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a flexus fork
at the White House!

SOS

Pants fall; video of incident stirs debate on airing footage

By HOWARD KURTZ

Washington Post

WASHINGTON — Don Imus wanted to run the footage but couldn't get permission from his bosses at MSNBC.

Fox News Channel aired the footage as an example of life's embarrassing moments.

CNN refused to carry the footage on grounds of taste.

C-SPAN edited out the footage — which it now says was a mistake.

The videotape that many Washington journalists were anguishing over Wednesday involved the receiving line at Tuesday night's state dinner for South Korean President Kim Dae Jung. A renowned video artist, Nam June Paik, left his wheelchair, grabbed his walker and was shaking hands with President Clinton when his pants suddenly dropped to his ankles.

The embarrassing moment — compounded by the artist's lack of underwear — lasted more than 10 seconds until another Korean came to his aid. Clinton's expression did not change.

Fox resolved the question — to air or not to air — in the affirmative.

"We digitized his face and private parts in order not to embarrass him," said Dennis Murray, executive producer of Fox News Channel, which used the footage on its "X-Press" morning show. "It was a jumping-off point for a discussion about your most embarrassing moments . . . We really went out of our way not to be tasteless."

But network executives later discussed the matter with Fox News President Roger Ailes, who said he was disappointed with the decision and would not have run the footage because it provided a laugh at a disabled person's expense.

Imus joked about the incident through much of his radio show, which is simulcast on MSNBC. "It doesn't get any better than this," he said. But his MSNBC producer refused to air the videotape.

Said Frank Sesno, CNN's Washington bureau chief: "This

fellow apparently is the victim of a stroke. What happened to him is unfortunate and it serves no editorial purpose, other than voyeurism, to put that on television."

C-SPAN did not carry the state dinner live because Congress was still in session, but aired selected portions of the receiving line — not including the incident — at 3 a.m. "In retrospect, we should have aired the whole thing," said spokesman Rich Fahle. "It's not C-SPAN's style to edit anything."

A decision was made to protect this person, and that's not what C-SPAN is around to do."

A Washington Post story in Wednesday's Style section mentioned the incident in the second paragraph — "a disabled guest accidentally dropping his pants in the receiving line" — and provided further detail on an inside page.

"Confronted with a difficult deadline decision, the editors and reporters involved in this story made a choice that we regret," said Robert G. Kaiser, the Post's managing editor. He said the second paragraph "was utterly lacking in context or explanation," but that the later passage, "recording that this unusual thing occurred, explaining why it occurred and how, is absolutely appropriate. It's a freakish event . . . and a lot of important people saw it, and it should be noted."

The Post received several calls of complaint. But Jim Dickson, director of community affairs for the National Organization on Disability, did not fault the newspaper's coverage.

"Embarrassments happen any time you're in public life," he said.

"But if anyone's pants fall down while shaking hands with the president, I can't imagine The Post not covering it. And I don't think we want special treatment as a disabled group."

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ROBERT MORTON

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ll day, said Mr.
who starts filming
GUIZAMO's "Freak"

There is a quality to my approach
to life, you might say," Ms. Toll says.
"In my art I was able to separate. It
was my escape to a better world. I
would turn every negative into a
positive. If the peasants were hate-
ful, in my pictures they were wonder-
ful. I had scarlet fever; all my moth-
er could do was put cold compresses
on my head. In my paintings when a
little girl is sick, a doctor comes to
see her and she is visited by friends."

Where does the trick come from
that enables one to do a reverse print
of reality, throwing up pretty water-
colors in yellows and reds when you
are living in the colors of genocide
and war?

Ms. Toll painted 64 watercolors in
the 13 months she and her mother
were in hiding. (Six will be auctioned
at Sotheby's next Friday.) All show
scenes of a happy childhood.

Ms. Toll, who favors dangling ear-
rings and has an accent evocative of
borscht, is a welcoming, exuberant
sort.

"I feel like I know you a million
years," she says a little while after
meeting, which actually is how peo-
ple feel meeting her. An hour into
lunch, understanding there is no need
to ask, Ms. Toll has moved on to the

war to scenes of seeming normalcy,
Ms. Toll believes was the gift of her
mother, Rose.

"She imbued me with a sense of
confidence and well-being, nurturing
me, praising me. She gave me a
birthday card with little medals; she
painted them."

It has been 54 years since her
mother painted the birthday card,
but Ms. Toll remembers.

"A medal for being pretty," Ms.
Toll says, and as she says it, one
realizes that she still is. "A medal for
working hard, for being polite, for
being kind. I wrote a play about all
this a few years ago. Somebody said I
made my mother to be too much of a
saint, but that was how I knew her."

After the war, Ms. Toll's mother
remarried and had another daugh-
ter. The family came to the United
States in 1951. Today, Ms. Toll seems
to inhabit the world she painted as a
child: leaf-green, happy domesticity.
Married, with two children and five
grandchildren, Ms. Toll lives in a
suburb of generous green lawns. She
is an adjunct professor of creative
writing. She also lectures on Holo-
caust art.

During her time in hiding, did she

sad picture?

"No."

A hazy line separates hope from
the vogueish state of denial.

When she experienced other diffi-
culties in life, did she turn from
them? How did she behave when her
mother was dying of cancer, five
years ago?

"I was realistic," Ms. Toll says. "I
did say to her, which my sister didn't,
'You know it could reverse' or that
'there will be a new drug.' I would
say this to her to the day she died.
Once she started to talk to me about
her funeral and I started crying. Af-
ter this she never mentioned it to me
again."

"I took my pictures once to an art
therapist," Ms. Toll says. "She said
the girl in the pictures was pretty
connected, steady, adjusted. She is
surrounded by friends; there is no
sense of aloneness without others.
There was a great deal of love behind
these artworks."

Her wish to keep where she lives
and works out of the papers?

"There are all kinds of neo-Nazis
and crazy people out there," Ms. Toll
says. "Why should they know where I
live? Let them look for me."

for HBO next week, with
SPIKE LEE directing.



NAM JUNE PAIK

3 Win Kyoto Prize

Assuming that the call
went through in the middle of
the night, the video artist

NAM JUNE PAIK is \$351,000
richer today. The Inamori
Foundation, started in 1984
by the industrialist KAZUO IN-
AMORI, chose him for one of
three Kyoto Prizes and was
scheduled to call him at his
loft in SoHo by 2:30 A.M.

He probably had an inkling
that the call was coming. Af-
ter all, the foundation had
summoned him to Kyoto, Ja-
pan, last month.

But the group, though ea-
ger for the publicity that
comes with giving away big
money, wanted to be the one

to give him the official word.
So it sent out a press kit on
the condition that he not be
contacted until after the all-
important call.

"If he doesn't pick up, they
keep trying," said JENNIFER
FRIEDMAN, a spokeswoman.

The two other winners,
who were to have been called
at the same time, were Dr.
KURT WUTHRICH, a pioneer
in molecular and structural
biology, and Dr. KIYOSI ITO, a
mathematician and profes-
sor emeritus at Kyoto Uni-
versity.

A Dancer's Debut

MIKHAIL BARYSHNIKOV
did something last night that
he had never done before: He
danced at a political event, a
fund-raiser for PETER VAL-
LONE, the City Council
Speaker and a candidate for
governor. "Peter Vallone has
always worked hard for arts
in New York City," Mr. Ba-
ryshnikov said, "and I'd like
to see him continue this work
for the state."

JAMES BARRON
with Phoebe Hoban