

RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EP 262 TRANSCRIPT

Jimmy Lee Wirt: This is Jimmy Lee Wirt, producer of the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. Please note that this program was recorded just before the FAA ordered the Boeing 737 Max 8 grounded in the United States.

David Feldman: From the KPFK studios in Southern California It's the Ralph Nader Radio Hour.

Stand up, stand up. You've been sitting way too long. [music]

Steve Skrovan: Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour. My name is Steve Skrovan along with my co-host, David Feldman. Hello, David.

David Feldman: Good morning.

Steve Skrovan: And we also have the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. Hello, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Hello, everybody.

Steve Skrovan: Well, we come to today's show with a heavy heart. The news was not good this weekend for the families of the victims of Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302, which crashed shortly after takeoff, and it has personal resonance for us because one of those victims was Ralph's great-niece. So, we offer condolences to the entire extended family.

We're going to deal with it this way. There have been concerns about this particular jet manufactured by Boeing ever since it came onto the market. It's Boeing's best-selling jet, and according to the New York Times, Southwest Airlines and American Airlines are the only two carriers in the United States that use the jet, and they said they will continue to fly the plane.

Boeing flights have been grounded across the globe, but not in the United States. And to help us sort all of this out, we welcome back aviation expert from Consumer Reports, Willie McGee. Mr. McGee was on the show a little less than a year ago talking about his new book, Attention All Passengers: The Airlines' Dangerous Descent--and How to Reclaim Our Skies. And we're lucky to get Mr. McGee today because he has been in great demand since this tragedy occurred. That will be the first half of this show. In the second half of this show, we'll be talking to Colman McCarthy, who is a journalist, and a teacher, and the founder of the Center for Teaching Peace. We teach a lot about war in our schools, but how do we give peace a chance? It's Mr. McCarthy's mission to get peace courses into every school and every grade in every nation. And he says and I quote, "Unless we teach our children peace, someone will teach them violence." And as always, we will check in with our Corporate Crime Reporter, Russell Mohkiber to get the latest word on the real American carnage, the crime in the suites. But first, let's talk aviation safety, or the lack thereof. David.

David Feldman: Willie McGee is an award-winning travel journalist and the aviation advisor for Consumer Reports who also writes a monthly travel column for USA Today. Mr. McGee also spent nearly seven years in airline flight operations management. He has also written an exposé of the airline industry entitled, Attention All Passengers: The Airlines' Dangerous Descent--and How to Reclaim Our Skies. Welcome back to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour, William McGee.

William McGee: Thanks very much for having me on.

Ralph Nader: Welcome, Bill. Let's start with this machine called the Boeing 737 Max 8 and 9. Why did they have to modify the very reliable 737 with a larger engine? Is it because they wanted to put more seats in? And that's what led to, of course, the software problem which, in the two crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia, basically took the control of the plane away from its own pilots. So, what was the inspiration for this new version?

William McGee: Well, you nailed it. It is about putting more seats in. We've talked before about the tighter seat pitch. We know that it's not a myth. We've done the math. We know that legroom is not what it used to be. And you have a generation of airline executives that are determined to fit as many seats in as possible, and if that means taking out galleys or that means making the lavatories tighter, and for some passengers with disabilities, it's just untenable. So, there's that aspect of it. But then, there's another aspect. And that is that you sort of have to be deep in the weeds in the aviation industry reading the trade magazines and things to see this, but it's on the horizon that the industry clearly would like to see pilotless planes. All of the talk about autonomous cars; autonomous planes are on the drawing board. So, you get there incrementally. Basically, piece by piece, segment by segment, there is an effort--I've talked to experts about this - that they're trying to make as much automated as possible in the cockpit. And this is problematic for a lot of reasons, and I'm happy to sort of dive into that. I think if you talk to Sully, Captain Sullenberger from the Hudson River, that most of us remember a few years ago, the US Airways pilot. He's been very vocal about this. I follow him on social media, and he keeps saying that pilots need to have rudimentary skills to fly an airplane. The old-timers call it stick and rudder, but they need to be able to know how to control an airplane when the systems malfunction, or fail, or aren't available, or what have you. It seems, we're still early, we know that; there are a lot of caveats here; the investigation is not over. But, it seems that, from what the experts are saying, there's evidence that Boeing built this aircraft, added a new and very complex system to it, and then it seems that there may be airlines out there that were not conversant in training their people in how to deal with it.

Ralph Nader: Well, Paul Hudson of Flyers Rights, in a release just a couple days ago, said that the pilots were unable to override an automatic control system that was not clearly disclosed by Boeing to airlines and pilots. He's referring to the Lion air crash off Indonesia that killed almost 200 people. Here's a plane, they've sold about 300, they have orders for about 3,000 all over the world, and in the United States, only Southwest and American use it, yet Delta and United don't use it. It's a plane that is the future of Boeing. So, this is not some phasing out of an old DC-9, and they're digging in. They refuse to ground it. They ground the 787 in 2013, as you know, because of the lithium battery fire. So, it's not unheard of to ground the plane. Now, the FAA and Boeing and Donald Trump are all alone. Every country now that has these planes: the European Union, and Australia, South Korea, Singapore, you name it, has grounded. Canada, just now, Wednesday, was the last one to ground it. And yet the FAA is stubbornly playing the toady along with Secretary of Transportation, Chao, to Boeing. Boeing's used to getting its own way in Washington whether it's the Department of Defense, whether it's avoiding taxes, whether it's getting its way with the FAA. So, I've called for a consumer boycott. I think the thing that will push it is if consumers basically say, "What plane am I riding on? The 737 Max 8 or 9? Sorry, I'm not taking this plane," and the planes start taking off and they have more and more empty seats, and then the pressure will be on Boeing to do what they're going to have to do anyway. Don't you think they're going to have to ground those planes now they're the only country in the world that's holding back?

William McGee: I do. It's sort of unfathomable for me to think that they couldn't at this point. I mean, they're standing alone, as you say. The whole world has done this: the European Union, you go around the world, China has something like 94 of these planes. They were one of the first countries to ground them. They have almost 100 of them. Australia, all around the world. It's an untenable position, really, because it's sort of saying we're defying the rest of the world.

Ralph Nader: Bill, explain the horror of being in a plane that's taking off like in Ethiopia. The plane has 157 people in it, including seven crew. It's taking off. Explain the horror of it.

William McGee: Well, Boeing did a very exhaustive study a few years ago from the dawn of the jet age, 1959 on, and they examined every jet aircraft fatal accident, and overwhelmingly, most accidents occur on takeoff and on landing--in the initial stages of flight and the final stages of flight, and both of these accidents, Lion Air and Ethiopian, it was the same thing, it was on takeoff. And it's terrifying because you're losing control and losing altitude at a very, very low altitude. If you're at 35,000 feet and something goes wrong, you have some breathing room, you have some abilities to correct things. This happened many times in the past where an aircraft suddenly descended, but you're at 37,000 feet and you're able to regroup. We're talking about these accidents; these aircraft were not under control at a very, very low altitude. So, it's horrifying. Everyone on board is aware of that. They know that something awful is pending, and to wrap your mind around it. I know this has touched you personally, Ralph, and of course I send you my condolences, but it's really an horrific situation.

Ralph Nader: Well, the harbinger here is artificial intelligence taking over human intelligence, and we're going to see more of that because artificial intelligence, to these greedy corporations, means less labor. It means more profits. And they're even developing autonomous weapons of mass destruction. This is why this letter a few years ago by Stephen Hawking, and Elon Musk, and others warning the globe that if we lose control to the robots or to artificial intelligence, it will destroy the world. And these are not science fiction types. This is like the frontier now. This is the example. Boeing is really planning for one pilot. They want one pilot. They had three pilots on the 747 and then two pilots on its successor. Now, they've got one pilot. The FAA gave Southwest Airlines a waiver to go to Hawaii. There's no place to land in the ocean with a 737. There's not enough fuel for a safe margin here. What do you think the FAA's going to do?

William McGee: Well, first of all, I would take it even further than what you just said. You said they're going towards one pilot. The goal, long-term, it's clear, if you read the tech magazines on this; the goal is to get to zero pilots. They want autonomous commercial aircraft. I'm not talking about Cessnas with two people. We're talking about commercial aircraft. That is the goal. Because, if you're in the business of just looking at numbers and how you can reduce costs, if you're an airline executive, well one of your highest costs is labor, and among your labor group, pilots are the most expensive, generally. So, that is the long-term goal. And what I would say is what we should watch very carefully in the coming years is what happens with cargo airlines in the United States. Because, that's often the harbinger of what's going on because I don't know if people are aware of this, but cargo airlines in the United States have a different set of rules on many areas, operationally, than passenger airlines. So, when you see cargo airlines suddenly allow one pilot, then I think the alarm bells will be going off. I'm sorry. I just wanted to make that point in reference to what you're saying about without reducing technology.

Ralph Nader: Congress is finally bestirring itself. Senator Wicker just announced he's going to have hearings in the Senate Commerce Committee. He hasn't put a date yet. I'm sure Congressman DeFazio

from Oregon, his counterpart in that House, is going to have hearings. You know this bill we sent twice, the surveys for all the freebies that the airlines offer members of Congress, sometimes their staff, that are not offered, ordinary people. They waive fees. Sometimes, they even hold planes, and not a single reply, which explains why Congress, over the years, has done nothing. Even their own comfort is compromised. I think, this time, they're going to be forced to do something because this is the plane of the future. And Boeing cannot go backwards into the future, but it's a very stubborn company. So, let's talk about what the listeners can do. One, if you're flying Southwest or American, you ask what kind of plane. Now, when you make the reservation, they may know. When you get a boarding pass, they definitely know. Southwest doesn't charge for switching reservations. American is under pressure not to, but they usually do. And the other thing is to contact, really, about the only consumer group exclusively working for safety. It's an offshoot from our Aviation Consumer Action Project. It's called Flyers Rights. Go to flyersrights.org. It's run by Paul Hudson, who lost his daughter in the Pan Am crash 30 years ago. And they keep you up to date, and they show how you can get information from various websites. And if you're so inclined, join them, they need more airline passenger members.

William McGee: Ralph, if I can jump in. Just this morning, Consumer Reports put up a petition through the advocacy division for passengers who were concerned about this to have their comments forwarded to the airlines to the FAA.

Ralph Nader: Good. What's the website?

William McGee: It's consumerreports.org. No punctuation, Consumer Reports all one word, dot org, and you'll find it there. Very prominent.

Ralph Nader: Now, the scheduled US Airlines had a good safety record over the last decade. However, it's like a rubber band. If you stretch it, you say, things are okay, you stretch it a little more, things are okay, and then it snaps. So, tell our listeners about one area that's going to boggle their minds in terms of extreme cost-cutting, outsourcing the maintenance of the aircraft that you fly people all over the country. You think they're maintained by US mechanics in the US? Think again.

William McGee: No. In fact, it's to the point now where the very profession of aircraft mechanic in the United States is dying off because people are not getting jobs and they're not going into it, which is happening to a lesser extent with pilots but, what you're referring to is what I've spent years at Consumer Reports doing investigations on, and we've advocated about this in Congress, and DOT [Department of Transportation], and FAA [Federal Aviation Administration]. Every airline in the United States in 2019, every single airline without exception, now outsources some, or much, or in some cases, just about most all of what they call the heavy maintenance and repairs. The work, sometimes, is done at outsource facilities in the United States. It's often done outside the United States in El Salvador in Brazil, in Singapore, China, Mexico. According to the FAA, there's one standard for maintenance work on US Airlines. That's what's on paper. In reality, waivers are given on a regular basis. So, in fact, there are two sets of standards. Waivers are given, for example, outside the United States. You don't need to go through alcohol and drug screening as you would if you were employed by an airline in the United States. The FAA will give waivers for background security checks. That's required. If you're a mechanic for an airline in the United States, you have to go through that. And probably most shocking is that many, many, many of the, you can't even call them mechanics in some cases, you have to call them technicians--are unlicensed that are doing the work in these outsourced facilities. They're not licensed by the FAA nor by an FAA equivalency agency in another country. So, I'll just put it in very simple terms.

I worked for Pan Am, and when I worked for Pan Am in the late '80s and early '90s, if there was an aircraft at JFK airport in hangar 17 that needed to have an engine change, there were 10 mechanics working on that job and one signed the book at the end that it was done. But, all 10 of them were licensed by the FAA. All 10 of them had background checks; all of them had alcohol and drug screening. Now, the model is that same job can be done, say, in El Salvador, and you might still have 10 people working on that engine change. Nine of them don't have to be licensed, but once again, the regulation hasn't changed. The person signing the book puts his or her license on the line and says, "Yes, I certify that this was done properly," even if they're overseeing three or four operations at once on multiple aircraft. So, that's the system. I sat with the FAA in an office in Washington a couple years back when I was discussing this with them, and I said, "How can you say those two models are the same?" I mean, a person off the street who has no knowledge of aviation, or maintenance, or anything like that would say, Well, wait a minute. 10 licensed people, nine unlicensed people, and the FAA senior officials looked at me and said, It's the same. We still have a licensed person signing the book.

Ralph Nader: How often does the FAA send inspectors to El Salvador and those countries?

William McGee: Well, that is a huge problem. That's why the government shutdown was awful. But, the fact is, even on a good day, the oversight that the FAA provides is nothing like it was 10, 15, 20 years ago. I speak to FAA front line inspectors all the time. I've spoken to some just last week. I spoke to them during the government shutdown, and many of them were home and they weren't able to work. There were such budget constraints that it can often take--even if they do get approval to go to places like El Salvador, Brazil--six to eight weeks to get it approved. So, the idea that you have inspectors that used to, they call it "kicking the tires in the industry. The mechanics call it that; the inspectors call it that. Many of the FAA inspectors are former mechanics themselves. They're from the airlines or the military. So, they would call it kicking the tires. The FAA facility is right near a major airport or a major maintenance bus. They show up any time they want to. They could show up on a Sunday morning. They go in, "Hey, what are you doing? What's going on there? Let me see the paperwork. What's that?" Now, your visit is announced. I spoke to an FAA inspector who went to China and he said he felt like a fool because he walked into a hangar in China--this is for a US Airline; I want to stress that. We're not talking about foreign allies--US Airline. He walked into the hangar and he said it looked like it was a Hollywood set. All the tools were perfect, and shiny, and new on the wall, and they were wearing white smocks. He said, "I've been in hangars my whole life. I never saw a hangar like this. The floor, you can eat off of."

Ralph Nader: Sounds like an OSHA [Occupational Health and Safety] inspector. Bill, there's going to be more whistleblowers. You can't suppress technical descent. Apparently in the heated discussions between Boeing and the airline pilots, and the FAA there was a lot of technical descent about the adequacy of the software, the adequacy of the manuals, the adequacy of the training of the pilots. That's all going to be starting to spill out, no doubt, but I've written this open letter to Boeing that's on nader.org if anybody's interested, and I basically said myself, "Your own lawyers should be counseling you that Boeing is on public notice and that, heaven forbid, a Boeing 737 Max 8 crashed in this country, the arrogance of your algorithms, overpowering the pilots, can move law enforcement to investigate potential personal criminal negligence." That's the only language these guys understand, because they can always pass on the cost. They got insurance. They pass on the cost in all kinds of ways. The 737 Max 8, by the way, listeners, sells, by Boeing, for 120 million dollars. So, Senators Ed Markey and Richard Blumenthal have just put out very strong statements. So, what do you see? We're talking with Bill McGee, the aviation consultant to Consumer Reports and the author of a great book. What do you see

coming out of this, besides the likely grounding of the entire fleet of over 300 in terms of finally paying attention to all these problems you've been pointing out for years, including this outsourcing to third-world countries?

William McGee: Well, I think this is a turning point. I do believe that, because I think you're right; you asked me, are there going to be more whistleblowers? But, what's happening is people in the industry are speaking up: pilots, mechanics, et cetera. I had a hard time, 15 years ago, finding sources who would talk to me about these issues. Now, they're coming to me. I open up my email and they're talking to me about these things. So, I do apologize; I have to go now, but I'm happy to follow up with you at any time.

Ralph Nader: Okay, very good, Bill. We're going to talk about Trump's involvement here in the shutdown, how that delayed the response by the FAA to the software alterations that Boeing passed on after the crash in Indonesia. Thanks, Bill.

William McGee: Thank you, Ralph. Any time. Bye.

Steve Skrovan: We have been speaking with Consumer Report's William McGee. We will link to his work at ralphnaderradiohour.com.

Ralph Nader: Just one addition on the Trump situation. When Trump shut the government down for five weeks, I repeatedly pointed out that he's shutting down life-saving agencies. He's shutting down a lot of the work of the Food and Drug Administration, the auto safety administration, the Occupational Health and Safety Agency, and the FAA. I mean, he was determined to cut the budget of FAA in his first budget. He's cutting the budget of the Department of Transportation. He's increasing the budget for the bloated military budget another 30, 40 billion dollars. There's a madman in the White House and he's at large, and he should be held to account for this crash in Ethiopia. If there's any connection between what the FAA would have done if they were not closed down, essentially, to handle the reams of software alterations and manual alterations for the pilots, because they weren't on the job. And in fact, Trump furloughed them, and if they could have done that, if they could have sent out changes in the instructions, and if it could have affected what happened in Addis Ababa, Trump ought to be held accountable for that.

Steve Skrovan: Well, here's a little tidbit I picked up off the CNN business website. These are numbers I'm quoting here. "The cost of grounding all 373 Max planes could be between 1 billion and 5 billion according to estimates from Wall Street firm's Melius Research and Jefferies. But, those estimates were based on three-month grounding. Boeing could afford that. It posted record revenue of 101 billion last year and 10.6 billion profit, and it had forecast even stronger results this year."

Ralph Nader: And it probably is insured and they can write it off. So, that's not the problem. The problem is Boeing has got to make a choice because once an aircraft like the 737 Max 8 gets a stigma, once it gets an airline passenger stigma, it's going to be very, very hard to race ahead of Airbus. A lot of this is the competition with Airbus. They're cutting corners, they're saying, "This isn't a new plane, folks, but the airlines don't have to have much more training for the pilots because it's not that much different." That's one of the sales incentives to try to beat out Airbus in Europe. I think Bill McGee is right. I think this is the opportunity to really open up all the skeletons in the closet, what the future plans are. They're crushing people in terms of knee space, in terms of seat width. And increasingly, there are going to be millions of people who can't even fit in the restrooms. This is really totally madness. You

would think corporations are at least good at convenience, you know, physical convenience. They like fancy, nice packaging, and cushions, and so on. And these people are so crazed. They've got monetized minds, and they don't understand there's going to be a big backlash. It may take a while, but there's going to be a big backlash. What happens when a large person has to rush to the restroom and can't get in the door, can't fit? What's going to happen when people can't fit in the seats, and then the airlines turn around and charge you more for legroom? We've got to really begin demanding, listeners. Go and join flyersrights.org. You'll see what an honest and wonderful group it's been over the years. Paul Hudson is a member of the Aviation [Rule Making] Advisory committee to the FAA and he always calls them to account. He's incorruptible and he's your champion. So, go to flyersrights.org. You'll see all kinds of useful information in your future travels.

David Feldman: If somebody is 6'3 or 6'4, shouldn't there be a class-action suit already against the airlines?

Ralph Nader: You know, David, the most amazing thing is how these business travelers who are always complaining, never organized a business travelers' consumer group. I mean, they can do it in a matter of days. They're fairly well-off. They know how to reach each other. So, they can take, for example, people over 6 feet and start making demands. It's just like the airlines want to make it so uncomfortable for you in coach class to make you upgrade to first class or to business class going overseas. So, all this is going to be spilling out now, including all the freebies that they give to each member of Congress. When I sent that survey out twice last year, it went to a lot of progressive members as well as the right-wing corporatists. Not one responded. What does that tell you? That tells you they are getting these special treatments, these special privileges, and they don't want anybody to know about it. That's going to all spill out. So, start making strong demands, listeners, especially boycotting the Boeing 737 Max 8 and 9.

Steve Skrovan: Well, I have a scheduled flight. I'm flying tomorrow on Southwest, and I'm going to call them and ask them, and I guess that's what you have to do. They've already got my money, but it doesn't seem worth the risk.

Ralph Nader: They're not going to charge you for it. They're the one airline that doesn't charge for reservation changes. They're not going to make a fuss about it.

David Feldman: And they're legally obligated to tell you what the aircraft is?

Ralph Nader: Oh yes, definitely. You can tell at any time. You can tell, maybe, when you book it, depending on how far down the line your flight is. You can tell when you get your boarding pass, you can tell when you're at the gate, and you can tell when you're in the seat because the seat pocket is supposed to have a picture of the plane and the exact nomenclature of the plane. There's another real ominous part of this, which is suppose the software -- let's say the software is properly designed, but it's defectively transmitted. So, that accounts for the airlines saying, "Well, we've flown all these flights and nothing has happened." But, as you know, it just has to happen once or twice and hundreds of people are killed. We know that there are cars that are adequately designed, let's say, for crash protection, but then they come off the assembly line and they have construction defects - the difference between construction and design. But, when it comes to software, that kind of scrutiny is not subject by reporters. They haven't reached that level yet. So, one of the side benefits of this terrible tragedy is it's going to interest more reporters in having more vigor and rigor in getting to the bottom of this because the press--the New York Times, the Washington Post--they really are on it right now and they've

assigned reporters, but they have to have material to work with. And so, they're all phoning, looking for Boeing whistleblowers and all kinds of dissent. The pilots are often intimidated because their jobs are at stake. But, in private sessions, they really unload. So, that's what we're waiting for, the kind of making public what they said was an inadequate training process, inadequate manual, too little, too late for Indonesia and Ethiopian passengers.

Steve Skrovan: I wonder if the flight attendants' union, which was really sort of pivotal in the government shutdown because once they said, "We're not getting on these planes anymore," all of a sudden, they were able to clear it up. It seems like they have power if they say, "We're not going to fly on these planes."

Ralph Nader: Immediately, that would ground all the planes in the U.S. Mind you, every country in all the airlines now, except in the U.S., have been grounded. So, I think it's just a matter of time before Boeing comes to its senses and realizes that there's disaster, litigation, prosecution, exposure, stigma to the aircraft in the foreseeable future. And just from their own crass commercial interest, they can say they're erring on the side of safety for face-saving purposes. Ground the planes until all these problems can be dealt with.

Steve Skrovan: So, Boeing can ground the planes, but also the airlines can ground the planes too, right?

Ralph Nader: Yeah. If Boeing says ground the planes, the airlines will never not ground the planes. And the airlines, by themselves, can ground the planes. And of course, the FAA can require the planes to be grounded.

Steve Skrovan: It just seems like how they justify that, especially in the face of it being grounded worldwide--got a quote here from New York Times, it says, "The airlines have said they have analyzed data from the thousands of flights with the jets and found no reason to ground them." That seems like a big reason to ground them. Just happened on Sunday.

Ralph Nader: When was the last time you had a brand new plane, and less than six months, two major crashes taking over 300 lives? What is Boeing saying? That there are higher standards in the U.S., they're better pilots, and they know how to read manuals? They're not translated into foreign languages, which these manuals have to be translated. That's another form of arrogance.

Steve Skrovan: Yeah, and Ethiopian Airlines, it's not like it was some fly-by-night. They had a great safety record.

Ralph Nader: It's the most reliable African airline.

Steve Skrovan: Yeah.

David Feldman: Monday morning, I woke up, CBS News was playing at the coffee shop. Not CBS financial news. Just CBS Morning News. And their lead headline was "Boeing stock price takes a hit after..." I won't even... that they led with the price of Boeing stock.

Ralph Nader: Isn't that crass? That's commercialism run amuck. Boeing's stock was way up. It doesn't matter if it goes down 5, 10%. They think it's going to bounce right back. Because, Boeing has always had its way. It's really remarkable. It's had its way with the Department of Defense even against the objections of Senator John McCain with the tanker that they were building for the Department of

Defense. It pays almost no taxes. It muscled the state government in Washington State to escape sales taxes and income taxes. It pays very, very little federal income tax. They got the FAA in their grip. So, they're very arrogant. Arrogance, historically, brings down the arrogant.

David Feldman: They build everything; little pieces and parts are built throughout America in each congressional district.

Ralph Nader: They do that and they have a lot of suppliers. They have a major installation in South Carolina. They're shifting more of their finishing work to China because China is their biggest customer, and the jobs are being reduced in Seattle, which is where the Boeing planes were all manufactured. And of course, it has a monopoly in the U.S. I mean, its only competitor is Airbus. So, just two major competitors supplying these scheduled airline aircraft to the world. That sometimes leads to premature decisions and cost-cutting. We'll find out how much of that occurred with the Boeing 737 Max 8 and 9. I'm just saying to the listeners, go to flyersrights.org and become part of the airline passenger consumer safety movement. They need you and you need them.

Steve Skrovan: Very good. We're going to take a short break. When we come back, we're going to welcome back Colman McCarthy, who will give us the latest from his Center for Teaching Peace. Stay tuned for Russell Mohkiber, our Corporate Crime Reporter. Back after this.

Russell Mohkiber: From National Press Building in Washington D.C., this is your Corporate Crime Reporter "Morning Minute" for Friday, March 15, 2019. I'm Russell Mohkiber. Cognizant Technology Solutions Corporation will pay 25 million dollars to settle charges that it violated the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. Two of the company's former executives were charged for their roles in facilitating the payment of millions of dollars in a bribe to an Indian government official. The Securities and Exchange Commission complaint alleges that, in 2014, a senior government official of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu demanded a 2 million dollar bribe from the construction firm responsible for building Cognizant's 2.7 million square foot campus in Chennai, India. The SEC alleged that Cognizant's President, Gordon Coburn, and Chief Legal Officer, Steven Schwartz, authorized the contractor to pay the bribe and directed their subordinates to conceal the bribe by doctoring the contractor's change orders. For the Corporate Crime Reporter, I'm Russell Mohkiber.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you, Russell. In this country, we have war colleges and military academies. Wouldn't it make a lot of sense to make peace an academic subject? Well, that's been the mission of our next guest. David?

David Feldman: Colman McCarthy is a journalist, teacher, lecturer, pacifist, progressive and long-time peace activist who directs the Center for Teaching Peace in Washington D.C. Washingtonian Magazine has called him "the liberal conscience of the Washington Post". Mr. McCarthy's books include *I'd Rather Teach Peace* and *All of One Peace [Essays on Nonviolence]*. Welcome to the Ralph Nader Radio Hour, Colman McCarthy.

Colman McCarthy: Thank you.

Ralph Nader: You were 28 years with the Washington Post, Colman, and then you started this effort to get high schools and colleges to have peace curriculum. In 1970, there was only one college that taught peace. How many colleges and high schools now do it, in large part to your effort?

Colman McCarthy: Well, the universities are easier to organize. There's about 70, 75, and I've been teaching at American universities since the mid-1980s as well as Georgetown University Law School, and also Georgetown undergrad plus University of Maryland, and I teach every morning two classes at Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School where I've been volunteering for about 35 years.

Ralph Nader: And you have a unique way of teaching. First of all, you don't like grades. Second of all, you have a way of evoking the students who grow up talking about the wars and rah rah and jingoism that the schools fill our textbooks with. Tell us how you actually teach peace. What is involved? What materials do you use and how do you get the students motivated?

Colman McCarthy: Well, I use mostly literature from two textbooks published by my Center for Teaching Peace. One is called Solutions to Violence, and there's about 80 essays by all the great peacemakers. And then I have one that's called Strength Through Peace [The Ideas and People of Nonviolence], which is exactly what our President isn't. They like peace through strength. In other words, military strength. Go kill people, we'll have peace forever. And my other book is Peace is Possible. I wanted to entitle it Peace is Probable, but humanity's not quite there yet. It's only possible, not probable.

Ralph Nader: I bet your students challenge you and say, "What about World War II, Hitler, Pearl Harbor? Where does peace stand there? You've got to fight them"

Colman McCarthy: Oh sure, you hear it all the time, and I have a chapter in one of our books that's called "Okay, but what about Hitler?" and it comes up all the time, and you talk about the Danish Resistance that resisted the Nazi invasion and came out fairly well. And they said, if we try to defeat the Nazi's militarily, we'd have been wiped out immediately. But, Denmark had a great king, King Christian the 10th, who stood with the people, and they resisted non-violently. But, in the classrooms, as you said, Ralph, I don't believe in giving homework; I don't give tests or exams, because I think those are all forms of academic violence, and they tend to agree with me very quickly on that one. And what happens, we just process these students as though they're slabs of cheese going to Velveeta High School on their way to the Mozzarella University. That's a pretty cheesy metaphor, but it is well crafted. I have a discussion-based class, and many students come from dysfunctional households. They've seen domestic violence, they've seen military violence, economic violence, prison violence, handgun violence. We have a very violent government, Ralph, as you know, and have been fighting that for all your life.

Ralph Nader: How do you avoid them seeing your course as a gut--just easy, no grades, no homework? You've put a lot of creative challenges in front of them.

Colman McCarthy: Well, there's two ways to learn: you either learn by fear, and American schools are based on fear-based learning. Do your homework, get an A, or else. So, desire-based learning is what we're looking for, and sure, some of the kids come in and blow it off. That's okay. McDonald's is hiring. Don't take this class seriously. So, I get away with this because I'm not paid. I volunteer, so I can't be fired because I haven't been hired.

Ralph Nader: Colman, I bet you the thing you get most in terms of feedback is the world is a dangerous place. You got brutal dictators, you got violent overthrows, World War I, World War II, and they try to pigeonhole you that, after, there is no peace advocacy, and the wars erupt, then they say, "Okay Colman McCarthy, you're going to have peace on this? The tanks are rolling. The bombers are coming. What are you talking about?" You have shown, again and again, that there's hardly a war that couldn't have been

prevented. I mean, World War I was clearly preventable. That was incredible collision of egos--the Czar and the head of Germany, the Kaiser, and the British and the French, monarchs, et cetera. And World War I with the Versailles treaty et cetera, historians have said really led directly to World War II. So, why don't you explain? Take the hardest cases when they say, "What would you have done after Pearl Harbor? What would you have done at the sinking of Lusitania?"

Colman McCarthy: You can go back and debate all these things, Ralph, but it's all theoretical. You have to examine where are we now, what kind of government do we have. My high school classes, they've been born after 1991 when we first invaded Iraq. We're still there. So, let's not go back and argue about second World War, first World War. What are we doing now? And you'll be delighted to know this, Ralph, but one thing I educate them on is that film that you were involved in, *Body of War*.

Ralph Nader: Phil Donahue did that film.

Colman McCarthy: Our good friend, Phil Donahue, and we watched that, we discussed that, we do about a whole week just showing that film and getting them to see what politics is all about, and the vote was in favor of war, 77 to 23. And I think I tell the class that that boy, Tomas Young, asked to meet you. Is that the story, Ralph, right? And then he was going after the hospital.

Ralph Nader: Yeah, he was at Walter Reed and I called Phil Donahue and said, "Do you want to come down?" That changed Donahue's life. He not only did the film. He helped Tomas Young in his attempt to recover, the pain and anguish for several years. I'd like you to just talk about how you changed lives. We have a wonderful member of Congress from Massachusetts, Jim McGovern. Tell them the story of Jim McGovern. Then, I want you to tell our listeners all the wars that were averted because cool heads prevailed and they had peace negotiations. So, let's start with Jim McGovern.

Colman McCarthy: Well, Jim, I had him at American University in, I think, 1984, and I was worried about Jim because he's making too many A's. I said, "Jim, you've got to get out of the library and go get some experiential knowledge." So, I suggested he go down and work at the women's shelter downtown run by some Carmelite Catholic nuns. So, we went down and volunteered, and then he began meeting so many women who had fled El Salvador during that war in the 1980s. And he was working, at the time, as an aide for Joe Moakley. He was on the staff. By the way, Ralph, one of the interns with Joe Moakley was Michael Cohen. Did you know that?

Ralph Nader: This is Congressman Moakley, yeah.

Colman McCarthy: Congressman Moakley, because Michael Cohen went to American University. I haven't spoken to Jim in a couple of weeks, but I think he probably knew Michael Cohen. He was interning there while Joe was on the staff. But anyway, Jim knew about El Salvador and he started taking members of Congress to El Salvador to see what's being used with our money. And to make a long story longer, Joe Moakley ended up cutting off funding for the war in El Salvador and Jim was largely responsible for that. Joe Moakley didn't know where El Salvador was from Hong Kong. He was an old Boston Irish pol. And Jim also took members of Congress to Cuba to open up relations, and that's finally happened. So, he's one of the most progressive members of the House, and he has a safe seat now, and he's been to Iraq, and he's very anti-war. He's a conscientious member of Congress.

Ralph Nader: Well, that's just one example. All the stories in this wonderful book, listeners, 136 pages called *I'd Rather Teach Peace* by Colman McCarthy. I like to read this every few years. It came out in 2002.

Colman McCarthy: Oh, you're good, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: It's so full of stories, and insights, and gripping episodes, proper names, all the rest. Obviously, the violence in Central America elsewhere. I mean, U.S. has been the imperialistic, supporting dictators, propping them up, overturning democratically-elected regimes, like in Guatemala 1953, always interfering under the Monroe Doctrine all the way to Patagonia. They back up these huge oligarchs who connect with the dictatorships. So, taking your principles, a peace advocacy would have prevented this terrible situation. And now, of course, these people are terrified and they're heading north to get into the U.S. So, what comes around goes around, the saying. So, gives some examples of peaceful resolution. There's one going on now in Ethiopia, Eritrea, right? But, give some other examples.

Colman McCarthy: Well, example like Poland. When the Soviet Union was there all those years, we had the Cold War, they're out to invade us with nukes. And there was Lech Walesa, a shipyard worker, and he said, "We're going to get the Soviets out of this country," and he began to organize the Solidarity Movement. I had a boy in my class in American U. He said to me, "I'll believe in pacifism when the Soviet Union falls without a major war." Well, it happened thanks to Lech Walesa. There was never a major physical war against the Soviet Union. It was because Lech Walesa organized a Solidarity Union and drove the Soviets. So, that boy who said, "No, no, the Soviet Union is going to have to go to war with them," he's now running a craft shop in Vermont.

Ralph Nader: And then Eritrea and Ethiopia were at each other hundreds of thousands of fatalities over a piece of arid land because the two dictators couldn't stand each other. Suddenly, there's a prime minister, who's a very young man. Tell us about that.

Colman McCarthy: Well, you know an old saying is, "If you want to have a chance for peace, don't talk to your friends. Talk to your enemies." I think we have to give some credit to Nixon going to China back in that time and he pulled it off. Now, there were some problems, but you got to talk to your enemies. But, so many of the kids come from families, Ralph, where they see verbal violence at home, they're victims of emotional violence, they're victims of economic violence. Look at the story right now with all these wealthy people trying to get their kids into the Ivy Leagues; you know, bribing people. So, their kids see violence in their own lives. Also, I asked them five questions: who would like to reduce cruelty in the world? Who would like to reduce poverty in the world? Who would like to reduce global warming? Who would like to have a healthy body? And they all say yes. Well, stop eating meat. That is a violent diet. That hits home way more than talking about politics, this country and that country. Every day, you make a choice because meat, animal agriculture, is a major cause of climate warming. So, that's something you do every day, you make choices. But, the cruelty to animals is out of sight. It's at a geographical distance and also philosophical distance. "All the animals are there for our purpose," the kids tell me. No, they're not. They want to live just like you and I do: a pain-free, victimless life. But, that's something they can act on right away. So, I spend about two or three weeks on animal rights.

Ralph Nader: What do you think President Trump's overtures with Kim, the dictator of North Korea and with Putin?

Colman McCarthy: Well, you can argue both ways. It's good that he does it, but I think he's doing it for vanity reasons. "Oh, I'm a peacemaker," he's going to crow pretty soon. But, the guy, it's very hard to give him any credit for that, Ralph. I don't want to judge his motives, but it's been showbiz up until now, I think. What do you think?

Ralph Nader: Well, there could have been a war. I mean, they could have launched missiles and we could have retaliated. It's sort of a truce now, isn't it, with North Korea?

Colman McCarthy: Well, the irony is that we don't want him to have one nuke, and we have about how many do we have? 6,000 in our arsenal. So, where do we get off taking the moral high ground.

Ralph Nader: That's what we do all over the world.

Colman McCarthy: Oh yes, exactly.

Ralph Nader: But there was a peace, nuclear arms agreement with the Soviet Union, and we've gone from 30,000 nuclear warheads to six, as you say; the Soviets have done the same under inspection by each other's inspectors. I mean, these are spectacular peace moves, and they're hardly publicized, hardly written about. You never hear about the anniversary of the START [Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty] Agreement. We hear about the anniversary of bad things, not good things. So, what's the future? What are you planning to do in the next few years? More and more peace studies? Is that spreading among high schools, for example?

Colman McCarthy: Well, I've been trying for about 35 years at Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School to get a peace studies department as well-funded as the science department or the math department. I've gotten absolutely nowhere, Ralph, but I'm going to keep trying. It's very hard to crack the high schools, particularly of the government high schools, public high schools. They've always required courses. You gotta take four years of math, four of science, and yet I teach two classes every morning. It's the only class I've ever had in 12 years that's been anywhere near peace studies. So, we would never send anybody through 12 years of middle school, elementary and high school with only one science class. You get science for 12 years, whether you like it or not, you get math.

Ralph Nader: Well, they'll say there are jobs out there. There needs to be a lot more jobs than conflict resolution and peace advocacy. Needless to say, the need is enormous. We've got a 750 billion dollar war budget and almost zero peace budget. It's all insane. We have John Bolton, and Elliott Abrams, and Michael Pompeo. These are war criminals; these are war advocates. That's the only thing they think of is military force. What are the new books you're coming out with?

Colman McCarthy: Well, I have a new one, Ralph. It's called Teaching Peace, and it's about letters I used to get from my students over the years, and I'd always kind of put them aside. And then, I met Harper Lee, and I was invited to give a commencement speech at Spring Hill College in Mobile, Alabama, and they gave me an honorary degree plus the commencement speech, but the real news that day was Harper Lee was going to get an honorary degree. Hers was deserved, of course, and I don't know whether mine was. But anyway, I met Harper. And I used to get a lot of letters from students around the country, and I kind of put 'em aside. I put them on my sometime soon box, and I asked Harper, "Are you writing much these days," and she said, "Yes, I write every day." And I said to myself, gee, what's the name of her last book; I couldn't remember and then finally I said, "Harper, what's the name of your last book? I want to get it." She said, "No, I don't write books. I write letters to school children." And she

answers all the letters that kids write to her, "I want to be like Atticus Finch. Thank you for your wonderful book." So, there the great Harper Lee was. I said to myself, if Harper Lee can answer letters to schoolchildren, buddy start to do it. And that turned into a book.

Ralph Nader: Letter writing is a lost art. It's got to be recovered. David Grossberg, who's an actual State Farm Insurance agent has written, with his wife, a great manuscript on the history of letters, the importance of letters, how they're being lost, the art of writing letters. Kids today ask their parents, "Where do you put the postage stamp?" They don't know where to put it on the envelope. And he can't even get a publisher.

Colman McCarthy: Oh god, you're kidding me. Is that right? How do you know him?

Ralph Nader: He sent me the manuscript.

Colman McCarthy: Oh my god, is that right?

Ralph Nader: Yeah, it's full of history and names. You know, there used to be books. The Holmes-Laski letters. What are they going to do now? The Jones-Smith emails?

Colman McCarthy: Oh yeah, yeah.

Ralph Nader: We're running out of time, Colman McCarthy, author of this great book, I'd Rather Teach Peace. You think this book is dull? You wouldn't put it down once you start. Well, thank you very much. We're out of time, unfortunately, Colman McCarthy, author of many books, and the one I like is I'd Rather Teach Peace, a short paperback that is very invigorating and very encouraging. Thanks very much, Colman.

Colman McCarthy: Thanks, Ralph. You've always been my hero, Ralph. You know that.

Ralph Nader: Wow, you're very kind, Colman.

Steve Skrovan: We have been speaking with Colman McCarthy, founder of the Center for Teaching Peace. We will link to that at ralphnaderradiohour.com. So, Ralph did you want to say a little bit more about this crash and how it's affected you?

Ralph Nader: Well, in the crash was my grandniece, Samya Stumo, all of 24 years old, a coming leader from the young generation. Her mission was global health--not just diagnosis and treatment. Her mission was prevention, and she'd already had a lot of experience. She graduated at University of Massachusetts, and then University of Copenhagen where she spent time in Africa conducting her studies to get a Master's in Global Health, and she also spent time in Peru. And, she had peer-reviewed studies published in professional journals, and she was multilingual. At just 24, people who have worked with her saw enormous leadership emanating from her sparkling personality, and she had a way with people, a way to motivate them, and she had enormous compassion coupled with intellectual rigor. She knew how to cut right through a bureaucracy; she was very direct. It was a terrible loss not just to us and to the family, but it's a loss to humanity. Think of the people whose lives she would have saved. So, this is inconceivable that this wonderful young woman was denied the right to fulfill her possibilities, and the signs point to a dangerous machine called the Boeing 737 Max 8, and the investigations will continue in Congress, in the media; we hope in the FAA, and we hope consumers will do their part in boycotting this deadly software-driven aircraft that takes control of the aircraft from its pilots under certain conditions.

It needs to be grounded. All the planes need to be grounded and fixed. That's the least we can do for the 157 people who died in that crash and an even larger number who died off Indonesia five months ago. And that plane that Samya was on was full of people going to Kenya [and] Uganda to help with safe-drinking water, adequate food nutrition, environmental health, and they all lost their lives. This is the problem of artificial intelligence going berserk and overwriting human intelligence of airline pilots.

Steve Skrovan: Well, thank you for sharing that with us, Ralph, and I think I speak for David in extending our deepest condolences to you, and your family, and to all the families of those victims of those two airline crashes that probably could have been prevented. I want to thank our guests again today, William McGee and Colman McCarthy. For those listening on the radio, that's our show for you. Podcast listeners, stay tuned for some bonus material we call the Wrap-Up.

David Feldman: Join us next week on the Ralph Nader Radio Hour where we are joined by Marilee Shapiro Asher, an artist still going strong at age 106. Thank you very much, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Peace be with you all.