

CHAPTER NINE

Working for a Living

*You can't get what you want,
'Til you know what you want.*

—Joe Jackson

It is conceivable that I would not hire me. That's correct, there's a definite downside to employing a maverick who has no interest in currying favor. Many bosses absolutely want obsequious people around them. That's how incompetents survive.

Quick story I have already told, but it's worth a repeat. Martin Van Buren became president of the United States because he kissed Andrew Jackson's tush. As Old Hickory's vice president, Van Buren agreed with *everything* his boss said even before the words were fully formed. "The Little Magician," as Martin was called, turned toadyism into an art form and is responsible for the most used word in the world: *okay*.

How? Well, Van Buren's other nickname was "Old Kinderhook," after his New York hometown. Soon, it was shortened to OK, which became slang for "fine with me."

Today, in every part of the planet, *okay* is understood.

In 1836, Van Buren won the presidency off the incredibly popular Jackson's endorsement. He was a one-term disaster because vexing problems are not often solved by sycophants.

Anyway, office politics haven't changed very much in two hundred years; kissing up remains very prevalent.

But not with me.

The counter to my defiant workplace attitude is that I have always labored extremely hard. If you pay me, I never phone it in. I've made money for every company or person who's ever hired me.

The O'Reillys are workers. In County Cavan, Ireland, my ancestors had a two-acre farm that supported a growing family until the dastardly British overlords stole the land. These thieves raised taxes so high, most small farmers couldn't pay. Confiscation followed. In 1868, my people packed it in for Brooklyn, where they worked anywhere that would hire them. Twin sixteen-year-old boys made the voyage from Galway on a "coffin ship." They were given free passage in return for tossing dead bodies overboard into the Atlantic Ocean.

Obviously, life was a struggle back then. There were few safety nets other than personal generosity. You worked for food and shelter. Very basic. My ancestors always labored. On my mother's side, three sisters took jobs in a hat factory for paltry wages. My grandfather was a porter on trains to Canada. My other grandfather was a cop. Money was always tight.

In fact, I am the first member of my family to become affluent. After 150 years of working-class status in America, I left that status behind. But it was a very difficult climb.



Here's what has to change today. The work ethic in America is on the decline. That's what the socialism thing is all about. Statistics say half of US homes receive some kind of means-tested welfare. Millions of these folks feel they are entitled to government-funded programs. Free stuff. Food, shelter, childcare, healthcare, transportation. Give me, give me, give me.★

★ As of March 2026, approximately 104 million Americans aged sixteen or older were not in the labor force. These individuals are classified as "not in the labor force" because they are neither employed nor actively looking for work, a category that in-

There's something wrong with that attitude. It erodes ambition, crushes spirits, creates massive dependency.

It's not everyone. Some individuals, through no fault of their own, need help. It would be cruel to turn away from them.

However, grifters abound. Venal politicians goad and patronize the less fortunate. Votes are cast. Bernie Sanders is the worst. The Communist Senator from Vermont runs around vilifying successful Americans, positing that the system should take things away from them for "redistribution."

Sanders knows communism and socialism have never worked. Human nature runs contrary to punishing achievement. The only way to impose forced redistribution is by the gun. Totalitarianism. The Chinese model.

Old Bernie doesn't care. He sets up class warfare. He panders to the jealous. He sells victimization. The American way is responsible if you fail—not *you*. The intellectually dishonest Elizabeth Warren does the same thing. Here's her take. Fail, it's a racist society's fault. The US is a corrupt country catering to wealthy, White men. They are evil. Socialism is good. Don't depend on yourself, depend on a government that has debt approaching \$40 trillion.

I once asked the very liberal actor Warren Beatty if he supported income redistribution. Of course, he said he did. We were having dinner in Santa Monica, California. His wife Annette Bening was in attendance, as was Al Pacino. Annette loathes me. I believe I amuse Pacino.

Anyway, as we ate expensive appetizers, the conversation centered on how seizing assets from the affluent through onerous taxation or other means can be justified. I questioned Beatty: Why should my (and his) hard-earned tax money be given to layabouts and substance abusers? How can you justify that?

I thought Annette was going to throw some calamari at me. Warren didn't really have an answer other than helping people is good.

cludes retirees, students, stay-at-home parents, and discouraged workers. Each year, the federal government pays out \$4 trillion in welfare and other subsidies.

And it IS good. As long as some phony power seekers don't impose it and the money is responsibly spent.

Here's what should be taught in every school: Hard work and honesty are the keys to economic success. You are not "entitled" to other people's stuff. You are compelled to develop skills so you can compete in a capitalist society.

Dependency is bad. Self-sufficiency is good. The United States offers more opportunity and options than anywhere else, which is why millions of foreign nationals are trying to get in here.

If schools would pound home those themes to the urchins, America would be a stronger country and an overall better place.

Or am I wrong?



My father never gave me a dime. A child of the Great Depression, he believed another economic disaster was inevitable. So, he harbored his money. Big time. We lived extremely modestly in Levittown, Long Island, and so did everyone else in that gigantic community. But when the Good Humor man showed up in the summer, I needed cash for a toasted almond bar.

My mother usually came through.

But I didn't like asking her for the twenty-five cents. Or matinee movie money to see *House on Haunted Hill* at the Westbury Theater (still there). So, at age ten, my work life began.

My friends and I shoveled snow in the winter (no global warming then). Cut lawns in the summer. When I turned twelve, babysitting became an option. If there was work to do in the neighborhood, we were up for it.

At seventeen, I got a job at a Carvel ice cream stand. I made \$1.30 an hour. Free malts and hot fudge sundaes. But I had to pay some small tax. Money was not piling up.

At eighteen I passed the lifeguard and water safety instructor test. Better money teaching little kids to swim and sauntering around the pool like a big shot. But gassing up my old Nash Rambler and buying lunch was a drain. I needed to move up salary-wise.

So, I started a house painting business.

Here's the scenario. There were hundreds of houses in Levittown that needed fresh paint every few years. Most husbands in said houses worked their butts off during the week, and the absolute last thing they wanted to do during their time off was stand on a ladder sloshing paint around.

These guys couldn't afford the pros, but I, already a junior capitalist, undercut the professional painting estimates by a significant amount.

The work poured in.

Unfortunately, I had to hire four friends to do the labor. One was an excellent painter. I was so-so. The other three were certified menaces.

However, we mostly did a decent job, and word got around. Big money for the soon-to-be college student. My father loved the whole thing. I paid my way.

Painting is hard work. My kids wouldn't even think of it, and they are not lazy. But back then, we were willing to put those ladders up, fight the wasps, and get two coats down fast. Another job awaited.

There were always problems. One guy did not like ladder work and was so shaky, he dropped his paint on a bush. An expensive bush. I immediately draped a drop cloth over the green growth, which was now white.

The house was completely dark when we came back around 11:00 p.m. armed with small axes. The shrub quickly disappeared.

Two days later, the job was finished. I always did a walk around with the customer before payment was made. The house itself looked good. Shining white shingles, dark-green trim.

The guy turns to me and says, "Looks okay, but there's something different."

Whereupon I replied, "People always tell us that because fresh paint really changes things."

He handed me a check made out to "cash." We shook hands. I'm going to hell.



As mentioned earlier, my first “real” job after graduating from college was teaching high school.

Monsignor Edward Pace High is a Catholic institution designed to educate working-class students. The rich kids attend Christopher Columbus High School down the Palmetto Expressway.

Pace is in a bad neighborhood six miles north of Miami—which is another world. Young teachers at the school were paid next to nothing, but the administration did secure a place to live for a couple of guys arriving from the North.

“You’ll like the apartment complex,” the principal told me on the phone. “It has a pool.”

And it did. One problem. When we pulled up to our new quarters, there was a refrigerator at the bottom of said pool. And our neighbors looked like they had just been paroled from Raiford Prison.

We quickly sought other accommodations.

At twenty-two years old, I was a good teacher of History and English. The original Mr. Kotter, if you can remember the *Welcome Back* guy. But a reoccurring theme began to emerge. I did it my way.

Pace was a rough-hewn place. Students sniffing glue was big in 1972. So was bullying kids who were different. I did not brook any of that.

“Mr. O’Reilly” was a tough guy. My senior class learned that in a hurry. One day a student named Annette called me Bill. She was three years younger than me.

Looking stern, I asked Annette to stand up. The class was mesmerized. A confrontation. A test of the inexperienced teacher. I was calm.

“Ms. Brown [not her real last name], you know it’s against class rules to address me by my first name. Why did you do it?”

The young lady blushed heavily, the class now totally silent. “I don’t know,” she finally answered.

“Well, I do. You were displaying immaturity. I hope it doesn’t happen again.” I gave her my Clint Eastwood squint-eyed look. She sat down.

All over for the disrupters. Embarrassing teenagers in front of their

peers is horrific for them. That solidified my profile. Don't mess with this guy.

I felt sorry for Annette and, a short time later, spoke with her privately. She understood and did well in the class, which was run with fairness and efficiency. Every kid who wanted to learn did. There was no chaos.



There's one more important point about kids learning the value of work. Throughout the school year, a few parent-teacher conferences occurred. The smart and motivated students were always represented by their family members, who wanted to hear praise.

The parents of failing kids never showed because they didn't care. No government can legislate good parenting, and most of the social problems that plague the US are driven by derelict or absent mothers and fathers. This is an unsolvable problem.

My job as a teacher was to mitigate as much parental damage as I could. Millions of other teachers do the same thing. But, sadly, we are heavily outnumbered by bad parents. A national shame.

After two years in the classroom (a miracle I wasn't sacked), I decided to use my God-given talents, writing and bloviating, in a larger way.

Hello, journalism.



My first job in broadcasting was in Scranton, Pennsylvania, Joe Biden's hometown and a working-class depot. Nice folks, generally speaking, in northeastern Pennsylvania.

I had just graduated from Boston University with a master's degree in broadcast journalism and was ready to take Walter Cronkite's job on day one.

But old Walter was 120 miles east in New York City. I was twenty-five years old but understood the world. I had to work my way up. I had to sacrifice, live in a tough place, work my butt off.

I was willing to do those things. Many young Americans today are not. They want the free bus rides New York's Communist Mayor Zohran Mamdani promises.

Graduate school had methodically taken all my savings, so I was tapped. Apartments in Scranton required a deposit that I did not have because WNEP-TV was paying me \$200 a week before taxes. No debit card for me. I was lucky I had toothpaste.

The station was family owned, and the general manager, Tom Shelburne, was sympathetic when I explained that I would have to live in my car unless I found some way to earn extra money. Grooming would suffer if I had to do that.

The GM had a solution; the station would pay me \$25 more a week if I wrote the script for *Uncle Ted's Ghoul School*.

My reply to the offer was short: "What?"

"Uncle Ted" was a local personality in his late fifties who knew the barstool count in every saloon within ten miles. On Saturday night at 11:30, he would host a horror movie program. Think *I Was a Teenage Werewolf* or *The Wasp Woman*. It was a live production.

Ted's job was to darken his eyes with mascara and introduce the commercials with some witty banter. That's where I came in.

Uncle Ted had no sense of humor, could barely read the giant cue cards, and was nasty to boot. Lots of F-words in the brief rehearsal. After two weeks, I told Ted we needed to have a "talk."

I am six four, around two hundred pounds. Ted could have played the head "munchkin" in *The Wizard of Oz*. Again, using my Eastwood squint, I advised Ted that unless he started reading the cards energetically, three of my friends would beat him silly and tie him to a tree in the Poconos. I went on to say that although I did not want that to happen, I was powerless because my friends were not liking the show. However, if Ted improved, maybe they would start enjoying the broadcast again and not assault him.

On Monday, I was called into the GM's office.

"Did you threaten Ted?"

"Certainly not. Why would you think that?"

“Because he is refusing to come to work next Saturday.”

“Oh, no.”

The GM actually laughed. “Just lay off him. We’re making about four hundred bucks a show no matter what he does.”

I nodded. And get this: Ted’s presentation improved a bit. Especially after I brought three big guys in to watch the *Ghoul School* in person.



From Scranton, I moved up fast. Dallas, Denver, primary anchor job in Hartford, Connecticut. Then my agent got the call: WCBS-TV in New York wanted the big Irish guy. I came home.

Loved Channel 2. And I didn’t change my style a bit. Whatever assignment they gave me, I turned in a good report. Wasn’t easy. New York City is a hard place, especially when you’re on the streets doing live on-camera stuff. Almost every time, a variety of miscreants would appear out of nowhere to jump around behind me, spouting gibberish.

Had to stop that without committing felonies. So, I selected the biggest guy on every location, gave him ten bucks, and put him in charge of “crowd control.” Also, I gave him my business card. I had large pals all over the city.

But most of all, I did what I always did: worked damn hard. Took no guff. From anyone.

Back up for that. Shortly before St. Patrick’s Day, circa 1981, I was assigned to cover Governor Hugh Carey, who was falling in the polls. Data showed that Carey’s new wife, a society woman named Evangeline Gouletas, was one of the reasons why.

The governor was attending an Irish event in midtown and worked a receiving line alongside Evangeline. All were polite and deferential until the pair reached the end of the queue. Standing there was yours truly backed by a cameraman.

Now, Hugh Carey was not a man to be trifled with, and the New York City political press corps did not often confront him. But on this night, the rules of engagement changed.

"Governor, Bill O'Reilly, Channel 2. I have a question about the latest polling."

"I know who you are," Carey snarled.

I immediately sensed disenchantment.

"Your approval rating is down significantly, and some say your wife may be part of the reason." I was low-key with the statement, not accusatory. "Any comment?"

"You're rude. Can't you see my wife is right here?"

"Hi, Mrs. Carey." I thought the governor was going to hit me when I said that.

"I'm not answering your F-ing question!" Carey thundered. Then proceeded to insult me and Channel 2 (for employing me) in a four-minute bash fest. The diatribe made Donald Trump look like Mr. Rogers.

The governor finally strode away. His state trooper guards stared at me, although I think one guy grinned.

We raced back to the studio on Fifty-Seventh Street to edit for the eleven o'clock news. Lead story. But when the producer saw the footage, there was no edit. They used the whole thing! Unheard of. I went on the set with anchor Roland Smith and the confrontational tape rolled. This is it, I thought, hero reporter! Man of the hour!

Uh, no.

The next day, WCBS news director Steve Cohen summoned me to his office. Raise, I thought. No. The station general manager, Ed Joyce, wanted to see us.

Us? Never a good sign.

Joyce was a bloodless bureaucrat who resembled Heinrich Himmler right down to the glasses. Few wanted to ride an elevator with him.

Cohen had warned me not to say ANYTHING. A good piece of advice, as it turned out. Sitting behind his desk, Joyce verbally punched me out for around five minutes. Something about "decorum" at CBS News.

I just stared at him while Cohen looked at his shoes. What the deuce was this? I politely asked a legitimate question. Yes, it was a sensitive issue, but, hey, this is the news business, right?

Wrong. This is the political power business.

On the way back to the newsroom, I asked Steve Cohen, a brilliant newsman, if I had done anything wrong. He shook his head no, but clearly he did not want this fight. I didn't blame him.

A few weeks later, I found out what really happened from a "well-placed source." It seems that Hugh Carey was buddies with the guy who ran CBS, Bill Paley. So, of course, Carey called Paley to bitch about me, your misunderstood, humble correspondent.

Paley called Joyce who called Cohen who called me. President Reagan might have been involved, but I can't confirm that. I'm being facetious, but the point is that politics intrudes on journalists all the time.

The one positive in this tale is that I gained respect in the newsroom. No fear leads to that. I went back to doing my job the same way I had always done it. And then, something startling happened.



Ed Joyce got promoted to the CBS national news. Goodbye, local. Hello, Dan Rather. And Joyce wanted ME to go with him.

Hard to believe, but it's absolutely true. Maybe they wanted me dead. The offer was to cover the chaos in Latin America. War in El Salvador, Sandinistas, Contras, all of that. I would be based in Miami. For one of only a few times in my life, I didn't know what to do.

By this time, I was anchoring on the weekends alongside Lester Holt! We were both considered rising stars at WCBS, but our styles were totally opposite. Lester, a good guy, was very calm. I was a bit more, shall we say, unrestrained.

The Channel 2 station manager, Ron Tindiglia, invited me to dinner to talk about the CBS offer. Ron was a television genius. He flat out told me *not* to take the national job. He wouldn't say why, but I could feel there was something brewing that I didn't yet understand. I did consider what Ron said and very much appreciated his candor.

But I took the offer. Couldn't resist the big stage.

I should have listened to Ron.



I will digress a bit before we get to a terrible thing that happened to me at CBS News.

If you work for a company, you are essentially powerless. That's a significant situation. I am a member of SAG, the Screen Actors Guild, a fairly powerful union. But although I paid heavy dues, the guild could not help me or anyone else who was treated unfairly. Salary guidelines and healthcare, yes. Beefs with management, no.

That's reality in the workplace. It is far better to run your own operation, as I do now. But corporate America does provide opportunities and money. However, you will have to swallow some ill-tasting stuff. That should be highlighted in every American school.

It is not.

The absolute truth is this: It is not enough to do your job well in many places. I was naive to believe that it would be. So, I found out the hard way.



The year was 1982. Ronald Reagan in the White House, Central America on fire. The civil war in El Salvador was raging with no rules of engagement. Communist guerrillas were trying to overthrow an authoritarian government that did not respect human rights. Neither did the reds.*

Activist nuns were murdered. So was Archbishop Oscar Romero. Bodies all over the place. The US backed the government but knew their supplicants were essentially gangsters. However, the "muchachos" were considered worse because of their ties to the Communist Nicaraguan Sandinistas and Cuba.

Enter O'Reilly.

* The Salvadoran Civil War (1979–1992) in 1982 was marked by escalating violence, heavy US support for the right-wing military government, and major Communist guerrilla offensives. A defining 1982 event was the El Calabozo massacre in August, where government forces killed over two hundred civilians. The year also saw the Battle of Ilopango Airport in January, where guerrillas destroyed significant air force assets.



The Air Florida flight from Miami circled the airport at San Salvador. From my window seat, I saw tanks ringing the runway. Ninety minutes ago, I could buy a postcard with a flamingo on it in South Florida. Now a very dark scenario awaited.

After checking into the hotel, I went to the CBS suite for “orientation.” Nobody was friendly. Today they call it “welcoming.” Didn’t bother me.

Orientation was straightforward: Don’t get killed like ABC News correspondent Bill Stewart. In 1979, Stewart, thirty-seven, and his twenty-six-year-old translator, Juan Espinoza, were covering the Sandinista revolution in Managua, Nicaragua. The two stepped out of their van at a government checkpoint and were shot dead.

The horrific executions were photographed by an ABC employee inside the vehicle. The footage shows Stewart being forced to kneel down, then shot in the head.

The soldiers who killed Stewart and Espinoza were part of dictator Anastasio Somoza’s brutal army. Somoza, a brutish thug, was supported by the Carter administration. But the national outcry over Stewart’s murder shown to the world pretty much ended that. A short time later, Somoza fled to Miami, then to Paraguay, where he was assassinated.

After being briefed on Stewart (never go to your knees), another tape was presented. A Dutch photographer shot in the head filming a firefight in El Salvador. Journalist jargon for bullets flying is “bang, bang.”

Don’t know why, but the violent videos didn’t scare me. However, I understood the danger. No question.

My primary assignment was quickly made clear: find out about a rumored massacre in the remote province of Morazán, a mountainous area where the rebels roamed. Who did it? How many died? Fine with me. Four of us jumped in a large van: cameraman, sound guy, driver/interpreter, and me, your very green network correspondent.

The journey was slow because bridges over streams had been blown up and we had to wade through water. Eventually, we rolled into San Francisco Gotera, the capital of Morazán. *Todo bueno*. At least, so far.

The government held a fort in town, and we drove on in. As the cab driver told James Bond in *Live and Let Die*, “I hope you make friends easy!”

Not always. A captain walked out to inspect our credentials and was respectful. But behind him were three men hanging from a scaffold, ropes tied to their wrists. “Muchachos?” I asked, using slang for Communist guerrilla fighters.

“No, señor. Mi hombres.”

My men? What?

It seemed the three had fallen asleep on guard duty the previous night. The public punishment was an obvious warning to the Salvadoran garrison: Stay alert.

The captain, a short, well-dressed officer, denied knowing about any massacre. He offered lunch, explaining there was nowhere else to eat. We accepted.

When I mentioned our assignment was to locate the alleged combat zone, he smiled, shook his head. “Muy arriesgado.”

Sí, dangerous.

Two hours later we rolled up to a deserted town. No trace of anything human. A few dead farm animals. No idea what happened.

And that's what I said in my report that aired on *CBS Weekend News*. I actually called home from the hotel back in San Salvador to alert my parents to watch. My father answered the phone. “Where are you?” he asked.

“El Salvador. Remember I told you I'd be covering the war?”

“Right. Here's your mother.”

I soft-pedaled everything, not wanting to worry the folks. “I'm fine, Mom, the story will be on Channel 2 at 6:30.”



Years later, the incredibly vicious left-wing magazine *Mother Jones* accused me of faking my war coverage. *Politico*, *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and CNN all picked up the lies. Their goal was to damage me, a commentator they loathed.

I was a bit disturbed. Well, maybe more than a bit.

But then an extraordinary thing happened. Out of nowhere, Don Browne, the NBC Bureau Chief in Miami, stepped up and defended me.

"I was surprised by the article," Browne said. "I was overseeing the coverage in El Salvador. It was a brutal war. [O'Reilly] was there to cover the war. He came down to get his ticket punched and he did."

Which means I did my job. Not one of the media organizations that smeared me issued a retraction. Why bother with that? Why seek the truth? We don't like O'Reilly. So, let's get him.

I will always be grateful to Don Browne. There was nothing in it for him. Honest people are hard to find. Especially in the media.

With my ticket punched in El Salvador, the CBS brass then handed me an airline ticket to Argentina. And that is where my working life changed.



The Pan American jet from Rio de Janeiro to Buenos Aires landed at Ezeiza Airport in the early afternoon. I alighted, looking for the CBS driver who was supposed to take me to the Sheraton Hotel, the American media headquarters for the Falklands War.

But no driver was present. So, I hopped into a cab for the twenty-two-mile journey.

About an hour later, I strolled into the CBS News suite, a bunch of connected rooms full of tech gear, desks, TV monitors.

"O'Reilly reporting for duty," I said to Larry Doyle, the bureau chief.

"What are you doing here? Nobody told me you were coming."

This was an omen.

"Just doing what New York asked. Here's my ticket, and they did have my room reservation."

Doyle was not pleased. "Okay, find a desk."

My pal Bernie Goldberg, a CBS correspondent for twenty-two years, explained to me in 2025 what I did not understand way back when. "They didn't like you because you were a local news hotshot and the network people look down on local news. Plus, you're you."

Ah, yes, me.

A few days after being hired by the *Rather* crew, I rode in an elevator with *60 Minutes* commentator Andy Rooney, who, unprompted, looked way up at me and said, "You'll never make it."

Nice to meet you, too, Andy.

Anyway, I didn't know anything about Larry Doyle and the CBS squad in Buenos Aires. Correspondents Bob Schieffer and Eric Engberg, as well as radio reporter Chuck Gomez, were on site. I had no experience with any of them. That would change fast.



Without a doubt, the battle over the useless Falkland Islands was one of the most foolish conflicts in world history. On April 2, 1982, Argentine military strongman Leopoldo Galtieri ordered an "invasion" of the Malvinas, which is what Argentina calls the Falkland Islands.

Why? Well, Argentina's economy was falling apart, so a diversion was needed. The old "wag the dog" strategy. One problem: The cold and windy place had been under British control since 1690, a rest port for English mariners sailing to the Pacific.

Three days after the invasion, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher dispatched a bunch of warships to the South Atlantic. At first, President Reagan stayed "neutral." But he wasn't really neutral. He and "Maggie" were fast friends, so US intelligence was covertly helping the Brits.

An interesting footnote. The late Pope Francis was an influential priest in Buenos Aires at the time and supported the Falklands War. If he had not, he and his fellow Argentine Jesuits would have been in grave danger—the fascist military was not above throwing dissident priests out of helicopters.



For a month, nothing much happened. Argentine soldiers, based in Port Stanley, patrolled the island, frightening the sheep. There were only a few hundred British subjects living there, and they lay low.

Finally, the mini-armada arrived.

Almost immediately the Argentine cruiser *General Belgrano* was destroyed, leaving 323 dead. But there were no reporters on the islands, and the military government censored all war news anyway. Galtieri often appeared on television telling the world his forces were kicking butt.*

Then, the Argentine Air Force, armed with powerful Exocet missiles, scored a hit. The HMS *Sheffield* sank quickly, twenty Brits killed, nearly one hundred wounded, some gravely burned.

I, your humble correspondent, was dispatched to Montevideo, Uruguay, where the hurt British sailors were being taken for treatment. Harrowing scene as stretchers were unloaded from a transport ship. Uruguay was neutral but very hostile to American reporters. Sullen soldiers kept us penned up on a dock for eight hours. No food, water, or facilities. And it was cold. Tough assignment.

Finally, the scene unfolded. I spoke with two of the wounded who were ambulatory. Others were wrapped like mummies because of severe burns.

We sent our story via satellite to Buenos Aires. It was then transmitted to New York for the Rather broadcast. But when it aired that night, there was no sign of me. CBS News had “folded” my footage and interviews into another report voiced by Bob Schieffer, who had not left the hotel in Buenos Aires.

Not good. I remembered my dinner with Ron Tindiglia.

* Leopoldo Fortunato Galtieri (1926–2003) was an Argentine Army general who served as the de facto president of Argentina from December 1981 to June 1982 during the final, brutal military dictatorship known as the National Reorganization Process (1976–1983). A hardline anti-Communist, he is best remembered for ordering the disastrous 1982 invasion of the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas), which led to his downfall and accelerated the return of democracy to Argentina. He died from a heart attack in 2003 at the age of seventy-six.



On June 13, 1982, Argentine troops occupying the Falklands surrendered. But remember, the people thought their country was winning. Almost immediately, street riots broke out.

I was summoned. Taking two camera crews, which I knew would be needed, we drove the short distance to the presidential palace, called the Casa Rosada (pink house). It was here, years back, that Eva Peron addressed the folks who stood listening in the Plaza del Mayo.

Now standing before the palace was a huge crowd, screaming their collective brains out. They wanted Galtieri's head. A tight line of government soldiers stood in protection mode behind a palace iron fence. Some in the agitated crowd threw rocks and coins at the soldiers, who had shields along with their automatic weapons.

I positioned one camera guy to the left and took the other with me to the right. Suddenly, a bunch of trucks pulled into the palace courtyard. Shock troops.

Tear gas was fired, then incredibly, a few of the troops fired live rounds into the mob. People dropped; most ran, trampling anyone in their path.

My cameraman, a freelance South American named Roberto Moreno, was standing on a sidewalk taping the scene when panicked demonstrators knocked him to the ground. His gear went flying. Apparently, he hit his head on the concrete because blood trickled from his ear. He was clearly concussed.

While dragging Roberto into a doorway, I shouted at the soundman to get the crushed camera and the tape—which he did.

We stood in the doorway for a short time trying to figure out an exit strategy. Then more chaos. A few young, heavily armed soldiers appeared. One lifted his rifle in our direction. Immediately, I looked him in the eye. Showing fear in Latin America can be a death sentence, as I learned in El Salvador.

Clearly, I stated, "Periodistas, no despare, por favor." Journalists, please don't shoot.

The soldier was now about ten yards away. He looked to be a teenager. He didn't fire.

To this day, I cannot describe the adrenaline flow.

We had a designated meeting place for our van, directly behind the palace. In fact, there were two CBS vehicles. I put the dazed Roberto Moreno in the back seat and told the driver to go to the closest hospital.

Then the other driver, me, and the sound guy sped back to the Sheraton. The tape was not damaged.



Before we get to the conclusion of this saga, I want to clearly state why I am writing it. This chapter is about working for a living, which is imperative if you want to live a productive life. However, the workplace can be treacherous and unfair. Somewhere down the road, you are likely to be hurt. When that happens, you have to accept the situation and change course. If you don't, the bad people win.



As with Governor Carey, I thought my reporting was going to be rewarded with many accolades. Perhaps a standing O when I entered the CBS suite at the Sheraton.

Not exactly.

As I walked through the office to debrief Larry Doyle, I had blood on my jacket and smelled of tear gas.

Eyeing me warily were Bob Schieffer and his lackey Eric Engberg. I did not see them at the Casa Rosada. Maybe they were undercover or something. Perhaps they remembered Bill Stewart.

I handed the video to the techs, alerted Doyle about Moreno, and sat down to write my story.

Then all hell broke loose.

Almost snarling, Schieffer, one of Dan Rather's main men, demanded that I give him my notes.

My emotional reply was succinct and began with an *F*. I certainly was not expecting this.

Schieffer said something to the effect that I would be in deep trouble if I didn't give him my notebook. And then he said, "I heard you put your cameraman in danger. Well, we'll have to look into that."

I bolted up from the chair and gave the guy a shove he'll never forget, propelling him across the room. I said something like, "Get away from me, you jerk. This is my story."

But it wasn't.

A bunch of techs saved Schieffer's butt, dragging me away from him. Shock in the bureau. I appealed to Doyle, who told me to leave and cool off.

Schieffer never got the notebook, but a few hours later, he stood on the rooftop of the Sheraton Hotel opening the *Rather* program. The pretense: He was on the riot scene. Again, I didn't see him. I am as angry about this today as I was forty-four years ago.*

There was absolutely nothing I could do. I was told Roberto Moreno was okay but never saw him again as CBS quickly got him out of Argentina. At least that was the rumor.

What happened to me in Buenos Aires is called "big footing." It's still around today in some news operations. It's corrupt, insidious, and there's no excuse for it. You don't steal other people's work.



Bernie Goldberg worked for CBS at the time, and, of course, the incident spread like Ebola throughout the company. I pretty much knew that I was done, and, years later, Bernie confirmed it.

"You bucked the system," Goldberg told me. "CBS News doesn't

* Bob Schieffer (born 1937) is an American television journalist who spent over forty years at CBS News, becoming renowned as a moderator of *Face the Nation* (1991–2015) and a staple Washington correspondent. Known for covering all four major DC beats—the White House, Pentagon, State Department, and Capitol Hill—he won eight Emmys and is a Broadcasting & Cable Hall of Fame inductee. Schieffer is active in his retirement, specifically engaging in art and recently returning to Texas for a 2026 exhibit featuring his work.

care about fairness. Dan Rather wanted his pals on the air, so that's what happened. What YOU wanted did not matter to them."

All true. All horrendous.



What Bob Schieffer did was outrageous. The hack Eric Engberg spread all kinds of false stories about the incident. The boys stuck together, and this time there was no honest knight like Don Browne. It was me alone against a corrupt system. But I had to make one final attempt to right this wrong: see Dan Rather himself.



Before we get to that showdown, there was one other on-the-record situation that happened during the ordeal in Buenos Aires. After Schieffer stole my story, I filed my version for the CBS "feed." That is a service provided to all television stations that are affiliated with the CBS network. The story ran about two minutes. The next day the CBS bureau in Buenos Aires received a text from New York.

CBS News New York to CBS News Buenos Aires

Doyle, O'Reilly, didn't have the time last night but would like to say many thanks for the riot piece last night. WCBS-TV and WCAU-TV both took the entire piece instead of stripping it for PIX. They called me to say thanks for a fine piece.

So, thanks again. Your piece made the late feed a winner last night.

That telegram did not help me at all, unfortunately. But it did back up what I was alleging. That I covered the story but did not appear in it on the Dan Rather program.

Shameful.



The man who pushed Walter Cronkite into retirement sat behind an expensive desk in his office on West Fifty-Seventh Street in New York

City. He wore a freshly pressed white shirt, suspenders, and dark suit pants from Saville Row in London. His jacket, which would be pressed just before airtime, hung on a hook behind the closed door.

I had gained audience through his agent, who did not want Rather dragged into a public spat with some young punk reporter who meant nothing to anyone.

Rather had already been briefed by Schieffer, Engberg, and Doyle, so no fair hearing was possible. I knew that.

But I had something to say to the Texan who came up the hard way and actually effectively covered stories in the field.

Rather was polite, and I suspected his secretary had been given a “short time” instruction. An important call would be announced in about five minutes. Dan, of course, would have to take that call—leading to my exit. That’s how this stuff works in the circles of power.

So, I looked him in the eye and began.

“What your crew did to me in Argentina was flat-out wrong. In my opinion, I should have led your program because I risked my life getting the story. Where was Schieffer? How can this be condoned?”

My tone was even. Rather’s face was blank. Then I moved in.

“What if, in Dealey Plaza, where you reported the assassination of JFK, some other correspondent not on the scene stole your footage and put his voice on your story? Would you be where you are today?”

No answer. Rather just sat there.

In late November 1963, Dan Rather was in Dallas covering President John F. Kennedy’s visit to a city that generally despised him. While riding in his motorcade, JFK was shot by Lee Harvey Oswald, a mentally unbalanced former marine. I spent years investigating the assassination, culminating in my book *Killing Kennedy*.

Dan Rather was first with the news that JFK had died. He monitored transmissions to Parkland Hospital. Excellent reporting. That and follow-up stories made Rather’s career.

I figured the comparison to my situation in Argentina was worth a shot. Didn’t work. Dan said he’d “look into the situation.”

Sure.

A few moments later, Rather's secretary buzzed saying he had to take a very important call.



Word got out about my confrontation in Argentina. Doom loop. Very quickly my agent got a call from Boston offering me an anchor job. Boston is a great place. The president of CBS News, Van Gordon Sauter, gave me a glowing letter of recommendation. I couldn't believe it was me he was writing about. But again, CBS News did not want a public airing of this.

Actually, what Sauter did was very kind. He knew I would be attacked down the road because of the confrontation. So, he provided me somewhat of a shield by praising my work.



No parting gifts from Rather, Schieffer, or Engberg, but I'm sure there was a bit of sneering whenever my name came up. I'm also sure they thought I was gone, baby, gone. Dead and buried in the world of national news.

They were wrong because America is a great place. Opportunity abounds. If you get up from adversity and then get down doing honest work.

Which I did.



Two fascinating footnotes to the CBS story. Years later, I ran into Dan Rather at some press event in New York City. I was the top-rated cable news anchor in the country and held the number one position on the *New York Times* bestseller list with, ironically, *Killing Kennedy*.

Rather approached, and our eyes met. "Bill, it's just triumph after triumph for you."

Many things could have been said. But I didn't say them. No reason to do it. I had eclipsed the man who would soon be forced out

of prominence for using false documents on a story about President George W. Bush.

Karma?



In 1986, I sat across from ABC News chief Rooney Arledge, who was offering me a job as a New York-based correspondent. Arledge was a cold-hearted, unapproachable man who founded *Monday Night Football* and shepherded Peter Jennings to anchorman superstardom. Most were intimidated by Arledge, but I was not. Probably because I didn't particularly want the job.

I had achieved success in Boston and very much liked the beat of the city. Did I really want to return to the corrupt culture at network news? No, I did not.

The reason for Arledge's interest was that he had seen me give the eulogy at my best friend's funeral. On January 21, 1986, ABC News correspondent Joe Spencer was killed in a wintry helicopter crash in Minnesota. Recently married, thirty-one years old. I cannot describe the pain experienced by his family and friends. My son is named after Spencer, as I always called him.

Peter Jennings was also set to speak at the mass. But Jennings didn't know Joe Spencer, which was a bit awkward. So, I pulled him aside in the sacristy before the service. "How long are you going to go, Mr. Jennings?"

I didn't know Peter at all. He was wary. "I don't know," he answered.

"Well, keep it tight because there's a ton of emotion in the church. Let's honor Joe Spencer with the facts. You take the journalism, I'll do the personal."

Now, a guy like Jennings was not used to being told to "keep it tight." But he was, as I learned, a good man. He nodded assent and walked to his seat.

The priest, a middle-aged Irishman, then said to me, "Did you just do that?"

Apparently so, Father, and I hope you "keep it tight, too."



Now sitting across from the legendary Arledge, I kept my gaze steady, my voice calm. We discussed his vision of my job, which was standard issue: We'll give you plenty of work. We need more firepower on the street.

My turn. I said something like this: I can handle the work. But please don't hire me if you're going to big foot or allow producers to call my shots. I do the story my way. If you'll promise that, I'll come down from Boston. If you break your promise, I will walk, and not quietly.

Up to you, Mr. Arledge. I admire what you've done in the industry. Thinking back, I think I stole the last line from Robert Duvall's Tom Hagen character in *The Godfather*, when he told the corrupt movie producer Woltz that he admired his films very much.

The Hollywood guy wound up with a horse's head in his bed.

I didn't have to go that far with ABC. Arledge said the right things, and I took the job for two reasons: to keep Joe Spencer's legacy alive, and to get blankin' revenge on CBS. Which I did.



From then on, your humble correspondent became a leading man. In 1988, tabloid television was raging. Shows like *A Current Affair* brought in big ratings. I got a call from two colleagues I had worked with at Channel 2 in New York. They were starting up a program called *Inside Edition*. At first I mocked them. Why would I leave ABC News, where I had appeared on *World News Tonight* more than one hundred times, for some dopey syndicated program that does stories about topless donut shops? The answer came back quickly: *Inside Edition* would double my salary and put a clause in my contract that said I could report on any story in the world that I wanted to cover.

That was extraordinary.

Word got around quickly. I was sitting in the makeup chair preparing to do an ABC News Brief when Peter Jennings walked in. "Are you blankin' crazy?" he asked me. "You're going tabloid?"

I explained to Peter the news coverage clause and the money aspect. Both he and I knew that I was never going to be a frontline anchor at ABC News. There were too many guys ahead of me named Forest and Stone, bluebloods whom ABC was much more comfortable with than some guy from Levittown.

Peter Jennings understood. He remains a major positive force in my life. In 2005, he died from lung cancer at the age of sixty-seven. I miss him to this day.



Inside Edition was a blast. I signed on as the chief correspondent and substitute anchor for the primary host, British TV guy David Frost. Frost was world renowned for his interview with Richard Nixon and for hobnobbing with movie stars. However, there was one problem.

David Frost had about as much in common with American blue-collar viewers as Nelson Rockefeller. He had no idea how people lived in the colonies. Nor did he care. Also, David was very fond of long lunches complemented by extensive wine lists. So, when he showed up for taping, he was not a smooth operator, as Sade once sang.

David Frost was fired within weeks of the show's debut.

I took over. Things were grim. Ratings were terrible. But I knew the audience. They did not necessarily want salacious garbage, but they didn't want to be bored, either. *Inside Edition* put together a daily roster of interesting hard news stories as well as the Madonna stuff. I did the tabloid nonsense with a wink, and often made fun of it. I wasn't making fun of the audience. I was basically sending a message that we really don't take the latest Hollywood scandals seriously.

What we did take seriously was Donald Trump. He dominated tabloid coverage in New York City at the time. I interviewed him with regularity. That began my friendship with the president.

Inside Edition turned into a smash hit. I anchored it for six years, making parent company King World hundreds of millions of dollars. But I never liked those people, and they certainly were not fond

of me. Why? Because I pretty much did what I wanted. What else is new? After two contract cycles, I decided to do something new. So, I went up to Cambridge, Massachusetts, to complete a master's degree at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. It was there that I designed *The O'Reilly Factor*.



On October 7, 1996, the Fox News Channel went on the air. It was designed to give conservative/traditional Americans a point of view they did not receive from the other broadcast networks. In fact, the Right was completely shut out of the television news process.

Fox News was backed by the Murdoch family. Big money. And it was immediately attacked by people like Ted Turner, who owned CNN. Mr. Turner said something like, "We'll squash them like a bug." My rejoinder was, "There isn't enough Raid in the world."

The rest is history. Fox News still dominates the cable news ratings and often beats the network news. My program, *The O'Reilly Factor*, was number one for sixteen consecutive years. A dominant number one. That will never be duplicated.

I could write ten books about Fox News. Suffice it to say, I did my job. I was well paid, worked extremely hard, developed a very capable staff, and basically succeeded at a level I never thought possible.

This could only happen in America, as I've said many times. Capitalism rules here. If people like your program, you will make money. If you make money, you will become very famous and affluent. And that's what happened to me.

Along the way I had to endure smears, attacks, defamation, you name it. That is "life in the fast lane," to use a terrible cliché that the Eagles are responsible for. Looking back, it was worth it. But the constant attacks did a lot of damage, no question about it. These are not worth relitigating here because the theme of this book is what is most important.



What is that theme? Here it is: Determined people can make it in America if they stay strong, honest, and engaged. You must perform. You don't have to sell your soul. The higher you want to fly in the marketplace, the more challenges you will face.

Finally, there is nothing wrong with settling down in a nice place with a good job and living a comfortable life. Most of my peers have done that. I'm the crazy one working for fifty years on the high wire. But that's what I wanted to do, and my success could only happen in the USA. Sorry, Portugal.

Today in America, millions want the government to help them through. Not me. I'm proudly independent and self-sufficient.

President Obama once told me on camera that the government helped me become a success, so I owed it. There's slight truth to that, and I pay enormous taxes in return for the opportunities I've received in the marketplace.

But, in reality, the government had little to do with my workplace failures and successes. I did the very heavy lift. I made the mistakes. That's what the founders gave all of us: a pathway of opportunity. But to negotiate the dollar world, you have to develop a clear vision and significant discipline.

It's all about will. With that, the way unfolds.