

= The Blessing Way (The X @-@ Files) =

" The Blessing Way " is the first episode of the third season of the American science fiction television series The X @-@ Files . It premiered on the Fox network on September 22 , 1995 . It was directed by R.W. Goodwin , and written by series creator Chris Carter . " The Blessing Way " featured guest appearances by Floyd Red Crow Westerman , Peter Donat and Jerry Hardin , and introduced John Neville as the Well @-@ Manicured Man . The episode helped explore the overarching mythology , or fictional history of The X @-@ Files . " The Blessing Way " earned a Nielsen household rating of 12 @.@ 3 , being watched by 19 @.@ 94 million people in its initial broadcast . The episode received mixed reviews from critics .

The show centers on FBI special agents Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) who work on cases linked to the paranormal , called X @-@ Files . In this episode , Mulder is found near death on a Navajo reservation , and is nursed back to health by the tribe , led by Albert Hosteen (Westerman) . Meanwhile , Scully investigates an implant found in her neck , and fears that her life ? and those of her family ? may be in danger . " The Blessing Way " is part of a three @-@ episode storyline , carrying on from the second season finale " Anasazi " , and continuing in the next episode , " Paper Clip " .

Series creator Chris Carter , who called the episode one of his favorite episodes to write , created the episode as a way to explore how the character of Fox Mulder would react to the death of his father . The episode contained several elaborate special effects ; effects producer Mat Beck considered the sequence where Mulder has a vision of Deep Throat and his father to be one of the most difficult of the season .

= = Plot = =

In Two Grey Hills , New Mexico , Albert Hosteen (Floyd Red Crow Westerman) and his family are beaten by the Men in Black as they search for the whereabouts of Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) . Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) is pursued by a black helicopter before soldiers retrieve her printed copies of Albert 's translations of the digital tape . Scully denies having the original tape , saying it is in Mulder 's possession . Upon returning to Washington , the FBI puts Scully on mandatory leave and forces her to turn in her badge and gun . Upon entering Mulder 's office , she finds the tape missing .

Meanwhile , in New York City , The Smoking Man (William B. Davis) appears before the Syndicate , who question him over the whereabouts of the tape . Mulder , alive but severely wounded , is found buried under some rocks near the buried boxcar . Hosteen has Mulder taken to a Navajo sweat lodge to be healed during a " Blessing Way " ritual . During the ritual , Mulder has ghostly visions of Deep Throat and his father , who urge him to recover and continue his search for the truth .

Melvin Frohike visits Scully 's apartment and shows her a newspaper article about Kenneth Soona 's murder . When she returns to FBI headquarters , the metal detector curiously goes off . Scully presents Skinner with the newspaper article , thinking that the data from Soona 's death can clear Mulder in his father 's murder . Skinner , however , refuses to do any follow @-@ up on it . Leaving the building , Scully has a hunch upon seeing the metal detector again that leads to locating metal in the back of her neck . Scully sees a doctor , who removes a small metal implant .

Scully 's sister Melissa urges her to see a hypnotherapist to recover lost memories of her abduction . Scully heads there , but becomes scared and stops the session . Returning home , Scully finds Skinner leaving her apartment and driving off ; he later denies being there . Mulder , recovered from the Blessing Way ritual , is told by Albert that he cannot bathe or change clothes for four days . Scully heads to Boston to attend Bill 's funeral , where she introduces herself to Mulder 's mother , Teena . At the cemetery , Scully is approached by a Syndicate member known as the Well @-@ Manicured Man , who warns her that she is about to be killed , either by a pair of assassins or by someone she knows . Mulder goes to Connecticut and questions Teena about an old photo of his father standing with the other members of the Syndicate in front of a mysterious building .

Melissa calls Scully and tells her she is coming over . After receiving a call from someone who

immediately hangs up , Scully leaves her apartment and tells Melissa that she 'll head to her home instead . As she leaves , Skinner pulls up in his car , telling her they need to speak in private . Melissa shows up soon afterwards and is mistakenly shot by Luis Cardinal , who is hiding there with Alex Krycek . Realizing they shot the wrong person , the two flee . Meanwhile , after taking Skinner to Mulder 's apartment , Scully holds him at gunpoint , believing he is the traitor the Well @-@ Manicured Man spoke of . Skinner tells Scully that he is in possession of the digital tape . Just then , someone steps outside the door . This distracts Scully enough for Skinner to pull out his gun on her .

= = Production = =

Series creator Chris Carter felt this was one of his favorite episodes to write , as he found it interesting to explore how the character of Fox Mulder would react to the death of his father . Carter had recently lost a parent himself when he began work on the episode . Frank Spotnitz said of the episode " The expectations were very high coming after a summer 's worth of anticipation to see how Mulder got out of the boxcar . We knew we had to answer that question and still leave an intriguing enough dilemma at the end of the show to bring viewers back for the third and final part . I also thought it was a big gamble to do all that Indian mysticism stuff . I thought a lot of people would not necessarily respond to that . So I was nervous about that , but very excited about the Scully storyline and the way all of that played out with Mulder and Skinner . " Carter attended Navajo chants and rituals to ensure the accuracy of the events in this episode , after being alerted to inaccuracies in the previous episode by Navajo scholars . A sand painter was brought in to create the two sand paintings for the Blessing Way sequence , which took an entire day to create . The scenes set in New Mexico were filmed in the same Vancouver quarry that had been used as a stand @-@ in in the previous episode , " Anasazi " , the repainting of which required only minor touch @-@ ups .

Visual effects producer Mat Beck considered the sequence where Fox Mulder has a vision of Deep Throat and his father the most difficult of the season . The end of the episode reads " In Memoriam , Larry Wells , 1946 - 1995 . " Wells was a costume designer on the show . Mark Snow slightly changed the piano melody from the opening theme music (and the corresponding shortened theme in the credits) from the first two seasons in this episode . The music would remain unchanged for several years . The title of the episode refers to the Navajo ceremony of the Blessing Way . This is the first episode where Mitch Pileggi is credited under Also Starring in the opening credits .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" The Blessing Way " premiered on the Fox network on September 22 , 1995 , and was first broadcast in the United Kingdom on BBC Two on September 12 , 1996 . The episode earned a Nielsen household rating of 12 @. @ 3 with a 22 share , meaning that roughly 12 @. @ 3 percent of all television @-@ equipped households , and 22 percent of households watching television , were tuned in to the episode . A total of 19 @. @ 94 million viewers watched this episode during its original airing , making it the most viewed episode of the third season .

= = = Reviews = = =

" The Blessing Way " received mixed reviews from critics . The episode , along with both other parts of the story arc , were listed concurrently as the second @-@ best episode of the series by Den of Geek 's Nina Sordi . Sordi noted that the plotline " laid the groundwork for the mythology arc for the rest of the series " , adding that it " brought much more significance to what is to come " . John Keegan , writing for Critical Myth , gave the episode a largely positive review and rated it a 10 out of

10 . Keegan described it as the " perfect counterpoint to Anasazi " and a " strong beginning to the third season " . Other reviews were more mixed . In an overview of the third season in Entertainment Weekly , " The Blessing Way " was rated a B + . The episode was derided for its " corny dream sequence and high @-@ flown cosmic hooey " , although the introduction of the Well @-@ Manicured Man and Mitch Pileggi 's portrayal of Walter Skinner were seen as highlights . Writing for the A.V. Club , Todd VanDerWerff panned the episode 's " pseudo @-@ mystical bullshit " , rating the episode a B- . He felt that the resolution of the cliffhanger from the previous episode " Anasazi " ? that of Mulder 's apparent death ? was poorly handled , and that the character of Albert Hosteen was perhaps the worst in the series . However , the introduction of plot threads such as Scully 's implant and the alien @-@ human hybrids were deemed positive factors .

David Duchovny was somewhat disappointed with the episode , hoping he would have had a chance to do more in an episode that was primarily a symbolic journey for him rather than a real one . The actor said " I like the psychology , and I like the thinking that went into the episode as a viewer . As an actor , I felt like an opportunity passed me by . If I had to do any episode over again , it would be that one . " The actor called the episode in 1995 the greatest missed opportunity they had . Chris Carter disagreed , stating that Fox Mulder 's role in the episode was the right way to do it , and that the dramatic weight for the episode had to shift from Mulder to Dana Scully .