

RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EP 297 TRANSCRIPT

Steve Skrovan: Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. My name is Steve Skrovan along with my co-host David Feldman. How are you today, David?

David Feldman: Excited about today's show, of course.

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

Ralph Nader: Hello everybody.

Steve Skrovan: And I'm excited about today's show, too. Last week we had Dr. George Luber on the show. He was being honored with the Joe A. Callaway Award for Civic Courage for blowing the whistle at the Centers for Disease Control when he was ordered to tamp down his efforts to deal with the climate crisis. Well on the show today, we're going to feature another courageous Joe A. Callaway Award winner. His name is John M. Barnett. Regular listeners to this show know the many different ways we have covered the Boeing MAX 8 story. We've talked about how mergers and management decisions have turned a once great engineering company into more of a financial company, intent on jacking up its stock price not through innovation, but through buying back its own stock. We've talked about how the Federal Aviation Commission dropped the ball and allowed Boeing to essentially regulate itself. And we've talked about how the marketeers at Boeing have continually overruled the engineers.

Mr. Barnett was a quality control expert at Boeing working not on the MAX 8, but on the 787 Dreamliner at their big production facility in South Carolina. There he blew the whistle on shoddy engineering and a corporate culture where profits trumped safety. He's got an eye-opening story to tell and we look forward to hearing that. As always, we will take a moment after that to find out what's happening in the other dark recesses of the corporate underworld with our corporate crime reporter Russell Mokhiber and Ralph will also answer some listener questions. But first, let's meet yet another courageous whistleblower, David.

David Feldman: John M. Barnett was a quality control manager at Boeing for 25 years in its Seattle facility. He transferred in 2011 to manage Boeing's new plant in South Carolina to build the 787 Dreamliner where he revealed shoddy production as reported on the front page of the April 20th 2019 *New York Times*. He retired under pressure in 2017 and assumed the challenge to inform the flying public. His whistleblower complaint to OSHA is now pending. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, John Barnett.

John M. Barnett: Thank you, pleasure to be here.

Ralph Nader: Indeed welcome, John Barnett. Describe the plane that you have been very concerned about, the Dreamliner and how many of them are up in the air; when was the first one launched?

John M. Barnett: Okay, it's a 787 and the biggest concern came when they opened the Charleston plant. That's when the issues and shoddy production work really started. And I believe our first delivery out of there was 2012.

Ralph Nader: And why did they open a plant in North Charleston, South Carolina where there was a dearth of skilled workers instead of expanding their facility in Seattle where, I understand the Dreamliner is also produced, in your judgment, at a much higher standard than at South Carolina. What brought them to South Carolina?

John M. Barnett: Well, I can tell you, Ralph, what the information they shared with us from Boeing was as they were trying to expand the production facilities and bring other areas into the mix, but from an internal standpoint, it was more about the union activity that was up in Washington State and there was the battles with them and the strikes that they were causing, so they really wanting to get to a non-unionized Right-to-Work State.

Ralph Nader: Did the Governor of South Carolina help them do that? Nikki Haley is now on the board of the Boeing corporation for a few meetings earning as other board members are, over \$300,000 a year. What was, besides being a nonunion state, did they give them all kinds of subsidies?

John M. Barnett: Yes, sir. The information we were provided inside of Boeing as employees were that there were hundreds of millions of dollars in subsidies and tax breaks and that type of thing that Boeing was offered to go to South Carolina. And part of that deal was that we hired most of the employees locally, so we were not allowed to go to areas that had high experience in aerospace and airplane building; we had to hire the local people fresh out of college.

Ralph Nader: And I remember Boeing was saying that they were going to have training facilities so to upgrade untrained workers to the very demanding tasks of assembling an aircraft. This was really not a manufacturing facility as it was an assembling one; isn't that right bringing various parts from around the country in the world?

John M. Barnett: Yes, sir, that's correct. The 787 is fabricated from various parts of the world and they all come together in the final assembly is performed in Charleston and Everett, yes, sir.

Ralph Nader: You were a quality control inspector who received high commendations when you worked at the Seattle plant.

John M. Barnett: Yes, sir.

Ralph Nader: You volunteered to go to South Carolina. You've once said that the quality control inspectors at Boeing are the last check, the last safety check before the plane takes off with passengers.

John M. Barnett: That's correct. The quality control or quality personnel are the last line of defense. That's correct.

Ralph Nader: Given the importance of this skill, why is it that Boeing is laying off literally hundreds of quality control people in both their Seattle plant and South Carolina? What's their reason for that?

John M. Barnett: Well, so they've been preaching for years that quality is non-value added, doesn't bring any value to the product, so they've been trying real hard to eliminate quality. And in the process of eliminating quality, what they're doing internally is they're telling inspectors not to document defects, they're telling quality folks to do a visual buy off and not document things and just way outside the realms of how they should be building airplanes.

Ralph Nader: John, when you use the word quality, I think it's almost a term of art; you don't mean metallurgical quality or something; you're talking about quality control inspectors, aren't you?

John M. Barnett: Yes, sir, that's correct. Yeah, so within Boeing, you have what you call the quality department and you have manufacturing. And within the quality department, that's where your inspectors are, your quality managers, your quality assurance investigators, anything having to do with quality of the product, is under the quality organization.

Ralph Nader: So why they want to eliminate that critical role? Because they know if a plane goes down because of Boeing's neglect or negligence, it can be all hell for Boeing to pay. Look what happened after the two MAX crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia and on other crashes in the past. I mean, how can they dare take a risk like that? Who's going to replace several hundred Boeing quality control inspectors in Seattle and in South Carolina?

John M. Barnett: So what their plan is--what they call MFPP--it's a multifunction process or production process. And basically what it allows it to do is the mechanic to buy off his buddies' work; so mechanics are buying off each other's work saying that it's good to go.

Ralph Nader: We're talking with John Barnett, former quality control inspector for the Boeing corporation on the Boeing 787 Dreamliner. John, aren't they also arguing that automation is better, more reliable than human quality control inspectors? I heard that reported in the press.

John M. Barnett: Yes, that is correct. However, there's very limited on what can actually be implemented within the aircraft program. We've had several what I'd call false starts with the technology where they're promising that it's bigger, better and badder than any inspector when they go to implement it and it isn't. So there's a lot of trial and error and there's a lot of discussion before they've actually implemented things and proven them out.

Ralph Nader: Well your experience, which we'll get to in a moment, the shoddy situation going on in the North Charleston plant in South Carolina, was so detailed that you were the main source for the *New York Times* Sunday page 1 expose of what was going on down there with the Dreamliner and the sloppiness, carelessness in the Charleston, North Carolina plant. So would you run us through how it all started? I mean you were one of numerous quality control inspectors and some of them have followed your courage after you took the first step. But what is it about the other quality control inspectors, when they see the same things you see, but they don't protest; they don't write it up?

John M. Barnett: Well and that goes back to the inexperience of the workforce, the people that's been hired in Charleston are brand new to Boeing, so they're basically doing what they're told. They're not experienced and knowledgeable enough to know when to push back when it's not right. They're just doing what's told and following direction. And the management there is just laying pressure on them big time to get the planes out the door regardless of the condition just to get them delivered and make the cash register ring.

Ralph Nader: What fascinated me when I read the *New York Times* article is the sloppiness on a plane that sells for how much? How much is one Dreamliner sell for?

John M. Barnett: Well they're advertised, they're listed for 150 million; and they actually sell for about 150 million.

Ralph Nader: 150 million?

John M. Barnett: Yes, sir.

Ralph Nader: And they're leaving all kinds of junk on the plane after they've finished assembling it. Why don't you describe how you started seeing things you couldn't believe compared to the higher standards you left in the Seattle Dreamliner plant?

John M. Barnett: Oh, absolutely, yes.

Ralph Nader: Why don't you give us that narrative?

John M. Barnett: Okay, so just a real quick background, it's been 25 years in Everett, Washington building/working on 747, 777, 787 when it first started up there. And the culture in Everett and actually Washington State, you know, you got to think back, there are several generations of employees that have been building airplanes, so you have the generational knowledge transfer of how to build airplanes. And the culture up there and the general population understands the criticality of following processes and procedures and making sure the airplane is built correctly whereas you do not have that in Charleston. They don't understand the ramifications of what a defect can cause, because they don't have that experience. And what we found in Charleston or what I've noticed in Charleston is there's a lot more pressure on mechanics to just buy off their jobs and get them sold. I mean they're measured almost by the hour and are measured by how many, like we call them "beans" you know, a job when they go to complete the job and get them inspected by an inspector and bought off. We call it a bean. So they're all about "bean counts" you know, how many jobs they can get done in a day not necessarily if it's done correctly. And the pressure from management is just get the airplanes out. And another part of the Charleston culture that I've noticed is that the leadership here seems to be more interested in self promotions instead of making sure the product is built correctly, if that makes sense. So it's more focused on themselves, on how a decision might affect their career, versus how it's going to affect the airplane, you know what I'm saying?

Ralph Nader: Right, but what did you start to discover?

John M. Barnett: So I think they're really making some poor decisions. And when I first moved down to Charleston, I was the first quality manager hired to set up Charleston plant and we had developed training plans from the quality perspective of how to look up procedures, how to follow drawings, you know--how to do your job. And we were pretty much shut down. None of the mechanics went through our training. Very few of our inspectors had to go through it. Manufacturing had set up a training program for their mechanics and it was mandatory for our inspectors to go through their training, so I sent my inspectors to it and they came back and said the only thing they're teaching them is how to roller stamp paperwork. They're not teaching them how to build an airplane. They're not teaching them how to follow processes, just how to roll out jobs. So that's kind of where it started was right when Charleston first opened up. And just over the years, it just got worse and worse as far as bypassing procedures, not documenting defects, not maintaining configuration control of the airplane. And towards the end of my time at Boeing, the issues that I discovered was we had hundreds of defective parts and what a defective part is is something that does not meet engineering or quality requirements and should not be used on an airplane. So we had hundreds upon hundreds of missing nonconforming parts that they didn't know where they went. So I wanted to make sure that we tracked these parts down, traced them down [to] figure out where they went; if they'd been installed on airplanes, we needed to get them corrected. My management shut me down. They basically what we call "pencil-whip" so when you have a job that you have to perform at Boeing, it's a work order and it's got steps and each step has the specific instruction of what you need to do or how you need to install a part in the airplane. Well rather than mechanics actually installing the parts and inspectors verifying it, they just sit at their desks and roller stamp things. And we find parts all over the place that the paperwork says it's been installed, but parts are sitting over on a shelf.

Ralph Nader: Good heavens, I could see passengers listening to this and saying, yuck, what is going on here? This is \$150 billion plane and they're engaged in sloppy pencil-whipping as you say. We're talking with John M. Barnett who is described by the Callaway Award for Civic Courage as "A defiant trustee for airline passenger and crew safety as veteran quality control manager for the Boeing corporation on the Boeing 747-767-777, and 787 programs." And you have been quoted as saying "I haven't seen a plane out of Charleston yet that I'd put my name on saying it's safe and air worthy." Well, have any of these planes crashed due to the sloppiness and the misplaced parts at the Charleston plant?

John M. Barnett: No sir, they have not as of yet, but let me throw in a caveat that in production, in aircraft production and working with Boeing all these years; we have a rule of thumb--that it takes eight to 10 years for a defect to become an issue on an airplane. So, you know, if you look at the eight- to 10-year timeframe before a defect becomes an issue and our first plane which was delivered in 2012, you know, we're starting to get into that eight- to 10-year window. So you're correct, we have not lost any 787s to date and thank God and I hope that continues; I'm just really concerned that the way they were produced and delivered that is not going to be the case in the future.

Ralph Nader: Well when Boeing's managers and higher ups saw your write-ups, your documented write-ups on misplaced parts, missing parts, parts in the wrong place, shavings here and there, did they move to correct it? And what are they doing if these planes are already up in the air? Are they thinking about sending bulletins to the airlines? Apart from what they did to

you, which we'll get to, what are they doing for that? I mean who's in charge here? Doesn't all this come down from top management?

John M. Barnett: Yes sir, it does. It comes from top down. But in Charleston, you're right, you know that it's more about profits over safety and quality. And like I say they're really putting the pressure on the mechanics just to close things down and quality, not document defects, and it's an ongoing thing, and you hear about the titanium slivers that's all in the flight control wires and the electronic equipment and that type of thing, you know, that's a major issue. And when I brought it up, I insisted that the airplanes be cleaned and I told my boss right out I refuse to buy off on this airplane as is. I was transferred to a different location. He brought in another way less in experience quality manager than myself and leadership there decided that they weren't going to take the time to clean the airplanes; they're going to deliver them! And they delivered. I filed my complaint in January of 2017 with the FAA. And since then the FAA has gone in and did a spot check. And they inspected ten airplanes in Charleston and they found these metal shavings on all ten airplanes both locations. And what they did was they issued a DAI, a designated airways inspection requirement to Boeing and what that DAI does is within the internal workings of Boeing, it tells them that they have to clean these planes before they can deliver them. But where they came up short, and I don't know if you caught it on the response that they did to the *New York Times* story, that the FAA came back and said Boeing decided that those slivers weren't a safety flight issue. And I don't understand how electronic equipment full of slivers, metal titanium slivers, all over the flight control wires, the electronic equipment, the power panels that actually run the full-powered airplane; I don't see how that cannot be a safety flight issue with metal shavings in there.

Ralph Nader: Well, tell us how many of these Dreamliners are up and what routes do they usually fly?

John M. Barnett: So I'm not sure what the count is up to now. I know when I left, we were up over 800 airplanes that had already been delivered. And they typically fly overseas, so they fly over the oceans and the long routes to other countries.

Ralph Nader: And how many pilots?

John M. Barnett: Two, I believe. I believe it takes two to fly the 787.

Ralph Nader: And were there any counterfeit parts, which are not Boeing's fault, they don't counterfeit parts, but there are reports over the years of counterfeit parts, for example, coming from East Asia, very, very facsimile similar. Were there any counterfeit parts that you discovered?

John M. Barnett: So actually, I was part of that back before when all this came up. I was actually working on receiving inspection at the time when all the counterfeit parts issue came up. And we put very specific safety catches in place to make sure that incoming parts were not counterfeit. Again in Charleston, they've eliminated those. So we don't know for sure if there's counterfeit parts coming or not to be honest with you. They bypassed those safety or those quality check points.

Ralph Nader: Why weren't there FAA inspectors at the scene? This plant has 7,000 employees in North Charleston, South Carolina? Why was it just left up to you and others to make these discoveries? I think people think the FAA is the watchdog here.

John M. Barnett: Well, and that's another issue that really needs to be addressed, Ralph, because like I say, I've been working for Boeing for 32 years. And over the years, I've seen the FAA backing off on their oversight and they've become more of a partnership than an oversight. And the FAA representatives there at Charleston, I actually worked real close with them; they were afraid of Boeing to find too many issues because they would be transferred or kicked out of the Charleston plant. So there was a very intimidation factor from Boeing to the FAA representatives at Charleston. They were afraid to make too many waves.

Ralph Nader: Like federal poultry and meat inspectors, that's the same problem they've had when they tried to be conscientious and do their job for the consumer. I want to ask you, when these charges come out from you and after you set the standard of speaking out, I understand that there were other whistleblowing safety complaints filed with federal regulators by Boeing workers, does Boeing ever feel obliged to respond to these publicly?

John M. Barnett: So Ralph, their response is spun, you know; I mean they have what they call spin doctors. They'll spin it to; we call it the Boeing switch. So if an employee raises a concern saying as an example, if I raised a concern saying that people aren't buying off their job or are not documenting defects, well then Boeing turns it around and accuses me of not documenting defects. So the person that's complaining, they turn it around and point at them and say they're the ones doing it wrong. So that's a big problem. So no, they're not willing to have a face-to-face discussion and discuss it. It's just try to cover up, make it go away, and make the whistleblowers look bad.

Ralph Nader: John, do you ever find engineering professors who don't have to worry about Boeing paying them a salary supporting you? Do you ever find anybody outside Boeing in the engineering and inspection profession taking the stand on your behalf?

John M. Barnett: Not personally other than my legal counsel, which is excellent, but not really. I know that after the *New York Times* came out, I think it was CNN had some specialist on there and they supported what I was saying that, you know, the metal slivers could be catastrophic and we haven't gotten into the oxygen systems where the emergency oxygen for passengers on a decompression event, I discovered that 25% of them do not work on the 787s.

Ralph Nader: Why don't you repeat that because people are told all the time when the oxygen drops, you know, put it on, every time you take a flight.

John M. Barnett: Put it on, right? And pull the cord.

Ralph Nader: So what you're saying is a quarter of them didn't work?

John M. Barnett: That's correct, yes, sir. A team and myself put together a control sample of over 300 of them and out of those, 75 of them did not operate as required. They did not release the oxygen. I elevated this to my management. Again I was removed from the investigation.

They turned it over to . . . I think it was a two-year employee within Boeing and they didn't do anything with it.

Ralph Nader: What did they do with the 800 Dreamliners that have these oxygen units?

John M. Barnett: They have done nothing to correct it; they've done nothing to identify root cause. They have done nothing to correct the issue, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: And no airworthiness directive from the FAA and no Boeing warning bulletin to their customers, the airlines?

John M. Barnett: That's correct, yes.

Ralph Nader: Now tell us if you think there's an increasing danger in air safety from over automation--from automating your type of job all the way to the kind of automation that increased the likelihood that those Boeing MAXs would crash the so-called "software fix" that took control of the plane away from the pilots. Some specialist I talked to called it the "silent hijacker" and pushed the planes down with 340 human beings into the Java Sea and Ethiopian farm area. Give us your take on this drive for automation which is, of course, to cut costs and increase Boeing's bottom line even though, and this was not brought out by the congressional hearing, John, Boeing has spent over 40 billion with a B dollars on stock buybacks to raise its stock to increase the stock options of the compensation of Boeing's bosses. And as people are getting to know, stock buybacks don't create a single job; they don't build a single product. They're just there to increase the metrics for executive compensation. So here's Boeing cutting corners that affect the lives of people in the future in these planes and they are, in effect, burning tens of billions of dollars of stock buybacks.

John M. Barnett: Yes, sir, that's inconceivable to me. I just . . . I can't wrap my head around it because Boeing's number one priority should be the safety of the flying public. And the last six years that I worked with them, that is the last thing on their mind is the safety of flying public, because it's just about checking airplanes out and make the cash register ring.

Ralph Nader: Well, they claimed they've had a great safety record and automation will make it safety plus. Your response.

John M. Barnett: So going back to my comment earlier, the rule of thumb in aircraft production is it takes 8 to 10 years for a defect to manifest into an issue. So if you look at the last 20 years, that safety record that Boeing is touting right now is built on the past quality of 747s, 767s, 777s. So the 787 has not been in service long enough to meet the quality level or to prove that they're at the quality level that the other programs are at, so that's what Boeing is saying that they're at the highest quality level or they've had an excellent safety record. But again, we're just now getting into that eight- to 10-year window, so.

Ralph Nader: You're pointing out something that needs elaboration. A lot of people have said that after the McDonnell-Douglas merger with Boeing where the McDonnell-Douglas culture took over Boeing, Boeing moved from a prime engineering, high-reputation firm to a financial get-the-stock-up, stock-option-bonus firm and degraded its engineering priorities. In fact

someone said about the MAX that the Boeing marketeers overruled the Boeing engineers. In your career, did you see that change firsthand?

John M. Barnett: Yes, sir, I did, unfortunately. It was probably about six months or nine months after the merger between Boeing and McDonnell-Douglas and we . . . within Boeing on a production floor had a little . . . and I guess you'd call a little funnier, a little joke to say, you know, Boeing didn't buy McDonnell-Douglas. McDonnell-Douglas bought Boeing with its own money. And what I saw was when the merger happened, they brought in the McDonnell-Douglas leadership to take over the Boeing company and it was like a light switch. It went from quality to all about shareholder value. It was just amazing. Looking back, it just is so clear that the direction of the company made a 180 turn at that point in time.

Ralph Nader: Well, how, as we conclude, and I want to get Steve and David in on this, but how are you holding up professionally and personally? I mean they forced you into retirement.

John M. Barnett: Yes sir, they did. I'm not going to lie; it's been rough on me. It's been rough on my family. I'm still dealing with issues. I'm still having anxiety attacks, PTSD, but it's been very rough. It's taken a serious mental and emotional toll on me. But, you know, I want to try very hard to keep the focus on the safety of the airplane. I mean that's what my story is about is telling my story enough to where the right people get involved to make sure that these airplanes are made correctly. Because the 787 carries 288 passengers plus crew. So the last thing I want to do is wake up in the morning and see a 787 that's going down because titanium slivers caught fire at 40,000 feet or a defective part broke loose because it wasn't built correctly or they had a decompression event and people weren't able to get emergency oxygen. I mean it's just, it keeps me up at night, Ralph. I just, I can't sleep. It's taken a heck of a toll on me.

Ralph Nader: And for this level of professional concern, you got Boeing is trying to break you, discredit you, defame you, and probably blackball you from any future employment opportunities should you seek them.

John M. Barnett: Yes sir, actually that's already happened. I've been blocked; I was blacklisted; I was blocked from two different positions that I'm aware of that I can prove. There was probably others that I can't prove. And that's another thing, you know, when you're dealing with Boeing, you have to have it in documentation because otherwise it's your word against theirs and they're going to win every time. But I was able to keep my documentation.

Ralph Nader: You know I noticed that at the congressional hearings in the past few days, the Boeing CEO Muilenburg was very contrite and humble and he paid compassionate attention to the families holding up the pictures of their deceased relatives, but he knew and the Boeing lobbyists behind him and the chairs knew that they own the Congress. They give money to over 300 members of Congress. They're saying to Congress, where else is anybody going to go? You know, we're Boeing and Airbus and you're not going to go after the only domestic manufacturer of big-body passenger jets. And it's really sickening to watch because the questions coming in are tough within a narrow framework. They don't go into the fundamental design although Congressman Steve Cohen from Tennessee laid out how much Muilenburg was being paid. And asked him why he didn't get a pay cut. He's been paid 30 million bucks even after the crashes and he didn't ask for a pay cut. And he replied to Congressman Cohen, "Well, it's up to the board of

directors." Well he's the chairman of the board of directors. I calculated in the three hours I was sitting there listening to him, he made 45,000 bucks.

John M. Barnett: Wow. Unbelievable.

Ralph Nader: So we're dealing with corporate emperors who put on a show for the members of Congress and they're humble, and they're always address them as congressmen and congresswomen, but they know who's in charge. And by trying to break you, they're trying to make you an example to anyone else at the Charleston plant. Well, look what happened to John Barnett, you better shut up. But I'll tell you, if Boeing has to experience one or two more crashes due to Boeing faulty inspection or Boeing negligent design, it's going to break Boeing because it's no longer just two major companies, Airbus and Boeing dominating the world. You've got now the Chinese, Brazilian, Japanese about ready to offer competitive large-size passenger planes, number one. And number two, you may not know this, John, but in the 1950s, the British aerospace industry was one of the leaders in the world and they produced a plane called the Comet Jet, and three of them crashed and that was the end of the British aerospace industry leadership in the world. So beware, Boeing, the board of directors of Boeing and the CEO, digging in their heels on this Dreamliner mess and the disasters with the MAX have now a career conflict of interest with the future wellbeing of Boeing and its workers, which is why the families have demanded that there be a mass resignation as would have happened by the way in Japan right away.

John M. Barnett: Right, absolutely.

Ralph Nader: Yeah, they would have bowed and resigned. David, Steve, any final comments or questions?

John M. Barnett: If I could just touch on one thing . . .

Ralph Nader: Go ahead.

John M. Barnett: . . . you talked about the congressional hearing and unfortunately I'm in the process of moving and I was able to get bits and pieces of it. And I guess my point is, you know, I'd love to sit down with the CEO and the decision makers of Boeing and let them take my concerns seriously and let's have a one-on-one discussion. I don't have a problem talking to any of them.

Ralph Nader: John, we're demanding at the committees that a technical specialist testify after Boeing and not let Boeing get away with it stonewalling.

John M. Barnett: That's excellent, that's an excellent plan. Yes, sir.

Ralph Nader: And you will testify I assume.

John M. Barnett: Absolutely. But one of the things I've noticed Dennis Muilenburg keeps saying over and over is safety and quality is top priority. Well as the quality manager, I have a perform ...or I don't know if you're familiar with performance management reviews, but it's a

yearly review where you sit down with your boss and they review your work over the year and they grade you on how well you did. And based on those reviews, it defines your future raises, your bonuses, your ability to participate in special leadership programs, that type of thing. During my performance review as a quality manager, I was penalized and basically received no raises. And he actually put this in writing that I needed to learn to work in the gray areas of the procedures, that I was knowledgeable almost to a fault, that I needed to stop documenting quality issues and defects in email, you know, so I guess my question to Dennis is you're sitting up here saying that safety and quality is top priority, but yet you have quality managers within your organization that are being penalized for following processes. So how does that make it top priority?

Ralph Nader: Which is exactly why you should testify before Congress.

John M. Barnett: I'm willing anytime, Ralph. I mean like I say, they've done their damage to me. You know, I was forced to retire and I will deal with what's ahead of me, but it really needs to be brought to light before we start losing the airplanes. And that's my top concern is the safety of the flying public. As a quality manager, that's what I swore to protect and I'm going to do everything I can to.

Ralph Nader: And you put your entire career on the line.

John M. Barnett: Yes, sir, I did. I was put in a position to where I had to choose between the company I love and the job I love and my career versus the safety of the flying public. And I had to sacrifice those to protect the flying public or at least try to.

Ralph Nader: Beautifully said. Steve and David?

David Feldman: Well, I certainly don't know how to top that. I'm kind of speechless, sir, at your courage and completely appalled at the arrogance of Boeing. And boy, it just makes you want to have that whole company just crash.

John M. Barnett: There's some serious reckoning that needs to happen in there, you know, as far as following procedures and building the airplane correctly is for sure needs to . . . something needs to change before it's too late.

Ralph Nader: You know that Boeing is in trouble with their defense contracts, with NASA contracts. The contractors in NASA and Boeing in the Pentagon are fed up. They've often suspended the contracts that berated Boeing, so Boeing has a multi-faceted management problem, of great serious proportion.

John M. Barnett: Yes sir, you're correct. And I'm sure you all heard about the KC-46 the Air Force refused to take because they were finding so much FOD [Foreign Object Debris] You know, that was just recently.

Ralph Nader: That's right.

David Feldman: Where are the pilots association, the stewardesses in all this?

John M. Barnett: Well, see, that's the thing is all of this is internal to Boeing. So as an example, the slivers that I found and the 25% failure rate of the emergency oxygen system, Boeing does not notify the customers that that's an issue. So they keep it under wraps internal to Boeing and try to cover it up or make it go away so the pilots, the stewardesses, customers don't know any of that.

Ralph Nader: Well, we're out of time, John M. Barnett, and congratulations on your Joe A. Callaway Award for Civic Courage. I'm sure you get other awards, too. We hope to see you before Congress to react to Boeings testimony and full speed ahead for you in the coming months and years. Thank you.

John M. Barnett: Thank you, Mr. Nader. It's a pleasure talking to you. And I look forward to meeting you very soon.

Ralph Nader: Certainly.

Steve Skrovan: We have been speaking with John M. Barnett, whistleblower and winner of the Joe A. Callaway Award for Civic Courage. For more about his story, go to Ralphnaderradiohour.com. Right now, we're going to take a short break and check in with our relentless corporate crime reporter Russell Mokhiber. When we come back, Ralph has his own update about Boeing and will answer more of your questions. You are listening to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, back after this.

Russell Mokhiber: From the National Press Building in Washington, D.C., this is your Corporate Crime Reporter Morning Minute for Friday, November 15, 2019. I'm Russell Mokhiber.

A Massachusetts Buffalo Wild Wings is under investigation after a chemical mixture inside the kitchen killed one employee and left at least 10 staff members and customers hospitalized.

According to Boston's WHDH-TV, the fire department responded to the restaurant chain, in the town of Burlington, Massachusetts, just after 5:30 p.m. A team of firefighters wearing hazmat suits found a male worker suffering from nausea. The fire chief said in a news conference that the man had been exposed to the chemical, which was being used to clean the floor, after another individual mixed it and became ill. The man was rushed to a hospital where he later died. Authorities said that at the time he inhaled the fumes, he was trying to save others from the chemical.

For the Corporate Crime Reporter, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you, Russell. We're going to take your listener questions, but first, Ralph, you have some update on the Boeing MAX 8 situation. Why don't you tell our listeners what's going on there?

Ralph Nader: Well Boeing, the FAA, and their friends in Congress are racing to unground these 737-800 MAX by January or February. Now there aren't that many of them. They'll be in the US about 70/80 of them immediately and you should not fly them. And when you make a reservation, just ask the operator what's the equipment. That's the technical term. And if they say it's the 737-800 MAX, say I'd like to fly on another airline. And the airlines are willing to go

along with this for the time being without charging you a reservation fee change like Delta does, \$200. The second point I want to make is that it's really pretty insidious what's going on. Boeing has known from the beginning it has the country by the throat. It's the only domestic manufacturer of all these big passenger jets. It gives money to over 300 members of Congress, campaign cash, and it knows how to throw its influence around and to turn the FAA into putty instead of a regulator. And so when David Calhoun, who is the Chairman of the Board of Boeing; he's been on the board since 2009; he has a full-time job with the Blackstone Financial giant, says on CNBC a few days ago "From the vantage point of our board, Dennis Muilenburg has done everything right. Remember, Dennis didn't create this problem." From the beginning, he knew that MCAS," that's the software fix, so-called, that boomeranged and led to two disasters, Boeing 737 MAX crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia with 346 fatalities. He says "From the beginning, he knew that MCAS could and should have been done better and he's led a program to rewrite MCAS to alleviate all these conditions that ultimately beset two unfortunate crews and the families and the victims." That's completely false. Dennis Muilenburg was in on this problem from the beginning. He represented the Boeing marketeers overruling the Boeing engineers to get the MAX up as fast as possible to compete with Airbus's 320neo.

He's been CEO well before the Boeing MAX took off. He was in at the founding. And for his rubber stamp, David Calhoun, the Chairman of the Board of Directors, to say he didn't create the problem, is totally false. But you see, that's what's going on; the fix is in. The Congress is not going to do much; they have resisted our demands that they have a panel for the consumer groups like FlyersRights.org. You should go to it for updates and Consumer's Union and people like myself who's written on aviation safety. They haven't announced the hearing on that. They haven't announced the hearing for the second round for the labor unions who have to deal with these planes every day. They haven't announced, most crucially, a hearing for the technical critics--the aerospace experts, the avionics, the aerodynamic experts who are beseeching to testify and take apart Boeing's nonsense before the congressional committees. And they haven't allowed the families who are now very, very knowledgeable about what's going on. They've met with all kinds of technicians, the FAA, the National Transportation Safety Board. They haven't been scheduled for hearing either in the House under Congressman DeFazio from Oregon or in the Senate, Senator Wicker from Mississippi. So folks, it's going to be a very touch-and-go situation in the next few weeks until the early part of 2020. Weigh in on your member of Congress. They can say slow down Boeing, don't you dare certify FAA and we'll have more time to get this thing in better shape. FlyersRights.org is your update for any questions you may have.

David Feldman: Well I have a question, Ralph, were you at the hearing where Muilenburg apologized to the families a few weeks ago?

Ralph Nader: Yes, I was at the hearing. Muilenburg apologized more than once. He was told by my niece, Nadia Millerron, after the hearing that when he apologizes, he should look the families in the eye and not do it when he's looking straight ahead at the members of the House committee at which point he did that. He did that again, but he was raked over the coals because he was slated for a bonus of 15 million bucks, can you imagine? And he's dropped that. He's no longer taking that. And he's now making 23 million a year and he was taken to task by some members of the House committee on that. But what they didn't do is break it down. At the end of the hearing they said, Mr. Muilenburg, you have now made \$75,000 since you walked in this room at 9:30 and left at 3:30.

David Feldman: So in spite of all of that, you're feeling is that Congress will ultimately not call them to task in a serious way?

Ralph Nader: Unless there's a new surge of air traveler demands, because they are afraid that the air travelers will start gumming up the works by saying we're not going to fly the MAX. The airlines will be perplexed on how to handle this. The Boeing MAX brand will be seriously tarnished. And so what they're worried about, the air travelers and the labor unions, and above all, the families of the bereaved who are really, really organized and are getting all kinds of access to the FAA [Federal Aviation Administration], to the Department of Transportation to the House to the Senate, and even spent a couple of hours with Dennis Muilenburg, the CEO of Boeing. So if all these things come together, what will we get? We will get the publicity of the way Boeing is supposedly going to fix this plane that they have sent in secret to the FAA. We'll get that out in the open; we'll let the technical critics go over it, have a 60-day comment period, and then we'll see where we're at. And at the same time, Congress should have the hearings I just mentioned with the labor unions, the families, the consumer groups, and the aerospace experts, some of whom work for Boeing, others are subject matter specialists and do they have a story to tell.

David Feldman: So Ralph, in one kind of simple sentence, what is your demand? What are the demands of the family here that they want from Boeing? Do they want it completely grounded, build a new plane, what or some other solution?

Ralph Nader: They say the Boeing 737-800 MAX is a new plane. It should have been subject to a full certification; that's what they're demanding. That would include analyzing the aerodynamic instability problem as well as the faulty, complicated software fix they call the MCAS [Maneuvering Characteristics Augmentation System], full certification, and if the plane is ever slated to be ungrounded, full simulator training, as Sully, Captain Sullenberger testified for the House in June, should be required of the pilots by the airlines, and Boeing's full certification [and] full simulator training, before that plane is up.

David Feldman: In your opinion, knowing a lot about avionics, do you think this plane would pass the certification?

Ralph Nader: Well it depends on how stringent the FAA is. They can pass anything. They've been pretty permissive with Boeing...

David Feldman: Right, because they allowed Boeing to basically certify it themselves.

Ralph Nader: That's right. And they weren't up to date on the software fix. They weren't even informed by Boeing that the software strength was increased fourfold. And Boeing didn't even notify the airlines or the pilots that this stealth hijacker, this software, could take the control of the plane away from the pilots and nosedive it into the Java Sea or into a farmer's area in Ethiopia at 550 miles per hour, killing 346 people.

David Feldman: Now, does the FAA have the expertise and the staff to be able to do this? Because I thought that was the excuse before and that's why they allowed Boeing to do it.

Ralph Nader: Yes, they didn't have adequate staff, but they have adequate resources to hire consultants and people who can immediately come to grips with this even more profoundly than what FAA staff can do.

Steve Skrovan: You would think they could have maybe an independent blue-ribbon panel like what happened after the Challenger disaster, in the space shuttle disaster.

Ralph Nader: Well, they've had these panels, Steve, but the problem is they're all looking backward properly as to what happened, who knew what-when, who covered up, who didn't inform, who didn't respond. Now the panels have to address the question, should this plane ever fly again? And if it does, under what conditions? And that looking-forward panels have not been brought together, because they don't want to experience the conclusion of some of the findings, which is that unless that airframe and the injured overload problem that leads to the prone-to-stall inclination by the 737 MAX is addressed, the plane should never fly. And they're not willing to burden Boeing with that kind of economic price. So it all comes down to Boeing cash, Boeing profits.

David Feldman: And for the victims to be satisfied, it's going to take a movement and publicity and flyers knowing about these problems and potentially not flying on this plane for them to get their attention.

Ralph Nader: Yeah, and the coordinator is Flyers Rights run by Paul Hudson who lost his daughter at 16 years old in the Lockerbie collision over Scotland 30 years ago. Go to FlyersRights.org; he'll say exactly what he thinks you can do vis-a-vis Congress and elsewhere. We are passing out buttons "Axe the Max" for people to wear; take a picture, put it up on the internet. What Boeing can't control is a growing consumer boycott. Calls to airlines, even if you're not flying, just say we don't want you to use this plane. Boeing cannot control that. They can control the political situation in Washington. They can hammer the airlines and say you've got no choice, but they can't control resistance by the bread and butter of the airlines, the air traveler.

Steve Skrovan: All right, well you heard it, listeners, Flyers Rights is your source of updates and information and it really could be a consumer movement that decides the fate of the Boeing MAX 8. So let's move to some listener questions now, David.

David Feldman: This is from Paul G. Warrick, Ralph. He says, "I live in a Trump-supporter region. If you talk to one Trump supporter, you talked to them all. The problem as I see it, they are fed daily propaganda mostly by Fox News, Rush Limbaugh, etcetera. I would like to know who are the big money players supporting this subverted often toxic media? If you control the people, you control the politicians, right? Shouldn't journalists seek out these big money players and interview them on their positions on policies and issues? Politicians are puppets. Why waste time on them when there are deeper sources we should focus on; make them answer for their manipulations of our government and media out them."

Ralph Nader: All right, the big money players, first of all, are the advertisers on Fox and Rush Limbaugh. You can just get their name by listening to their ads. They're usually the big

companies [like] General Motors and the Merck drug companies, Bank of America, you name it. So they're the ones. Without advertising, no Fox News, no Rush Limbaugh, and no Facebook, and no Google. Though there are consumer groups who focus on the advertisers--they threaten boycotts, they announce boycotts, they go after the brand, and they're making some progress in that way. You'll notice that when there is misbehavior by a certain talk show on television and they start losing ads, that person has either lost his or her job or they tend to reconsider how far they're going to go with their blathering.

Steve Skrovan: All right. This next question comes from a long-time listener and frequent questioner, usually asks very good questions, Earl Ammerman IV. And he says, "Why is Joe Biden ignoring the fact that in order to accomplish his Moonshot to Cure Cancer, there needs to be healthcare infrastructure such as paid sick leave. In order to make the Moonshot to [Cure] Cancer work for actual cancer patients who can't afford to miss work, because they lack paid sick leave, and might lose their house and job if they're hospitalized. Correct me if I'm wrong, but the Moonshot to Cure Cancer seems to be an Orwellian policy that seems to benefit drug companies by subsidizing their research and development while cancer patients get the short end of the stick because they won't benefit because the \$100,000 chemo pills would be too expensive and cancer is not like the common cold. You don't just kick it after a couple of days. Cancer patients miss work to seek treatment. If they don't have paid sick leave, they won't be able to keep a roof over their head due to how expensive cancer treatment is."

Ralph Nader: Well, a lot of what you say, Earl, is correct. If the moonshot actually produces policies to prevent cancer, then I think part of your legitimate complaints are avoided because people will not get cancer. They won't have to deal with unpaid sick leave, etcetera, etcetera. But these big moonshot programs do increase the profits enormously of the companies that are in the arena to make money from cancer treatment or all the other aspects that cancer patients need. And that's where the profiteering comes in and you know as well as others that these companies are going to try to get the lion's share of that taxpayer bonanza as they see it. And by the way, we're one of the few countries in the world that call themselves democracies that don't have paid sick leave.

Steve Skrovan: This last question is not really a question. I just wanted to share it with our listeners and with you on the air, Ralph. It comes from a Manal Hamzeh and I don't know if that's a he or she actually, but it says, "Dear Ralph, I wanted you to know that my father, Dr. Zaid Hamzeh, has been listening to your radio hour podcasts lately. Today, his weekly column in the daily Al-Rai, Amman, Jordan, starts with you and the interview you had with Steven Greenhouse when we talked about unions." And it says "your impact and reach are critical locally and globally. Thank you, Manal." I just wanted to share that with you and get a reaction.

Ralph Nader: Well, Thank you very much, Manal. It's really good we've had feedback from places all over the world and that's one of the benefits of the new technology; it can carry your program everywhere. And I'm glad that some of the interviews we've had have relevance to conditions and issues of justice in these lands around the world.

Steve Skrovan: Thank you for your questions. Keep them coming on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* website. Now Ralph and David, before we go, I just want to take a few moments to alert our listeners that we're going to be releasing a special *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* on the

impeachment of Donald J. Trump. It's going to be in the form of a series of podcasts and will feature Ralph and our Resident Constitutional Scholar Bruce Fein. As regular listeners know, Bruce Fein is no radical lefty. He is a Republican who has worked in the Reagan Administration as well as for conservative think tanks like the Heritage Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute. As a young lawyer, he was even in the Justice Department during the impeachment inquiry over Richard Nixon. He also worked with the Republican Floor Manager Bob Barr, not Bill Barr, Bob Barr, different guy. He worked with Congressman Bob Barr from Georgia on the impeachment of Bill Clinton about 20 years ago. Bruce is a real stickler for the Constitution and he's written extensively about that founding document and how we as a country have strayed from many of its core articles. So this series of podcasts is an effort to take you beyond the politics of the moment, as perilous as these times are, and offer to our listeners as well as those in Congress, a constitutional reset of sorts. Bruce has outlined 14, that's 14 impeachable offenses that could be leveled at this president. Most are exclusively particular to Donald Trump, but there are others, which could be leveled at the past half dozen presidents as well. Each episode will dive into each count in the indictment, so to speak. So look for this series of podcasts on our website, our YouTube channel, Instagram, Twitter, and any other platform from which you download the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. So look for our special report on the impeachment of Donald J. Trump. I want to thank our guest again, John M. Barnett. For those of you listening on the radio, that's our show. For you podcast listeners, stay tuned for some bonus material we call the Wrap Up. A transcript of this show will appear on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* website soon after the episode is posted.

David Feldman: Subscribe to us on our *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* YouTube channel. And for Ralph's weekly column, it's free, go to nader.org. For more from Russell Mokhiber, go to corporatecrimereporter.com.

Steve Skrovan: And Ralph has got two new books out, the fable, *How the Rats Re-Formed the Congress*. To acquire a copy of that, go to ratsreformcongress.org. and *To the Ramparts: How Bush and Obama Paved the Way for the Trump Presidency, and Why It Isn't Too Late to Reverse Course*. We will link to that also.

David Feldman: Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* when we speak to legendary FCC Commissioner Nicholas Johnson. Thank you, Ralph.

Ralph Nader: Thank you everybody. Stay alert.