

Interview Transcript

The Bill Buckmaster Show

Wednesday, May 27, 2020

BILL BUCKMASTER (host): Matthew Schwartz joins us, investigative reporter for KVOA Channel four here in Tucson. The award winning investigative reporter has hit a home run with a new book. It was just released this week. The title is *Confessions of an Investigative Reporter*. It is published by the international publishing house Koehler Books. Matthew joining us on The Live Line.

How are you, sir?

MATTHEW SCHWARTZ (guest): I am well, thanks for having me. What a great way to spend my lunch break, because I'm still working full time on KVOA. So it's nice to be with you.

BUCKMASTER: Talk a little bit about the good news you've received from Amazon, Matthew.

SCHWARTZ: Well, I'm overwhelmed that, you know, I just wrote this book to leave as a kind of a legacy for my family and friends. I fully intended to self publish. I sent the manuscript to some prominent journalists I know, some I don't know. They said this is pretty good. You should try to get this published traditionally. First publisher I sent it to loved it and to my surprise, offered me a traditional deal with an advance.

It went up on. It was released yesterday and I found it this morning. It's number one in the Kindle version on Amazon in Hot New Releases in the category of Biography of Journalists. And the reviews have been fantastic. You know, you never know, especially when you're a rookie author, how people are going to react. There's a lot of anger in the world today to, you know, a lot of, you know, anti media sentiment. So a reporter writing a book...

BUCKMASTER: Yes in the age of fake news. Right. Why do you think this book is resonating so with so many people? Obviously, as you just mentioned, there's been a lot of response at Amazon. Do you think it's a chance for folks to kind of take a look behind the curtain, so to speak?

SCHWARTZ: I do. I think people are tired of what's going on now. Of course not talking about the just a pandemic, but they just angry. Upset. You have a very split country. And this book is not about politics. Yes, of course, I talk about some of the political stories I reported. I kind of beat up on both parties, as in the chapter on both Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders stiffing the city of Tucson when they didn't pay for their rallies here.

The book is not a partisan book. I think they're enjoying it, Bill, because the stories and I'm also honest and you can't put confessions in the title and not be self-deprecating. I talk about

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mistakes I've made. I talk about personal failings. And I think that's why it's resonating. And I think they just like good stories. And the book moves fast. It's only about two hundred thirty two pages. It's chapters only a few pages. And I think they like the first chapter that Amazon put on its Look Inside feature yesterday, talking about my personal failings and about my interview with the Son of Sam and how I was ordered to lie on the air. And I think that resonated.

BUCKMASTER: And that was one of your early interviews and early on in your life. I believe you dreamed of working your. You're from the tri state area in metropolitan New York area. You had dreamed of working in the media in the Big Apple and you and the dream came true. I believe you turned 30 years old and suddenly you were at Channel nine in New York.

And one of the big interviews was doing the Son of Sam interview. And after you got back to the newsroom, there was a bit of a surprise. What happened there, briefly?

SCHWARTZ: Three of the news managers, including the news director, asked to see the raw footage, which was unusual, but this was a big interview. He hadn't done an interview in a few years you know. We came back from the maximum security prison in upstate New York to the newsroom. I showed them the footage and they were thrilled with it.

And then the news director said to me, why don't you say you were nervous? Worried about Berkowitz picking up your pen and stabbing you with it? So I thought he was joking, but he wasn't. And, you know, I walked out of there in kind of in shock. Certainly not happy. And then I wrote the script. I screened the interview, put the script back to the news director, and he changed a line to say, my producer was worried that Berkowitz would pick up my pen and stab me with it.

Well, Bill, my producer wasn't even at the interview.

Now, this isn't the biggest lie in the world, but to me, a lie is a lie. Your credibility, you know, gets hurt. It doesn't matter the depth of it, in my opinion. And it really bothered me because I've never knowingly told a lie in my career. Sure, I've made mistakes. And that's a chapter I call mistakes. I've made a few.

But this really bothered me. And I still cringe when I watch the piece, which is on Vimeo and anybody can watch it right now. Matthew SchwartzDVDVimeo. So that bothered me, Bill. I think as a newsman, it would bother you, too. It's just sensationalism. Fox had bought the station and I, I saw the tenor of the news test changing to become more tabloid.

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BUCKMASTER: You talk about in the book lying on camera, you've a lot of people that you have interviewed in your career, you know, are lying on camera. What is your thinking when you would go in when you heard the lie? Do you confront them or do you let them, so to speak, hang themselves? What is your approach to that, Matthew Schwartz?

SCHWARTZ: I try to let them hang themselves. I try to ask them for their version of the truth, and then I tell them or show them a document or proof I have that what they're saying is untrue. The most I did two famous cases in my career of that, I mean, I've caught hundreds of people in lies. But the two most famous that I would say won here in Tucson with a trainer at the now closed Tucson Greyhound Park who told me he did not refuse to take a drug drug test as required by the state and did not drug his dog with a steroid.

I had the documents, so before I took the documents out, I asked them about that. Then he lied. And then I said very nicely. I said, well, I have the documents here, the official records from the state. And then he flipped me the bird, cursing me out and drove away. And that was all on camera. That's actually that's actually on the cover of the book. He's he's not telling me I'm "Number One."

BUCKMASTER: That's for sure. Confessions, Confessions of an Investigative Reporter.

SCHWARTZ: The other lie. The other lie was involving Hulk Hogan's wife, the professional wrestler named Terry Gene Bollea, his wife at their home in Clearwater in Bel Air, Florida, near Clearwater. She lied to me about something and we had that she she denied saying and we had it on videotape. We had her saying it. And we played it right after she said I never said that we played, which is butted the sound bite to her say, denying it. We had the tape even, but she still denied it.

That was a little, I was a little awkward, you know, getting into that confrontation with her with her six foot, eight inch, 300 pound husband there.

BUCKMASTER: I bet, you know, you and I have been around a long time, Matthew. We've seen a lot of evolution of this business. You spent 20 years in the New York market, then went to Tampa and then to Tucson. Have you seen investigative reporting, are fewer stations doing it?

SCHWARTZ: Yes. Well, I think every report by nature journalism should be investigative. I think fewer stations are doing it because it's time and money. And now with the Internet, they don't take the time to do these big investigations that take weeks for television.

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Everything is now feed the beast content and everything digital. Get it online now. So fewer stations are giving reporters like in the 80s and 90s weeks to do investigations. So what I do is I juggle a complicated ones with the quickies, and that's what I think most investigative reporters are doing. But the quantity of investigative reports has gone down. I don't think the quality has is just fewer of them. It's also an expensive proposition for a lot of stations to some of these pieces involve travel.

BUCKMASTER: Matthew, I'm quickly running out of time. I want to carve out about a minute for you to tell our listeners where they can obtain the book. And I know your book signings have been put on hold because of the COVID. Go ahead.

SCHWARTZ: Yeah. All before local bookstores in Tucson are buying the book. They've ordered it and both Barnes Noble's and Mostly Books. And you can get the book on Amazon, Barnes and Noble dot com, Indie Books, dot org. And on my website, MatthewSchwartzBook.com, which has an entertaining one minute video of their.

BUCKMASTER: Well, Matthew, your lunch hour is about over and it's time to get back to work right at Channel four. We'll look for your work. I appreciate talking with you. And congratulations on the book *Confessions of an Investigative Reporter*. The publisher is Koehler Books.

Thank you, Matthew.

SCHWARTZ: Thank you so much, Bill.

BUCKMASTER: Thanks a lot. Matthew Schwartz will look for his work on Channel four, and he's done very well with this new book, *Confessions of an Investigative Reporter*.

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