

# Liberal Bias? What Liberal Bias?

Sometimes, all it takes is a seemingly insignificant incident to show how biased journalists can be. Take Joe Biden's recent stumble while walking up the steps to Air Force One.

President Biden was on his way to Atlanta when he tripped three times ascending the stairs of Air Force One at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland. The White House blamed it on "wind" and said he "left the plane with ease" when he arrived in Atlanta.

The Daily Mail reports that, "As of Friday afternoon, the homepages of MSNBC, CBS News, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times and New York Times had no mention of Biden's stumbling incident earlier in the day at Joint Base Andrews."

According to various organizations that monitor the media, CNN devoted 15 seconds to the incident and MSNBC about a minute. NBC's Chuck Todd on MSNBC said, "We've all run up stairs and had that moment ourselves. And if you haven't, you aren't a human being."

Fair enough. The fall appeared to be no big deal and the coverage reflected the insignificance of what happened.

But compare how the media covered Biden's fall with how they covered Donald Trump's slow walk down a ramp after he delivered a graduation address at West Point in June of 2020: According to the Media Research Center, CNN devoted 22 minutes and 13 seconds to Trump's walk down the ramp, and MSNBC devoted 28 minutes and 42 seconds to the story.

Why so much time? Because it provided liberal news outlets that were no fans of Trump with the opportunity to question his physical and even mental fitness for office.

When Biden, who is 78, fell, it was treated as simply a slip, something we've all done at one time or another. But with Trump, who is 74, it was treated as a sign of potential serious health questions.

The Times ran "Trump's Halting Walk Down Ramp Raises New Health Questions" as its headline in 2020. Compare that to its headline when Biden fell last week: "Biden is 'doing 100 percent fine' after tripping while boarding Air Force One."

The Washington Post's headline in 2020 was: "Trump tries to explain his slow and unsteady walk down a ramp at West Point." But when Biden fell three times in a matter of seconds, the Post headline simply said: "Biden stumbles climbing stairs on Air Force One."

In 2020, MSNBC anchor Joy-Ann Reid tweeted: "Serious question: what is going on with [Trump]? His supporters have tried so hard to get the media to question Joe Biden's mental and physical fitness but they so often engage in projection it seems worth inquiring."

CNN couldn't speculate enough about the Trump story in 2020:

– Anchor Alisyn Camerota asked medical expert Dr. Sanjay Gupta, "Do you see something, possibly neurological, that could be throwing off his balance?" Gupta responded that a lot of neurologists were talking about the situation.

– Anchor John King said Trump looked "a little shaky" on the ramp.

– Political correspondent Abby Phillip wondered if Trump was being "transparent" about his health based on the "latest incidents."

– Political commentator Chris Cillizza said it was an important story because Trump was 74 at the time. "We know so little about Donald Trump's past medical history," Cillizza

said. As he talked, the on-screen graphic read: "Trump's unsteady walk, arm lift raise health questions."

Then-presidential candidate Biden even got into the act, saying: "Look at how he steps and look at how I step. Watch how I run up ramps and he stumbles down ramps. Come on." Pretty bold for a guy who less than a year later fell down three times in a matter of seconds while trying to walk up the steps to an airplane.

At the time, then-President Trump responded to speculation that he may have serious medical problems by noting that the ramp was slippery. But Maggie Haberman of the New York Times didn't buy it. "There was no evidence that the ramp was slippery, and the skies were clear during the ceremony," she wrote.

And, in its news story, the Times said: "Mr. Trump – who turned 74 on Sunday, the oldest a U.S. president has been in his first term – was recorded hesitantly descending the ramp one step at a time after he delivered an address to graduating cadets at the New York-based academy on Saturday."

Compare that to how the Times began its March 19 story on President Biden's stumble: "President Biden was 'doing fine' after falling off balance while boarding Air Force One before his Friday trip to Atlanta, according to a press secretary traveling with him." That seemed to be enough for the Times; there was nothing in its March 19 story that raised questions about Joe Biden's physical or mental ability because of his stumble.

Roger Mudd, my former colleague at CBS News, who recently died at age 93, told an interviewer on Nov. 18, 2011, that "A journalist's job is not to march in the parade, but to stand on the curb and report what goes by. An awful lot of people think that we ought to be in the parade and not be a disinterested observer."

Roger was onto something back then, but television news was more serious in his day and far less partisan than it is today. For too long now, especially after Trump was elected president, journalists have been marching in that parade without so much as a hint of embarrassment.

Roger Mudd was worried about a biased public trying to influence journalists. I'm worried about the opposite – biased journalists trying to influence the public.