowing people with exactly six months of experience, might have had an incident their first two months of driving, maybe had an out of service violation -- and we're approving them for lead driver.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

CRST DID GIVE US A WRITTEN STATEMENT IN WHICH THE COMPANY SAYS ALL TRAINERS ARE "EXPERIENCED DRIVERS WHO MUST ALSO COMPLETE AN ADDITIONAL CRST TRAINING PROGRAM, WHICH INCLUDES BOTH WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS AND ROAD TESTS." WHILE THE COMPANY

WRITES THAT IT'S QUOTE "PROUD OF ITS DRIVER TRAINING PROGRAM,"  
HANSEN SAYS HIS EXPERIENCE TELLS HIM SOMETHING ELSE.

TOM HANSEN

You know what I say? Stay off the sidewalks.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DESIREE WOOD SAYS AT HER COMPANY - COVENANT TRANSPORT - SHE  
WAS ALSO NERVOUS, ESPECIALLY WHEN SHE SURVEYED THE FIELD OF  
CO-DRIVERS WITH WHOM SHE'D BE PARTNERING.

WOOD

The first day of orientation, was like a "who's who" of criminal activity. "Oh, yeah, I just got out of this for this, and I got off for this." And I'm just sitting there going, they seriously do not let people who just got out of jail just get on trucks with somebody like, you know, Silly Sally. "Here – here" the keys to a truck and a gas card, see ya later. Go take our million dollars of freight and have a good time. Just make sure you get there on Monday, okay?"

HANSEN

There are a lot of good, productive, solid people out there driving trucks, salt of the earth. Some of my best friends are truck drivers, people that I would trust my life to. But there are also a lot of people who come to truck driving because it's their last resort. They've failed at everything else they ever did. They no longer have a credit rating. If it wasn't for the truck, they would be homeless.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

MANY, HE SAYS, ARE NOT JUST DOWN ON THEIR LUCK.

HANSEN

I have personally taken away pot pipes. I've found marijuana in the men's restroom at the terminal I worked at. I took a crack pipe away from-- a driver. I have caught people drunk on duty.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HANSEN SAYS HE'D PRIDED HIMSELF ON CONVINCING NEW RECRUITS TO  
COME CLEAN ABOUT CRIMINAL RECORDS AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE  
PROBLEMS -- UNTIL A FEW MONTHS AGO WHEN HE SAYS THE COMPANY  
TOLD HIM HE WAS WEEDING OUT TOO MANY NEW RECRUITS...

HANSEN

Once again, the numbers-- were affecting the playing field, I guess you could say. They told me, "Ease up on the honesty speech. Quit doing it." So, that's exactly what I did.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

CRST WROTE THAT "100% OF NEW HIRES ARE DRUG TESTED" AND THAT ANY DRIVER WHO FAILS IS "IMMEDIATELY TERMINATED." THEY SAY THE COMPANY'S HIRING STANDARDS AND BACKGROUND CHECKS "EXCEED" ALL FEDERAL "STANDARDS FOR PROFESSIONAL TRUCK DRIVERS." AT COVENANT, DESIREE WOOD SAYS HER CO-DRIVERS WEREN'T UP TO HER STANDARDS...REGARDLESS OF THE COMPANY'S.

WOOD

When you're a student and you're in a team, you have to share the bottom bunk. Nobody's allowed to be on the top while the truck is moving. And a team truck runs 24 hours a day. So, you're basically sleeping in the same bed as somebody that you just met. Well, I was on a truck with somebody that used to be in prison for attempted murder, and a former drug trafficker. I'm all for people changing their life and moving on. But, I shouldn't have to live with them in here. I'm not Dr. Phil.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DURING FINISHING SCHOOL, DESIREE WOOD SAYS SHE HAD ALL SORTS OF CO-DRIVERS AND ALL SORTS OF EXPERIENCES THAT DIDN'T MAKE IT INTO THE RECRUITING VIDEOS. BUT WOOD SAYS SHE WAS SHOCKED TO FIND OUT THAT COVENANT HAD APPROVED ONE PARTICULAR CO-DRIVER TO BECOME A TRAINER....

WOOD

We ended up getting to the desert and he told me that I was a racist cause I wouldn't have sex with him. That's kind of a thing with some of the male trainers is that they-- you know, they got-- you got a captive audience. They get you 2,000 miles from home and they're like, "You're not gonna pass unless you do me."

RATHER

You're not making this up.

WOOD

No. No. And it's- and it's common knowledge.

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

WOOD SAYS THAT SHE TOOK A LOT OF NOTES, AND THAT SHE FILED REPEATED COMPLAINTS -- DETAILING EVERYTHING FROM A PILL-POPPING CO-DRIVER, TO BEING ASKED TO FALSIFY LOGS, TO HAVING HER AND HER BELONGINGS TOSSED FROM A CAB. SHE SAID SHE PUSHED THE COMPANY TO REMOVE HER FROM SEVERAL TEAM TRUCKS. COVENANT DECLINED OUR REPEATED INTERVIEW REQUESTS, BUT IN A WRITTEN STATEMENT, THE COMPANY SAYS ITS SAFETY PROGRAM IS A QUOTE "NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED MODEL OF EXCELLENCE." THE COMPANY ALSO SAYS COVENANT IS A QUOTE "LEADING PROVIDER" OF CAREER OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN TRUCKERS -- WHO MAKE UP 17 PERCENT OF IT'S DRIVER WORKFORCE.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

COVENANT ALSO TOLD US THAT THE COMPANY HAS RECEIVED AND INVESTIGATED SOME OF DESIREE WOOD'S ALLEGATIONS, BUT THEY ARE "PROHIBITED FROM DISCUSSING PERSONNEL MATTERS." WOMEN ARE BREAKING INTO THE BIG RIG BUSINESS, BUT SOME SAY IT'S A ROUGH ROAD. TOM HANSEN'S FORMER COMPANY, CRST WAS THE TARGET OF A CLASS ACTION LAWSUIT FILED IN 2007 BY THE FEDERAL EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION. THAT SUIT INVOLVED 270 WOMEN DRIVERS WHO ACCUSED THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS OF DOZENS OF ACTS -- INCLUDING "PROPOSITIONS FOR SEX...BRUSHING UP...CRAWLING INTO WOMEN'S BUNKS UNINVITED...PUNCHING, KICKING, GRABBING, FONDLING AND RAPE." TOM HANSEN SAYS HE TESTIFIED IN A DEPOSITION ON BEHALF OF CRST.

HANSEN

The point of the lawsuit was to show that the management of the company had-- condoned it, didn't make any effort to stop it. And from a- being a manager, I know that wasn't true. I had no problems standing in front of the EEOC and saying we did our very best.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

...GOOD ENOUGH TO BEAT THE EEOC. THE COMPANY WON. THIS SUMMER, THE COURT DISMISSED THE CASE, RULING THE EEOC HAD FAILED TO PROVE IT WAS CRST'S STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE TO TOLERATE SEXUAL HARASSMENT, MEANING THEY'D LACKED ENOUGH EVIDENCE FOR A CLASS ACTION SUIT. THE COURT ALSO BLASTED THE AGENCY BECAUSE ITS LEGAL MISSTEPS MEANT POSSIBLY DOZENS OF POTENTIALLY MERITORIOUS SEXUAL HARRASSMENT CLAIMS MAY NOW

NEVER SEE THE INSIDE OF A COURTROOM." HANSEN SAYS HE THINKS THERE WERE CLEAR PROBLEMS THAT PUT A LOT OF WOMEN IN TROUBLING SITUATIONS.

HANSEN

There is nothing that says you can't hire an ex-felon. Okay? When you're trying to fill a truck, especially during a driver shortage, you're going to take what you can get. Now, what good common sense should say, don't pair them up with a female, don't-- you know, don't let them train a female. But once again, that's-- that's upper management's responsibility. Here's the problem I saw at my former company. The head of the safety department, who normally approves whether a person can come to work with felonies or - or convictions or whatever-- is also the head of the recruiting department. So it's a huge conflict of interest. The guy who's running the department that says no, we don't want 'em is also the guy that's responsible for producing the numbers. Same person.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

CRST WROTE US THAT HANSEN IS AN "OBVIOUSLY DISGRUNTLED" FORMER EMPLOYEE.

HANSEN

You could call me a disgruntled worker. But I'm not disgruntled. I'm disenchanted. I'm disheartened by what I've seen, you know, some pluses and some minuses, a lot more minuses than pluses.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND IN SEPTEMBER, AFTER SEVEN YEARS AT CRST, AND FOUR OTHER TRUCKING COMPANIES BEFORE THAT - HANSEN ALSO DECIDED IT WAS TIME FOR HIM TO TAKE HIS LEAVE.

HANSEN

I wanted to make transportation my profession. I wanted to be a transportation professional. I used to have my resume labeled transportation professional. I no longer want to be in the transportation business.

WOOD

You are all the time weighing how, "My life, my paycheck, my life, my paycheck. I've gotta pay my bills, but I-- you know what I mean? If I don't have a paycheck, I don't have a life."

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DURING FINISHING SCHOOL, DESIREE WOOD WAS EARNING 14 CENTS A MILE -- WHICH MEANT SHE WAS TYPICALLY BRINGING IN NO MORE THAN 300 DOLLARS A WEEK -- BEFORE EXPENSES.

WOOD

I can live on a sandwich, but I was always thinking about these young men. They've got a whole bunch of responsibilities and they're barely making ends meet, and that's how they got into this in the first place. They are at the end of the line that they had to tell their wife I'm gonna go away and I'm gonna live in a truck and I'm gonna send all the money home so that we can save the house or the car or whatever it is. That's when you get these meltdowns, you know, somebody's in Wyoming in a snowstorm and they just totally lose it. They got-- they worked all week and the paycheck comes and it's got all these deductions and they got \$40.

HANSEN

These people do not know what they're getting themselves into before they get there. All they know are the stories that were told to 'em by the truck driving schools, the instructors. Then they get there and they realize they're not making very much money. They're living in that truck 24 hours a day. The hygiene standards are very low. We might not get to take a shower but once every couple days. They have to spend a lot of money, just to live out on the road. People are rude to 'em. So, the turnover rate is very high.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

FOR EVERY 100 NEW DRIVERS HIRED, A RECENT STUDY -- FUNDED BY AN INDUSTRY ORGANIZATION -- FOUND AN ASTOUNDING 97 WERE NO LONGER ON THE COMPANY'S PAYROLL A YEAR LATER.

OSIECKI

From a safety standpoint, it is- it's a challenge. A stable workforce is typically a very safe workforce.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ATA'S VICE PRESIDENT OF SAFETY, DAVE OSIECKI, SAYS THAT NO COMPANY WANTS TO BE A REVOLVING DOOR....

OSIECKI

The fleets that we represent spend a lot of time trying to reduce driver turnover, because it does cost money. When you- when you have peo- drivers turning over, it is a cost of doing business. But it's also a safety concern, so they spend a lot of time trying to reduce those numbers.



RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WHILE TURNOVER -- ESPECIALLY AMONG THE ROOKIES -- IS CAUSE FOR CONCERN, OSIECKI SAYS THAT DATA DOESN'T LIE AND THE DATA SHOWS TRUCKING'S NEVER BEEN SAFER. BECAUSE, HE SAYS, WHILE THOUSANDS DIE... THE NUMBERS ARE DECLINING. SAFETY ADVOCATE JERRY DONALDSON...

JERRY DONALDSON, SAFETY ADVOCATE

If it's safe as it's ever been, then it isn't a very good story because it's not very safe. We've averaged about 5,000 deaths over the past decade. Those numbers have not significantly changed in many years. The fatal crash rate is still the highest of any type of surface transportation. So unfortunately, the same disproportionate impact on human lives and suffering is the same now as it has been for many years.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AS FOR DESIREE WOOD, SHE SAYS THAT MOST OF THE STUDENTS SHE BEGAN WITH ARE LONG GONE, AND THESE DAYS THE ONLY ONE SHE HAS TO SHARE HER TRUCK WITH IS HER DOG KARMA.

RATHER

Day-to-day, what's life for you?

WOOD

Just get up early, drive, hope to get a good parking spot. I mean, that's like-- you appreciate simple pleasures like-- going into a public restaurant, finding they have hot water and not just cold water to wash your face. All those little-- little simple pleasures, you- that you take for granted. Like, when you wake up in the morning and you go have to use the restroom, I have to walk through a parking lot. And if it's snowing outside, I gotta (LAUGHS) walk through the snow.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BEING ONE OF THE FEW TO DEFY THE ODDS AND SURVIVE THE TORMENT OF WHAT SHE CALLS "THE STUDENT TRUCKING INDUSTRY" HAS ARMED WOOD WITH A NEW RESOLVE. SHE DID NOT SUFFER QUIETLY. DESIREE WENT PUBLIC WITH HER STORY -- TAPPING OUT A DETAILED ACCOUNT OF WHAT SHE SAYS IT REALLY TAKES TO MAKE IT ON THAT RIVER OF RIGS...CHURNING ACROSS AMERICA'S HIGHWAYS. IT APPEARS IN A SERIES OF WEB POSTS SHE CALLS, " A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A LADY TRUCKER "

RATHER

Well you know that old saying., “Some days you're the windshield and some days you're the bug.” When you're driving the truck what do you feel?

WOOD

Oh, I feel like I'm the-- I-- I'm not the bug, not any more. Not any more I'm not the bug.

RATHER (VOICE-OVER)

HER TALES ATTRACTED A CULT-LIKE FOLLOWING... AND TODAY - TRUCKERDESIREE -- HAS BECOME SOMEWHAT OF A VIRTUAL TRUCKING STAR. SOMEWHERE ON A HIGHWAY LAST DECEMBER SHE WROTE IN HER BLOG:

RATHER VOICE OVER, READING EXCERPT FROM “A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A LADY TRUCKER.”

“IT'S TAKEN ME A YEAR TO BE ABLE TO START MAKING A LIFE OUT HERE. I LOVE IT BECAUSE I LIKE TO GO PLACES, I DON'T CARE WHERE. I THINK IT'S VERY IMPORTANT TIME FOR TRUCKERS TO LET THE OUTSIDE WORLD HAVE A GLIMPSE INSIDE THIS PRIVATE MISUNDERSTOOD WORLD...LET'S ALL GO FOR RIDE NOW...”

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

LIFE ON THE ROAD. NOW THERE'S SO MUCH MORE TO THE TRUCKING STORY. ESPECIALLY WHAT THE POWERFUL TRUCKING LOBBY IS DOING IN WASHINGTON TO INCREASE THE INDUSTRY'S BOTTOM LINE. WE HERE ON DAN RATHER REPORTS WILL HAVE THAT STORY IN THE COMING WEEKS. RIGHT UP NEXT- - DEEP DIVING TO FIND HEALTHY CORAL REEFS. YOU'LL WANT TO SEE IT.

**DEEP CORAL:**

RATHER (ON CAMERA)

WE'VE REPORTED ON THIS PROGRAM ABOUT THE CONDITION OF CORAL REEFS IN OUR OCEANS. IT'S NOT GOOD. POLLUTION HAS CHOKED THE UNDERSEA ENVIRONMENT FROM THE GREAT BARRIER REEF OFF AUSTRALIA...TO ONCE-GORGEOUS REEFS OFF THE FLORIDA COAST...BUT SCIENTISTS ARE NOW GOING DEEPER...LITERALLY... TO SEE IF THEY CAN FIND HEALTHY CORAL...AND HOPEFULLY A WAY TO SAVE IT.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IF THERE EVER WAS A COOL HAND LUKE IN OCEAN RESEARCH, HANU SINGH WOULD HAVE TO BE THAT MAN. HANU, A SCIENTIST AND ENGINEER WITH THE WOODS HOLE OCEANOGRAPHIC INSTITUTION BASED IN MASSACHUSETTS, HAS TROUBLE ON HIS HANDS.

HANU SINGH, SCIENTIST WOODS HOLE OCEANOGRAPHIC INSTITUTION

We seem to have a slight problem.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HIS RESEARCH VEHICLE, KNOWN AS SEABED, IS STUCK ON THE BOTTOM OF THE CARIBBEAN SEA.

SINGH

I'll come up and give you an update in a second, over.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SEABED IS DESIGNED TO FLY THROUGH THE SEA LIKE A HELICOPTER...TO WORK IN UNDERWATER REGIONS THAT ARE INACCESSIBLE. HERE IN THE CARIBBEAN, THAT MEANS DIVING 30 TO 90 METERS BELOW THE SURFACE. FAR DEEPER THAN THE SAFE RANGE FOR SCUBA DIVING. WITH THE VEHICLE STUCK, IT'S A CRISIS SITUATION THAT CALLS FOR A COOL HAND...THE KIND OF SITUATION HANU WOULD MUCH RATHER AVOID. HE HAS A MOTTO THAT IS WELL KNOWN AMONG THE WOODS HOLE TEAM:

SINGH

Boring is good. And let me explain that. When we talk about our expeditions, we always talk about you know how exciting things were. But the reality is, from an engineering standpoint, we'd like everything to be boring, we like everything to just work. But unfortunately it never quite works out that way.

What'd we lose...we'll just wait it out for a little bit...we'll wait an hour...let the mission time out.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

FROM AN ENGINEERING STANDPOINT, THIS SHOULD HAVE BEEN A BORING EXPEDITION. HANU AND HIS TEAM HAVE BROUGHT SEABED TO THE WATERS NEAR PUERTO RICO AND THE VIRGIN ISLANDS. THEIR MISSION, ABOARD THE RESEARCH VESSEL CAPE HATTERAS, IS TO LEARN IF THE DEEP CORAL IS ALIVE OR DEAD--AND WHAT THAT MEANS FOR THE

HEALTH OF THE EARTH'S SEAS. IT'S PRECISELY THE TYPE OF MISSION FOR WHICH SEABED WAS DESIGNED.

SINGH

If we look at the way we explore the world's oceans, there are three different kinds of vehicles that we typically use. There are manned submersibles, the most famous one of course is Alvin which is also operated by Woods Hole. Manned submersibles usually have you know some kind of enclosure where a few people can sit it in- inside it. The second class of vehicles are what are known as Told or Remotely Operated Vehicles. And those have in most cases a tether going back to the ship. Now the third kind and in some ways another interesting kind the autonomous submersible underwater vehicles. There is no tether, no human being, everything is pre-programmed.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SO AUVS---AUTONOMOUS UNDERWATER VEHICLES--LIKE SEABED, GIVE SCIENTISTS A WAY TO DIVE DEEP ON THE CHEAP--WITHOUT THE LIMITATIONS OF A TETHER OR THE EXPENSE OF A MANNED VEHICLE.

SINGH

SeaBED was built by my students and myself as part of an experiment to understand aspects of imaging underwater. What we wanted was a platform that was smaller and also one that we could use to concentrate on costal sites that it would be able to go to about two-thousand meters and also it would have really, really fancy cameras and imaging systems and navigation systems. We had a very limited budget and we had some very, very good students and between all that we did it extremely inexpensively and it came out quite well.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

LEAD ENGINEER JOHN BAILEY WAS KEY TO KEEPING COSTS DOWN.

JOHN BAILEY, ENGINEER, WOODS HOLE OCEANOGRAPHIC INSTITUTION

I used to be in the Marine Corps and we get a lot of hand-me-downs... the motto there of course was improvise, adapt, overcome. It turns out that things aren't totally different here. This is a three-bladed carbon fiber prop. And this is actually a very high performance propeller. If you were to custom make a prop like this it would cost thousands of dollars. But we're fortunate that the radio modeling hobby allows these to get produced in mass scale. And so we can go out and select an off the shelf prop for maybe a hundred dollars for a high performance carbon fiber prop.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HOWEVER, THEY SPARED NO EXPENSE ON ONE ASPECT OF SEABED: ITS CAMERAS.

BAILEY

What we've done is we've outfitted the vehicle with two cameras... one's pointed straight down, one's pointed forward at a 45-degree angle.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

CAMERAS THAT PROVIDE SHARP, DETAILED...HI-DEF QUALITY IMAGES OF THE SEA FLOOR.

BAILEY

It's important for the people that are going to be looking at these images to see the same thing in different perspectives. So as we come across the reef, this guy's going to be the first image spot on the reef at a 45-degree angle so you get an idea of the height things there in a 3D sense. This guy here ...is gonna be looking straight down so as the vehicle passes over that same spot, we're going to get the image straight down.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BACK ON THE DECK OF THE MOTHER SHIP, CAPE HATTERAS, HANU IS WONDERING IF HE'LL GET TO SEE ANY OF THOSE GREAT IMAGES.

CHRIS MURPHY, GRADUATE STUDENT MIT, WHOI

It's still down deep 30 meters and 60 meters away...I'll keep an eye on the range for you.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

This is SeaBED's second visit to these waters. On its maiden voyage the little craft was doing research for Roy Armstrong of the University of Puerto Rico.

ROY ARMSTRONG, SCIENTIST, UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO

Four years ago, we were on this very ship, using this vehicle. At that time, most people believed that at deeper depths, deeper than 30 meters, there were not a lot of coral.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WHAT SEABED REVEALED SURPRISED THEM AND THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY.

ARMSTRONG

We knew that there were reefs down there but we did not know that they extended for such a wide area. You know there's a lot of reef area that is along those depths, we're talking about 40 to 50 meters... shallow reefs during the last 20 or 30 years have lost a lot of coral cover. Up to 80 percent in the Caribbean in some places. But, ah, we're discovering that the deeper reefs are pretty healthy compared to the shallow water reefs and what we found was that about 43 percent on average of living healthy coral cover...that's very high you know for any reef.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THEY NEED TO LEARN WHETHER THE POLLUTION THAT'S AFFECTED THE SHALLOW CORAL HAS SEEPED LOWER AND KILLED THE DEEPER REEFS.

ARMSTRONG

I don't know if they will be as healthy as we left them four years ago...or not. We'll- we'll see.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

IF THEY HOPE TO FIND OUT, HANU HAS TO GET SEABED BACK. BUT FIRST THEY HAVE TO FIGURE OUT WHAT'S WRONG.

SINGH

You throw it over the side of the ship, you pray and if the number of deployments equals the number of recoveries, you are having a good day. If the number of deployments does not equal the number of recoveries, then you're probably having a really bad day.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

DOING THE SIMPLE MATH, HANU IS HAVING, BY HIS OWN DEFINITION, A BAD DAY.

BAILEY

We've seen it get hung up before like on an out-cropping or something like that.

SINGH

The reason I don't think its an outcropping is because it was going like this then it took a J-hook. So what we're going to do is wait it out for a little bit...and then, if nothing happens then...ah...we'll really nail this position down, walk over there with the ship.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HANU HAS ANOTHER MOTTO – WHEN TROUBLE STRIKES, DON'T PANIC...

SINGH

So the one thing we've got to do now, is just get the ship closer and see what's going on.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HANU'S BEST GUESS IS THAT SEABED HAS CAUGHT ITSELF ON A FISHING TRAP ON THE BOTTOM.

SINGH

I think what we should do right now is just put a grappling hook and see if we can grab a line around there and pull something up.

BAILEY

We need 40 meters of line.

SINGH

We need 40 meters of line and a hook on the end of it. Alright, let's do it!

BAILEY

The vehicle is still at 40 meters depth.

SINGH

But it's moving?

BAILEY

But it is moving with the ship.

SINGH

We should come to all stop and bring the cable up.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THEY'VE REACHED THE SPOT, THE HOOK IS SET...TIME TO GO FISHING FOR SEABED.

BAILEY

It's free.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SEABED'S OWN PHOTOGRAPHS CONFIRM IT...IT WAS TANGLED IN A FISH TRAP. WITH SEABED BACK, A SECOND TEAM OF SCIENTISTS GO TO WORK.

WOMEN ON SHIP

All I need is a protractor, it's not exactly something I bring to sea usually.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THEY ARE RESEARCHERS FROM THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST, WHO WILL SOON GET THEIR OWN AUV FROM HANU.

MAN ON SHIP

The idea would be to put strobes on the backside obviously for the left and right and maybe a strobe up top and forward...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

WOODS HOLE CREW IS GIVING THEM A HANDS-ON TUTORIAL.

SINGH

As soon as SeaBED, the original vehicle, started getting successful, I realized that you know I had only so many days in a year, I could only afford to go to sea so often. So now we are at the stage where we are building these vehicles so that other people can use them. And the idea was instead of trying to conquer the world yourself, you know lets split the world up into all the other people who want to conquer different parts of ocean related science.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HANU HAS BEGUN POPULATING THE OCEANS WORLDWIDE WITH SEABED OFFSPRING. A RECENT MISSION TO THE ARCTIC WAS GROUNDBREAKING.



SINGH

When the time came to try and start planning for the trip under ice in the Arctic, we wanted to go to five thousand meters. So we had to build new vehicles which would go much deeper.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

NO ONE HAD EVER SEEN THE ARCTIC'S OCEAN FLOOR BEFORE. THERE HAD NEVER BEEN A VEHICLE THAT COULD DIVE THERE AND RETURN... UNTIL NOW.

SINGH

If you look at AUVs themselves, now we have shown that they're probably one of the most useful assets to have in the arctic because once you deploy them, they are independent of ice cover and you can you know recover them from an ice breaker.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

BUT TODAY, THE FOCUS IS ON THE WARM SEAS OF THE CARIBBEAN. HAVE THE THREATS OF POLLUTION, STORMS AND RISING SEA TEMPERATURES, KILLED OFF THE DEEP-WATER CORAL?

ARMSTRONG

The worst fear is that the bleaching of 2005 affected them as much as the shallow water counterparts...so there could be heavy mortality. And my hope is that that's not the case, that since they're deeper they were more protected, and that they're still healthy and we'll find exactly the same coral cover that we left tem with.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

THE VEHICLE IS CRISS-CROSSING MILES OF THE SAME REEFS AS IT TRAVELED FOUR YEARS EARLIER...TAKING LITERALLY THOUSANDS OF IMAGES, PHOTOS THAT ROY WON'T SEE UNTIL AFTER THE CREW GETS SEABED BACK ABOARD THE SHIP.

MURPHY

Just want to let you know that the vehicle is three meters above the sea floor...so 30 meters down and it's started its transect...thank you.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AT CHRIS' COMPUTER, THE SCIENTISTS FOLLOW SEABED'S PROGRESS. ALL IS GOING WELL.

CREW MEMBER

Got it. Got it!

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SEABED IS READY TO REVEAL THE IMAGES FOR WHICH IMAGES THE TEAM HAS BEEN WAITING.

ARMSTRONG

Hey...This is more like it--yes...definitely. The coral looks good. How many pictures did it take? 4800 total between the two cameras. Looks very nice Hanu. Very impressive...

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SO, FOR THE SCIENTISTS ABOARD THE RESEARCH VESSEL CAPE HATTERAS, IT'S A PLEASANT CORAL SURPRISE. AFTER ALL, ALMOST ALL OF WHAT YOU HEAR ABOUT THE OCEANS THESE DAYS IS ABOUT ITS DEATH AND DYING.

ARMSTRONG

Right now, I feel good. It's good news. So far, from just looking at those few images, it looked fine the same, healthy coral. There is no evidence of recent mortality or disease. It means that the deeper corals are relatively safe compared to the shallow water counterparts.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

ITS POSSIBLE THAT THE DATA SUPPLIED BY SEABED COULD BE THE BASIS FOR SAVING THE WORLD'S SHALLOW WATER CORAL REEFS.

ARMSTRONG

In view of global climate change, with shallow reefs getting affected by higher water temperatures, higher incidence of bleaching and so forth, that the relatively deeper reefs that we're studying could provide a source of larvae for recovery. They're the same species of coral of many that are found in shallower areas, so they could be a reservoir of biodiversity for- in times of global climate change.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

HANU WILL CONTINUE SENDING SEABED AND ALL ITS OFFSPRING VEHICLES INTO THE DEEP AS THEY SEARCH FOR ANSWERS.

SINGH

I think the basic issue that we're trying to address is problems of social relevance. So whether we're looking at what's happening to coral in Puerto Rico, whether we are looking at what's underneath the Arctic Sea ice, in- you know at the Gakkel Ridge or whether we are looking at fisheries in the West (UNINTEL) or Hawaii...these are big problems that using our technology hopefully helps getting us a little closer to some kind of solution.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND HANU'S QUEST IS NOT LIMITED TO EARTH. FOR EXAMPLE, THE ARCTIC MISSION WAS BACKED BY NASA. THE SPACE ADMINISTRATION IS HOPING THAT STARTING WITH HANU'S ARCTIC RESEARCH, IT WILL ONE DAY SEND AN AUTONOMOUS UNDERWATER VEHICLE TO LOOK FOR LIFE UNDER THE ICY CRUST OF JUPITER'S MOON, EUROPA.

SINGH

We were funded to do that, explore the technologies associated with AUV's under ice with a specific aim of going to Europa...and hopefully that process continues. You know even if it doesn't happen in our lifetimes, or in our generation of research, hopefully the baby steps that we've taken right now get carried on either through the literature or more directly through you know our students and our collaborators to eventually getting to Europa.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

SAVING THE OCEANS...AND SOMEDAY, EXPLORING OTHER WORLDS... AND NOW A BRIEF UPDATE ON ANOTHER STORY WE'VE BEEN FOLLOWING THAT'S NOW IN THE HEADLINES...AND THAT'S THE STORY OF A TERRORIST IN THE TRIBAL AREAS OF PAKISTAN. THIS PROGRAM IS THE ONLY U.S. OUTLET TO MEET WITH ABDULMALEK RIGI...IN THE WILDS OF BALUCHISTAN.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

RIGI AND HIS CLAN DENY THEY ARE TERRORIST. THEY DO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THEY HAVE LONG BEEN ON THE WARPATH AGAINST IRAN...STAGING CROSS BORDER RAIDS ALONG PAKISTAN'S FRONTIER. WHEN WE CAUGHT UP WITH THIS GUERILLA COMMANDER

LAST FALL HE WAS IN THE REMOTE BALOCH DESERT. HE'S ONLY 25 YEARS OLD BUT HE IS NOW THE MOST WANTED MAN IN IRAN... FOR HIS REPEATED ATTACKS ON IRAN'S MILITARY. AND NOW HE'S SUSPECTED OF BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR A SUICIDE BOMBING LAST WEEK THAT KILLED SIX TOP OFFICIALS OF IRAN'S REVOLUTIONARY GUARD...INCLUDING A COMMANDING GENERAL. THE IRANIAN GOVERNMENT IS BLAMING THE ATTACK ON RIGI AND HIS ASSOCIATES...WHO IRAN SAYS...ARE TRAINED BY THE UNITED STATES AND BRITAIN. THE HEAD OF THE REVOLUTIONARY GUARD HAS VOWED TO TAKE REVENGE... RIGI SHOWED US A VIDEO LAST YEAR OF A RAID HE SAYS HE STAGED AGAINST THE IRANIANS. THIS LATEST INCIDENT THE ONE NOW MAKING HEADLINES COMES AT A TIME WHEN THE IRANIANS ARE ABOUT TO SIT DOWN FOR NUCLEAR TALKS IN VIENNA WITH THE UNITED STATES AND ITS WESTERN ALLIES.

RATHER (VOICE OVER)

AND THAT'S OUR PROGRAM FOR TONIGHT. FROM NEW YORK, FOR HD NET, DAN RATHER REPORTING. GOOD NIGHT.