



Bob Schieffer

“Politics is the most interesting thing because it’s about human nature and it’s human nature in the raw, and it’s, uh, human nature with both the flaws, uh, and the, uh, good things exaggerated, and, uh, I, I think there’s nothing, uh, more interesting than watching humans react one-to-another, uh, because it’s the same and, if you go back through history, people are still jealous of the same things, they still, they still want the same things, uh, they still hate the same things, uh, the, the tools have changed but basically, uh, human desire, and, and, uh, what humans want is the same as always, I mean, I always, when I look up and sit up at the press gallery on the nights that the President addresses a joint session of the Congress, and I look down on the Congress, it really is, in a sense, the National Zoo, because when you look down there, you kind of see one example of every kind of American that we have and I don’t mean just from a standpoint of ethnicity, I mean on the standpoint of there are buffoons, they’re geniuses, they’re hard-working people, they’re, uh, they’re people who come at it from a, from a rural attitude, and others from an urban background. They’re all down there and all you have to do is look down there and see them and if you’re familiar with who they are, uh, you understand that there is one example of every kind of the species that we have down there on the House floor.”

“I saw my byline on top of the stories, and in type, I was just, uh, carried away, I just loved seeing it and I think from that day on, I decided that wanted I want to do was be a reporter . . . seeing that story set in type and seeing my name on it, it just, uh, it seemed very official and very impressive to me. And, I still get a kick out of seeing my byline.”

“. . . they were having the National Put-Put miniature golf championships out at Rockville, and I was sent out to, uh, cover that and do a story on that for the morning news and I’ll never forget my sign off, “Bob Schieffer, CBS News, at the National Put-Put championships at Rockville, Maryland.”

“. . . When you’re on the police beat, it’s unlike any other beat on the paper. When you generally arrive on the scene, you’re arriving at the worst time in somebody’s life, and, uh, I’ve always thought, for that reason, it is the best possible training that a young reporter can get. . . that training I had and other early years in the police beat calling in stories about fires and wrecks, uh, it served me well throughout my career.”

“I learned in Vietnam is that it is important, just as important, perhaps more important, to teach our young people about the temptations of war as it is to teach them to shoot straight and operate their weapons. When you’re sent into a war zone like that, you’re leaving behind all of the checks that we have on our behavior and by that I mean, you’re doing, you’re in a place where your parents won’t know what you did, where your friends

won't know what you did. You are sometimes all alone with people you don't really know and that is where the real test of character comes about and it's very important that, uh, these young people are trained to recognize that there's a good side of people, of human nature, and there's a bad side, and war can bring out the best side of people and sometimes it can bring out the worst."

"I remember, uh, the last week I was in Vietnam, I went into an amputee ward and, because I didn't want to go back in the field, I was coming home, and I didn't want to get killed the last week I was there, and so I went to do a story about these kids in the hospital, and when you come in and see them with their legs missing or their arms missing, sometimes both, it really comes to you that no matter how long it takes for people to decide if the war was right or if it was wrong, these people's arms and legs will never grow back and they will not be as God made them, they will be as war left them, and, and this is, uh, something that we have to remember."

"Well, the way that story happened, of course, is that, uh, I was in the sitting room of the Fort Star-Telegram, I was trying to help them simply answer phones and because it was a complete bedlam, as you can imagine, and I answered the phone and this woman said, "Is there anybody there that can give me a ride to Dallas?" and I said "Lady, ya know, we don't run a taxi service here and besides the President's been shot." And she said, "Yes, I heard it on the radio. I think my, uh, son is the one who's arrested." And I said, well, I was absolutely stunned. I was flabbergasted, uh, 1st, why would somebody call the Fort Star-Telegram looking for a ride, and 2nd, I, I quickly realized who this woman was and what the importance she played in this story. And, again, going back to my training, from those years done the police beat, I, I was thinking like a reporter. And I was thinking, "Wait a minute, this is the story, how do I get this story? How do I get this story 1st?" And so I said to her, "Look, tell me where you live, I'll come out and get you, uh, don't tell, don't answer the phone if anybody else calls." And, uh, so I already started, my reporter instincts kicked in, and that comes from training and that kind of training where you do it over and over again, uh, so I went out and got her, and, but I mean, when it 1st happened, I was just absolutely flabbergasted. I, I didn't know what to think but I quickly got my wits about me and, this is not the 1st time that I've been out covering something that something untoward happened or something unusual happened and so I was able to handle it in that way."

"That weekend, as the entire nation focused on this 1 tragic event and we all went through this together, in many ways it's the 1st time that the entire nation had gone through something like this together. And so there was this sort of bonding there, uh, that came about through watching television, but from that day forward, survey after survey, has shown that people begin to depend on television as their primary source of news. After that, people didn't really believe it sometimes until they saw it on TV. Uh, prior to that, they only believed it if they saw it written down, in black and white . . . I can recall being at various conventions and I might be, um, standing in a position where I had a camera there, uh, uh, a monitor. I could see what was going on on television. And I would have people inside a convention hall come up and want to look at my monitor because they wanted to see what it looked like on television. They were in the hall, yet

they wanted to see it on TV because they, because it wasn't sort of official to them until they saw it on TV."

"Seeing those pictures of the airplanes and there were other pictures that we never really showed on television of people jumping out of those buildings. It was so, so awful that not only did we not show them but I could never bring myself, after seeing a couple of them, to bring myself to watch it, it was just, it was just awful . . . It took me a while after that, uh, to get, you know, to, to just feel light again. I was just completely depressed. I, I was just exhausted, and, uh, I think a lot of people felt that way."

"We had an interview with the Secretary of State, we had an interview with both New York senators, we had reports from ground-zero, we talked to financial experts about the financial impact and, at the end of the day, uh, I went home that night feeling that we had really done about a good a job as you can do to bring this horrible thing into context. And what made me feel real good about it; we did it after, after, after CBS had been on the air for 90 some odd straight hours. We were all exhausted, uh, this was a hard story because it wasn't about other people, it was about us, and, and our families, and, and all of us had friends, uh, who were lost, who were hurt, uh, in that, and the fact that we're, we're able to do a very professional broadcast, uh, that we did it, uh, we had the right people on the broadcast and, as horrible as it was, I felt like we really did our job well that day."

"I think that the next set of anchormen, a generation of anchor people, uh, will never again have the kind of influence or recognition or power that, uh, Dan Rather, and Tom, and Peter have had . . . In 9/11, we found that a lot of people came back to the 3 networks because they were coming back to the familiar, and it's understandable, but that didn't last very long, and now, if we have another calamity like that, the familiar won't be there, so in order for people to come back to the networks I think that the way the programs are currently designed simply have to change . . .Everybody now has cable in their office. Everybody has access to the Internet. Most people who sit down to watch the news at 6:30 have already had an idea of what the news is . . . I think this idea of just kind of regurgitating the spot news of the day is simply, is simply not going to work, and so I think these programs have to evolve into something beyond what they are today if they're gonna survive. Otherwise, if they don't, then they are gonna go away like the afternoon newspapers went away. And, people watch the news because they think they need to watch the news. They don't watch it for entertainment. And, what we have to do is create the kind of program in the evening that people feel they need to watch in order to know what they feel they need to know, and I think it's just about that simple."

"I've always felt that a reporter can can learn to, uh, conduct his business in other circumstances because everybody that you're coming in contact with generally doesn't want you there, and so that's why it's so important that that's where you really learn how to, uh, not panic, how to keep your wits about you, how to get your job done in a professional manner and go on"

"Being objective, basically, uh, is simply giving both sides an opportunity to state their case. That's about all it amounts to. It's much easier to be fair than it is to, you know, to

divorce yourself of all emotions and being fair just means giving both sides an opportunity to give their side of the argument.”

“You know, if you keep your mind straight and thoughts straight when, when you know, you’re lookin’ at a family that’s just been killed in a car wreck or had been shot by some crazed madman who’s over here on the other side, uh, you don’t have to worry about bias in a case like that, what you have to worry about is not be carried away by your own emotions. You have to remain calm like a doctor has to be calm when he’s performing an operation. Uh, and if you, if you learn to do that, uh, then you can, you can learn to be objective.”

“Our editor, always insisted that, that we write the lead to our story . . . if you can figure out what the lead of the story is, then, what he was really doing was teaching us to think like reporters and, in other words, when you call up on the scene of something, in the back of my mind, you’re saying “What’s the story here? What’s the lead here?” And as you assemble more facts, you’re saying, “Wait a minute, that’s more important than this, that’s probably the lead.” He was teaching us to think as reporters and so, you know, I’ve dictated hundreds of stories from fires and car wrecks to murders over the phone just from my notes, and, uh, by doing that, it helps you to prioritize what’s important and what’s not important, and I’m always thankful for him, uh, to him for requiring us to do that because that’s how you really learn to be a reporter and even after I came to CBS in the days where there used to be prime-time news conferences at the White House, I’ve always had a good reputation for knowing what the lead was and the reason is, is that I could come out of those news conferences and have things started and, you know, you’re talking to somebody in New York, the anchorman, and then you’re able to say, “Uh, Walter, what’s important here is that the President said X or Y, he never said that before” or “When the President said that what we, what that means is this,” and you can offer instant analysis sometimes because you’re sitting in that news conference not just sitting there listening to the, to what the President is saying, you’re thinking about what, “Wait a minute, what’s the lead here?” And that’s always in the back of your mind so that training I had and other early years in the police beat calling in stories about fires and wrecks, uh, it served me well throughout my career.”

“If you’re on the beat and are covering the beat every day, you’ll find the big stories, and I still think that works better because I think you develop a certain expertise.”

On playing in the big game as moderator of the third Presidential debate:

“Being on television is like being a professional athlete. After a while, you get to where you’re not nervous playing in front of a crowd and it’s the same way with being on television after you’ve been on it a long time. But really, this was something beyond the normal assignment, you know, and, I have to admit that I really did have butterflies before I did it and, uh, once I got out on stage it was fine and as I was thinking about that, I thought, you know, if I’m nervous, I wonder how these two men feel because they’re the ones who have something to lose here, uh, and, uh, I just starting thinking about that once I got out there it was like when you play in the big game. Once they throw the 1st ball, you kind lose your, you kinda settle down and focus and that’s the way it was there.”

“The job, the role of the daily journalist, is simply to get at the truth and let people know what it is. Uh, on Face the Nation, uh, my philosophy is if we can get the information out there, the American people are smart enough to figure out what to do about it. Sometimes it takes them a while. Sometimes they don’t come to the right conclusions immediately, but if you look back at the history of our country, in the end, they generally figure it out, and, uh, and, and, and the country keeps going forward.”