

Center for Strategic and International Studies

**Bob Schieffer's "About the News" with H. Andrew Schwartz
Podcast**

**Subject: "The Real Glenn Thrush: A Conversation with NYT's
White House Correspondent"**

**Speaker:
Glenn Thrush,
White House Correspondent,
The New York Times**

**Hosts:
H. Andrew Schwartz,
Senior Vice President for External Relations,
CSIS**

**Bob Schieffer,
CBS Political News Contributor;
Former Host, "Face the Nation," CBS News**

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(Music plays.)

BOB SCHIEFFER: I'm Bob Schieffer.

H. ANDREW SCHWARTZ: And I'm Andrew Schwartz.

MR. SCHIEFFER: And these are conversations about the news. We are in the midst of a communications revolution. We have access to more information than any people in history. But are we more informed, or just overwhelmed by so much information we can't process it?

MR. SCHWARTZ: These conversations are a year-long collaboration of the Bob Schieffer College of Communication at Texas Christian University and the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

(Music plays.)

MR. SCHIEFFER: Our guest this time is Glenn Thrush of The New York Times, where he came to work to cover the campaign and is now the White House correspondent. Glenn is a Brooklyn guy, grew up there, went to Brooklyn College, worked at Newsday. Then he came to Politico, where he really made a name for himself covering politics, and from there Times hired him.

Glenn, welcome. And here you at the Times. Already you have achieved something that it takes many reporters years to accomplish, and some never accomplish it. And that is that you have already been parodied on Saturday Night Live. I mean, what now? What else can you do?

GLENN THRUSH: The sweet, warm embrace of death, perhaps? No. (Laughter.) I'll tell you, for a brief, shining moment – and I mean, 15 solid minutes – my kids thought I was cool.

MR. SCHWARTZ: That's all that matters, right?

MR. THRUSH: And one of them actually – the funny story is – this doesn't – I will not name their school, because this might get their principal in trouble. But their principal showed up at their classroom the Monday after this happened on Saturday with a very stern look on his face. And he pulled them out of their English class. And they thought they were in trouble because they're my kids, so there would have been good reason for them to be in trouble. And he was – he pulled them out in the hallway and he gave them a hug and he said: This is cool. So for a very short period of time, I was the man.

MR. SCHIEFFER: All right. Let's get right to the news here. And that is, what's going on with Donald Trump? All of a sudden, we're seeing – is this the Bush administration that's evolved out of the Trump administration?

MR. THRUSH: Well, look, I got a lot of things wrong during the campaign. (Laughs.) There's a lot of people that did. But I – I will raise my hand and say I particularly got a lot of

things wrong. I didn't think – you know, I thought he had a 42, 43 percent ceiling nationally. I didn't turn out to be that wrong. One thing I did get right, and that was early on my sense was that this was a guy who was going to be much more in the form of a late-19th century president because of his lack of institutional knowledge of Washington, his complete novice status with the legislature, not understanding procedure, not understanding how the West Wing ran, and not really have the intellectual curiosity or historical grounding to see the mistakes others had made.

So I think what's going on, quite naturally, is you had a group of sort of boisterous revolutionaries who jumped into the West Wing. I'm reminded of that great scene from "Lawrence of Arabia," when the Bedouin get into, I think it's Damascus, and they just kind of tear up the room, right? Well, we're beyond that stage. And it turns out you have to run the White House. And, Bob, you know this better than anybody else. Presidents are big, they're important, we have a personality-based political system. But presidencies define presidents, not the other way around. That's what's happening right now.

MR. SCHIEFFER: So where do you see this going? And does this last? Because we've actually seen some things that – you know, I happen to think he did the right thing with the bombing in Syria. I think that's – you know, what happens next I think is the most important thing. But to see him now talking about, well, we probably need the Export-Import Bank, talking about we need China's help on North Korea. Is this going to be where it goes from here, or, well, next week it'll be something entirely different?

MR. THRUSH: No, no, I think it's moving towards what you're discussing, again, for the very simple reason that the problems haven't changed. Just because we've had this internal squabble in this country, this wrenching national kind of donnybrook here, doesn't mean the external factors that created this have changed. We're facing the same fact set that we faced before Donald Trump became president. We have an ascendant, perhaps wobbly, China, with an uncertain view of itself, both sort of economically and militarily in that part of the world. We have a rogue state of North Korea, that nobody knows what the hell to do with. And we have a set of problems – economic problems that actually have to be dealt with in a concrete way. And I think as we move from the campaign part of this into the problem-solving part of this, the options narrow.

Now, you talk about Syria. I obviously am paid not to have an opinion on this stuff. But I will say this: I think there's a 95 percent probability that Barack Obama would have done exactly the same thing because, remember, this isn't a redline situation. Barack Obama had a deal with these guys that the sarin gas was going to be put on a ship and floated out into the Mediterranean. They violated that compact. So I think it's almost certain that the Obama folks would have done the same thing. And, Bob, I think you're 100 percent right. I think what's going on right now is – and I hate to use this word – but the normalization of the Trump White House.

MR. SCHIEFFER: So who are the most influential advisors right now? We heard a lot of different names in the beginning – even when the inauguration happened and the argument over how large the crowd was and all of that. Things have changed there. I mean, obviously people who are influencing this president are not necessarily the same people who were

influencing him, number one, during the campaign, and certainly not in the early weeks of the administration.

MR. THRUSH: Steve Bannon is a guy who wanted to drive the sportscar of the presidency. Steve Bannon, as it turns out, was a guy who didn't know how to drive the sportscar. Apparently—I've never been in one—but a Lamborghini is a very difficult car to drive. (Laughs.) And it turns out just because you can make it go vroom-vroom in the driveway doesn't mean you can race it out on the course. And Bannon, by his own admission, doesn't know a thing about the legislative process. He wrote a couple of executive orders that were poorly drafted – including the second one – that were not court-proofed, not thought through.

And I believe Bannon, and that cluster of people who are now, by the way, abandoning him as quickly as they possibly can, he's becoming increasingly isolated. I believe that, you know, Bannon simply didn't understand how government worked. And when you put a guy in the driver's seat who doesn't know how to operate the basic mechanism of government, you're going to have trouble. And I think Trump is now realizing, through the agency of his family – it's very funny.

We talked about Jared Kushner, his son-in-law, who's in the White House, and his daughter Ivanka, who just took an office in the East Wing, as being sort of sui generis in terms of the role that they're going to play. Actually, I think that they are playing a very traditional familiar role here, keeping the guy from getting too far off the rails and pointing out which advisors are helping him and are hurting him. I think it's a natural progression.

Donald Trump is a guy – you know, for all of his individuality, singularity, as somebody who doesn't like to be embarrassed and he doesn't like to lose. And at the moment, with this particular group of people that he has, he's been losing a lot and he doesn't like that.

MR. SCHIEFFER: So, does Bannon go away?

MR. THRUSH: There's a calculation to be made here. Steve Bannon isn't just Steve Bannon. Steve Bannon is the former head of Breitbart. Breitbart is essentially a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Mercer family, a very wealthy and influential conservative donor group. Rebekah Mercer he's particularly close to, Bannon is. So what's going on right now is you're starting to see the Breitbart crowd, the conservative donor crowd, starting to judge Trump based on the campaign promises that he made. So all of these various flipflops and iterations that you've discussed and we've discussed in terms of him normalizing his White House are apostasy to these people. So you're starting to see the gap open up between Bannonism and the evolving Trumpism.

So the question that you have to ask yourself here is: Is having Steve Bannon inside better or worse for Donald Trump? And I think the logical play here would be to keep him cornered, but empowered to some degree so he's not outside. But what I've been hearing from my conversations over the last couple of days is Donald Trump doesn't give a damn. If he wants you out, you're going to be out.

MR. SCHWARTZ: Oh, and he always says, Donald Trump can't be bought by Rebekah Mercer or anybody else.

MR. THRUSH: Right, true. Absolutely. His brand is important to him. And he doesn't like the fact – you know, I wrote a story probably a month, month and a half ago at the CPAC, an analysis piece, about how Trump gave a speech, the day before Bannon had basically written the script for that speech. I have heard through the grapevine that I wrote it that way, that Bannon wrote the speech and Trump delivered it. I was told through a couple of intermediaries that Trump liked this notion that Bannon is being perceived as master of a puppet.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, I base this on nothing but seeing a lot of “Godfather” movies, but – (laughter) – my sense of it is – my money is on the family.

MR. THRUSH: Yes.

MR. SCHIEFFER: And I think no matter how influential Bannon has been – and I think what you're saying about keeping him over there – that's an old famous Lyndon Johnson thing about J. Edgar Hoover. I'd rather have him inside the tent aiming out –

MR. THRUSH: Doing a certain function, right.

MR. SCHIEFFER: – than outside the tent, aimed at us.

MR. THRUSH: Right. (Laughs.)

MR. SCHIEFFER: And my sense is that would certainly be the smart way if I were trying to figure out what to do with this problem. That would be the way that I would go about it. But I think it's going to be very, very difficult for anybody to penetrate that family circle. This, to me, is a mom and pop grocery store, multiplied by a factor of 100 or something. And that's the way Trump has always run his business, it seems to me. It's the closely-held family business. The family makes the decisions. And I think it's going to be very difficult for anyone to penetrate that, especially if things are not going well.

MR. THRUSH: Well, that's the great paradox of this, right? It's kind of a triple-headed issue here. The first is, you have a guy in Trump – and by the way, for all this talk of personnel I'm sometimes – I love writing behind-the-curtain stories. I've probably made my career writing these behind-the-curtain stories that Washington laps up, right? But it always gets down – and you know this very well in the course of your work – it's ultimately – everyone is iterative of the president himself. And I think it is especially true with Trump.

We can talk about Bannon and Ivanka and Jared, but Trump really is sitting in that Oval – and you walk into the Oval Office, it's totally a throwback. You've got papers on the desk. I seem to remember a candy wrapper on the floor. It's definitely lived in. And the man who's sitting in the middle of this thing is Trump. I don't think it's just – I don't think it's reality TV command. I think he really is sitting there making decisions.

But the paradox is he doesn't understand the system. And he doesn't have that level of trained savvy staff that allows him to connect to the system. It's almost like an adapter. When you're traveling abroad, you can have the best appliances, you can have a great computer, but if you don't have that little \$3 adapter that plugs you into the juice, you're screwed. And I think Trump fully, at the moment, with the exception of three or four people – I'll throw a name out there that people don't know, Marc Short his legislative affairs director is one of the few people who really understands the connection.

I think ultimately, Trump is going to be beholden to that layer of people he will have to hire by necessity. So, you have that element. You have a guy who needs and feels like he is command. I mean, for God's sakes, yesterday he called it his military. A pretty fundamental misunderstanding of the United States –

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, LBJ said, son, they're all my helicopters, one of his famous answers.

MR. THRUSH: Yeah. (Laughs.) Well, we see how that worked out for LBJ.

MR. SCHIEFFER: (Laughs.) Yeah.

MR. THRUSH: So you got – so you have this thing. You have the family that is sort of – we've yet to determine what position they're going to play. But I will tell you in general, I do not consider that to be a sophisticated policy operation. And it's less ideological, I think, than people realize. But again, it gets back, to my notion, and this is a bit of my hobbyhorse, is I think Trump is pushing us back into, again, the late 19th century Republican sort of presidency. Now, he has a façade – he has got a Teddy Roosevelt façade of energetic action and dominance. But in fact, everything – including those executive orders, by the way, which we've – the two executive orders on immigration. Everything has been written by people on the Hill. He outsourced those executive orders to Bob Goodlatte's office and made them sign confidentiality agreements.

So we're dealing with that great paradox –

MR. SCHIEFFER: He did what now?

MR. THRUSH: Yeah, he did. I mean, this has been reported. But the original draft on the executive order on the migrant ban was drafted by Congress Bob Goodlatte of Virginia's office.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Yeah, sure.

MR. THRUSH: And he made the staffers who worked on that during the transition sign confidentiality agreements.

MR. SCHIEFFER: But he didn't make Goodlatte sign a confidentiality – (laughs) –

MR. THRUSH: No. No, I don't think he can do that with a member of Congress. I'd

like to see somebody try, yeah. (Laughs.)

MR. SCHIEFFER: That's a – that's a –

MR. SCHWARTZ: If anyone's going to try, it might be this president.

MR. THRUSH: It might be this president.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Yeah.

Andrew, jump in.

MR. SCHWARTZ: Sure. Well, thank you, Bob.

Well, Glenn, you've been in the Oval Office recently, interviewing with your partner in crime Maggie Haberman. Explain the scene that you saw there? I know you've reported on it, but what – well, you just talked about a candy wrapper and I know the president drinks a lot of Diet Coke. And he – but he seems like he's in command when he's in there.

MR. SCHIEFFER: But how many people were in there?

MR. THRUSH: Well, that, to me, is the amazing thing. So let me just contrast this with – you know, a visit to the Oval Office with Barack Obama was a real occasion. I mean, and you literally felt it. You know, the Oval under Obama had the feel and cleanliness of a pharmaceutical laboratory. I mean, you couldn't find a dust mote in the place. And everyone seemed to be standing in their assigned places. And there was a binder for everything, right? So I did an interview with Obama January before last when I was at Politico. And it was intensely managed. But there were four or five people in there. And one of them was a public relations guy, Eric Schultz, and the rest were technical support people. The doors were closed. I was knee-to-knee with the president. Very clipped, clean, circumscribed environment.

Let me contrast that to last Thursday when I was sitting in the Oval Office. (Laughs.) First of all, the president – the way he has the office arranged – and the geography of the Oval Office tells you a lot about the presidency. Around the Resolute Desk, the main desk the president uses, is a semicircle of four chairs. And those four chairs represent whoever is in power, essentially. It's a great visual. And both doors to the Oval Office are open all the time. And people are wandering in – I swear to God – they're wandering in and out like it was the lobby of a hotel.

So Maggie and I, my partner in crime Maggie Haberman – (laughs) – and I are sitting in the two central chairs. To my left is Gary Cohn, who is on the ascent, the National Economic Council Chairman. Hope Hicks who people – she's sort of known as the silent press person for Trump, but in fact she is an enormously powerful figure within the White House. And then there is another aide sitting in another chair that gets pulled up. And there are four or five people wandering around the periphery of my vision.

And then halfway through this interview – (laughs) – Mike Pence and Reince Priebus wander in, and are just standing around, arms crossed, like – I don't know, serving as notaries, you know, witnessing –

MR. SCHIEFFER: Do you suppose they had just found out about it, or?

MR. THRUSH: No idea. And the president yells out: Hey, Mike. Hey, Reince. (Laughs.) Grab a soda. You know, like, pull up – like – (laughs) – it felt like we were at, you know.

MR. SCHIEFFER: You must have felt like Prime Minister Abe.

MR. THRUSH: (Laughs.) Yeah. I was like –

MR. SCHIEFFER: When he thought he was having a private dinner with the president down at Mar-a-Largo, and people were running up and getting selfies, they're in the restaurant.

MR. THRUSH: And then in the middle of this interview, which was allegedly about infrastructure – so we go in. And you know how this stuff is. Hope Hicks – and again, I would like to just emphasize the respect I have for Hope Hicks, who I think doesn't really get the props that she deserves. I think she is one of the more disciplined, on-message, in-control people in the White House. People need to understand that.

MR. SCHWARTZ: People seem to really like her.

MR. THRUSH: She is. I think – I've been very, very impressed by here. So she had a piece of paper and she wanted us to talk about infrastructure. We sit down, I kid you not, boom he hits on Susan Rice – nailing Susan Rice on the – he clearly wanted to talk about it. I looked – this was not planned. I look over at Hope and she's, like, shrugging. And at some point in time, as Trump is going on, Hope turns to us and says, can we start talking about infrastructure? And I'm like, I want to talk about it. I've got 10 questions on infrastructure. (Laughter.)

And then Maggie, who also happens to be my best friend, which is a unique situation, good for me. Has had a long relationship with Trump. She covered the campaign, microscopically, for the Times, but she also has, like, a two-decade relationship with Trump and his orbit, from having covered New York for the tabloids. And so her and Trump have this longstanding relationship. And I asked Trump – were talking about infrastructure, and I was asking him these questions about when was the last time he took the subway in New York. He gave a great answer about riding between the cars and how father would get angry at him.

But then I asked him – I wanted to know, when was the last time you drove a car. And in – right in the middle of that, he just takes off and starts attacking Maggie about some story she'd written. And I said to him, like, what does that have to do with cars? And he turns to me and he says, like totally unaffected, he's like, oh, this is therapy for me, yelling at her.

MR. SCHWARTZ: It's incredible. And you want to talk about – so I wanted to ask you

about this. This isn't exactly access journalism. I mean, this is – you're in there, and you and Maggie haven't pulled any punches when it comes to reporting with Trump. I mean, you tell it like it is, you call it like you see it. He's called your newspaper the failing New York Times, but he seems to have a therapeutic relationship with Maggie, and a good relationship with you. So what does this all tell you about this president?

MR. THRUSH: I'm from New York. I'm a tabloid – I come out of the tabloid environment. This is no different. This is a – I've said this before, and I said this at the panel the other day at the Newseum, it's like, this is much more of a national mayoralty to me than it is a presidency, right? I want to give Trump credit for this, OK? We get perceived as hammering the hell out of him on this. I think this speaks very highly to him, this sense that he does engage his adversaries. He says terrible things about us, calls us enemies of the people, but his actions – as you pointed out – belie that. He is actually very dependent on the media, and has empowered us tremendously. Even by attacking us, he has empowered us.

I mean, for God's sakes, I walk to the briefing every day and there are two people there every single day in the briefing who are holding signs saying: God bless The New York Times and God bless The Washington Post. I am not used to that. It creeps me out. It's like, get out of there.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Who does that?

MR. THRUSH: I don't know. Get a – you know, go get lunch.

MR. SCHIEFFER: You mean people outside who are holding up –

MR. THRUSH: People outside. And if you look at his first presidential press conference, which really threw the Washington establishment over – I mean, people went – I was sitting in the office at the Times watching. It was very interesting to watch. And I'm not in any way criticizing my colleagues. But people who have covered the presidency for a long time were aghast at him sort of picking fights and calling on people randomly. Maggie and I were sitting there and it was like an Ed Koch or Rudy Giuliani press conference.

He wasn't – Obama had four or five, six names of people he was going to call on. You'd ask him a 30 second question and he's give you a 10-minute answer, much like I'm doing now. And Trump is just freewheeling – sure, he's an insult comic, and he yells at people. But he allows the back and forth. I think, from my perspective, he deserves an enormous amount of credit for that, and that is an improvement over the previous administration.

MR. SCHIEFFER: I want to ask you about this, because following up on just what you're talking about, his relationship with the press, he and others in the administration do talk to reporters, unlike I can remember a lot of White Houses where if you didn't get it through the press office and they didn't set it up, they just didn't talk to you. But you know, I read your competitor The Washington Post, they seem to delight in pointing out how many people –

MR. SCHWARTZ: Twenty-one sources were talked to.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Twenty-one sources, 17 sources –

MR. THRUSH: I want to give a plug for my old publication, Politico.

MR. SCHIEFFER: You guys do the same thing. I mean, you are talking to a lot of people.

MR. THRUSH: I'd like to call it a leaky bucket, but that would imply that it was a bucket.

MR. SCHIEFFER: More like a firehouse.

MR. THRUSH: Yeah, more like, yeah, what bucket? It's like a puddle.

MR. SCHWARTZ: They seem to understand, and I think this comes from the top, that the media is exciting right now. The news is exciting. Some people even say, you know, news is the new rock and roll. There's no rock and roll anymore. This is what people in America are into now.

MR. THRUSH: Didn't they used to say Washington is Hollywood for ugly people? I believe that one to be more true. (Laughs.)

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, there's some exceptions.

MR. THRUSH: There are, there are.

MR. SCHWARTZ: There is a Bob Schieffer, for instance, you know.

MR. THRUSH: There's the front row at the briefing room.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Let me – let me talk about something really serious, and that is this whole – this whole thing with the Russians. I mean, a story, again, yesterday, now it was Mi5 or somebody who first tipped the CIA –

MR. THRUSH: Which ties into the dossier story as well, yeah.

MR. SCHIEFFER: It ties very much into the dossier story. Where do you see this thing going, and how serious do you think this is?

MR. THRUSH: I think it is – I think it's enormously serious. And I don't know where it's going. I mean, there is – it is entirely possible that all this is just weird, as opposed to being deeply nefarious or planned out. It is one – let's just talk about the known knowns, to quote a former defense secretary. What we know is Russia clearly wanted to influence the election and was using whatever avenues they could. That is a known known.

The second known known, and this is, I think, an aspect of this that people haven't really understood. The financial crisis of 2008 and 2009 froze up credit in the United States. If you were in the real estate business in New York City during that period of time and you needed investment, there were two places to go: the Chinese and the Russians. The Chinese, because they were printing their own money, and the Russians because they make their money off of resources, which were somewhat insulated by the crash, though not entirely. And the Russians, when commodities prices cratered, wanted to throw all their money into London and New York real estate. So that was where the money is.

MR. SCHWARTZ: And Florida.

MR. THRUSH: And Florida, that's right, of course.

So you have Russians from a political perspective, from Putin on down, attempting to influence elections all over. Second, you have Russian and Chinese money sloshing around. Third, you have this entire group of characters that Trump surrounds himself with, the second ring of people, who are, what we used to call in Yiddish "machers," people who wanted to make big business, right?

MR. SCHWARTZ: Big time.

MR. THRUSH: And big time people who wanted to make business, Paul Manafort. So these are the three things that we know. That is a very volatile set of circumstances. The larger question here, obviously, is what did Trump know and when did he know it. And that is why this sort of barrage of verbal flack that he throws up is, to me, and interesting tactical move, and ultimately will be unsuccessful.

He can say whatever he wants, but sooner or later the question is going to come down with who did Donald Trump talk to, what did they tell him, what was he aware of? I think we're going to – as the story moves forward, as we cycle through these congressional investigations, it will inevitably – and Bob knows this better than anybody else having lived through the Watergate situation and the Iran-Contra situation – these things always funnel down to one vanishing point, and that is: What did the president know?

MR. SCHIEFFER: So what I find very interesting about all this is the sums of money. I mean, we're learning now some of these recent stories. When Manafort leaves the administration, suddenly he's making loans or getting loans for multimillions of dollars. These are not the kinds of loans that individuals we normally associate with. These are the kinds of loans that companies and businesses and countries make and loan.

MR. THRUSH: And he got a \$10 million – we don't know how much of that was actually executed – but he got a \$10 million contract in 2005 from a Russian billionaire in order to promote Russian interests in the United States. And a few days prior to Mike McIntire's excellent story in our paper, I reported – I came into possession of how Manafort pitched himself to Trump. And one of the – one of the main selling points was that he was that he was going to do it for free, that he'd work for Trump for free.

MR. SCHIEFFER: But why did he find – why did he pitch himself to Trump? That’s the other part.

MR. THRUSH: We don’t know. The best that I can discern from talking to five or six people who are friends with both is that Manafort, quote, “wanted to get back into the game.”

MR. SCHWARTZ: And why did he need to pitch himself to the extent that he did, buying an apartment in Trump Tower? You know, Roger Stone is their mutual mishpocheh, if you will, family, they’re friends, really close. Why did he not just go through Roger Stone, like anybody else in the power elite would do, and –

MR. THRUSH: I think Stone definitely played a role. And I reported this, and he’s been reported. Stone played a role. The question is, what role did Stone play? For me, the fascinating dynamic, and we’re going to hear more about this, is Tom Barrack, who was the chairman of the president’s inauguration, presumably responsible for the terrible crowd size – I’m joking – but Barrack is a businessman who’s known Trump for quite some time.

MR. SCHWARTZ: Trump trusts him.

MR. THRUSH: Trump trusts him a great deal. That relationship, and Barrack, as I reported, was the intermediary, basically gave Manafort’s pitch to Ivanka and Jared. And Ivanka handed – physically, because as we know Trump doesn’t read stuff on the computer – printed out the emails and the memos and handed it to her father, and her father read it, and then got in touch with Manafort.

MR. SCHWARTZ: Why the strong pitch? Why did he have to write things? Why did he have to present them a –

MR. THRUSH: Great question. Great question. I wasn’t about to really discern that. I think – you know, he was pitching for convention manager, but he slid – he slid directly in to the role of campaign manager. The moment he appeared on Donald Trump’s threshold in March of 2016 was a very interesting moment to enter the campaign, because two things were true. It was apparent that Trump was – just a little push was about to get the nomination, but he was also in trouble. He was – he either was about to or had just lost Wisconsin. And there was turmoil at the top.

And so Manafort was stepping through the door at precisely the right moment for somebody like him. Things were generally moving in the right direction, there was a high probability Trump would be the nominee, yet the campaign itself was imploding.

MR. SCHIEFFER: I want to talk to you just a little bit about journalism, but that’s one of the things we kind of focus on here. You did it the traditional way. You started out as a newspaper reporter on a paper newspaper, just like I did. And then you go to Politico, which is a big step. I think anybody that works at a paper, and suddenly I’m not going to be at a paper anymore, I’m writing this stuff that people read on their phones. And now you’ve come to the

Times, which is the – you know, with The Washington Post are the two – the big two, I call them.

And I think one of the great things that going on right now is how this has caused the Times and the Post – both of you make the other better because you're there. There's no question about that.

MR. THRUSH: Yeah, absolutely. I love it. And these are – you know, these are all my friends. I mean, at the – I hate to keep doing this, but I'm going to throw Politico into the mix too. I think we do some extraordinary – we. They. It's only been three months.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Yeah. (Laughter.) So why'd you decide to do that? I mean, why did you decide to go to Politico, and then why from Politico to the Times?

MR. THRUSH: Well, I'll tell you a story about going to – going from Newsday to Politico. The day I got – the day I was hired at Newsday I was a Newsday delivery boy as a kid. And Newsday had some of the great columnists – the great, late Jimmy Breslin, who was my hero when I was a kid. I wanted to be the Jewish Jimmy Breslin. That was my goal. Still kind of is. I got the Jewish part down. (Laughter.) But back in 2008, I was kind of a one-man band covering Hillary Clinton. I was on the road 275 days in the course of 18 months.

And there was a day – it was the day of the Ohio primary. I call into my desk, to my national editor, Calvin Lawrence. And I say: Here's what I'm doing today. I'm going to stay behind in Cincinnati, blah, blah, blah, blah. And he says, Glenn, it has been such a pleasure working with you. And I was like, what are you talking about? He said, you don't know? Myself and five – the entire five-member editorial staff at the national team has been laid off. You'll be reporting to our Long Island editor.

MR. SCHWARTZ: That's terrible.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Really.

MR. THRUSH: And I had been talking to John Harris and VandeHei over at Politico. And Ben Smith, who was one of my best friends, was their star at the time – for a long, long time. And I was always like – Newsday at that point had won 28 Pulitzer Prizes, it was my hometown paper, it was a smart tabloid, it had done some great work. And I realized at that point in time, you know, you jump – this lily pad is sinking. You jump from one lily pad to the next. And that's really been the course of my career. I'm jumped from place to place.

And the thing about Politico, is Politico really was actually doing old-time – thought it was a digital platform, those guys understood – they were print people. That's been the trick about Politico. BuzzFeed really is –

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, yeah, VandeHei and John Harris.

MR. THRUSH: They're just print guys, and they – but the – but the real thing that had

happened that I was part of, that I didn't realize at the time, was the tabloidization of Washington political coverage, right? I mean that both in a positive and negative way. I like to think of myself as sort of the classier end of the tabloid spectrum. (Laughs.) But in general, it had become much more of an in-your-face, aggressive sort of business. And as tabloid journalism commercially was imploding in New York, a lot of us refugees – Maggie Haberman was a New York Post reporter, and so many of the other people who are doing this right now at the highest level – Annie Karni at Politico, Tara Palmeri – are also people who are tabloid refugees.

So coming from – now, I had just been at Politico, and I had done everything really except clean up the place. You know, when I first came there they wanted me to cover the White House. I said, no, I want to spend a year and a half on the Hill, because you can't – it is my personal belief you cannot cover Washington without covering the Hill. And if you're covering the White – it is my experience – when I covered City Hall in New York, I grew up in New York so I had friends, relatives who were in agencies. So I always had a source of news from the outside. The key to covering these institutions is collecting derogatory information and presenting it to people. And the only way to do that is to come from connected institutions that are outside the core.

So my decision at Politico was to cover Congress first. And I progressed up and I became the White House correspondent, and then started writing for the magazine. And I had just been there seven years. And my decision to go to the Times, which was a painful one for me because I loved Politico and I was committed to it, was based on the Times as an institution represents something larger than any one newspaper at this point in time. And if you're going to cover Donald Trump, considering the way that he had dealt with the press, you go into that battle on top of the biggest, baddest tank. And The New York Times to me, under Dean and under Matt Purdy and under Allison Mitchell and Elisabeth Bumiller, my bureau chief, have a real commitment and an understanding to being – to being responsible, tough, but to not fall into the trap of buying the Steve Bannon opposition party nonsense. We know – we define what we do. They don't define what we do.

MR. SCHIEFFER: And what we do is ask questions.

MR. THRUSH: Right.

MR. SCHIEFFER: And ask questions until we get an answer. And then when we get the answer, report back.

MR. THRUSH: Right, exactly.

MR. SCHIEFFER: And you know, if we do that right, that's a big deal. And that's why I've always been proud to be a reporter. And I've never been prouder of the profession than right now, for all the criticism that it gets. I think we did a pretty good job on this campaign.

MR. THRUSH: I think so too.

MR. SCHIEFFER: You know, I had a lot of people tell me they either liked or didn't

like Hillary Clinton. And a lot of people told me they liked or didn't like Donald Trump. But I didn't run into very many people who told me they needed more information to decide who to vote for. And to me, that is the evidence that we probably did a pretty good job.

MR. THRUSH: I've been saying that for – I couldn't agree with you more. First of all, I love reporters.

MR. SCHIEFFER: So do I.

MR. THRUSH: The way that Ethel Merman loved show people, I just love reporters. I said this the other day and it was taken out of context, and I'll say it again. The lowliest reporter has moral superiority over the most exalted flack. I just think, like, what we do – and I love flacks – I just think what we do is so fundamentally important. And I also think that was why – so people talk about Sean Spicer a lot, why? And I don't care about Sean Spicer. I mean, I care about him personally. I like the guy. I've known him for a dozen years. But Sean Spicer doesn't matter. I mean, those institutions matter. And every – and you know this. Every time you walk through that gate it's like the first time you ever walked through that gate. I can't believe I'm going there.

And to me, the thing that he did – let's put aside the fact that you fact check a Sean Spicer press conference every day and there are 10 things that are completely wrong, OK? (Laughs.) That is true. Ten is an exaggeration. Maybe three to five. The main thing that he did I thought was a violation, was the first time he appeared in that briefing room that – never mind what the topic was – it was to berate the press about the crowd size at the inauguration. I didn't care about it. Here's what I didn't like. You don't come into that room and yell at us without taking questions. That room is about asking questions and giving answers. You don't get to come in and yell. So when you're talking about questions being the fundamental coin of the realm, I couldn't agree with you more.

MR. SCHWARTZ: Is there a real golden age of journalism going on, though, right now? I mean, it seems like this presidency, this campaign, not just The New York Times, not just the Post, the Journal, everyone seems to be getting better. And there seems to be more of an appetite than ever before for news and information. Do you see that?

MR. THRUSH: Yeah, it's great. I mean, I think – I think we had sort of this horserace game change. Politico was part of that process as well. I think all those institutions and people are evolving to deal with a much more serious situation now. But I'm really happy we're out of that horserace crap. There's always going to be –

MR. SCHWARTZ: Well, it has to be because – you know, now, mind you, covering process is covering policy. So you have to do that. But I feel we're calibrating – the stakes are just too high and this is just too much of a convulsive thing. But getting back to what we were talking about before we started, where it isn't a golden age is local reporting. I mean, to me that is the biggest single problem with what's going on now. And it makes our jobs more difficult, because when you had really good, interactive local media, that established a trust between the public and reporters. Like, when you had people coming to your neighborhood and covering

something that had happened, and you had a real tactile one-on-one experience with people, it changes things.

Now there's that huge hole there. So people think – they see on TV and they believe stuff that people write about you, tweet about you. They don't have a personal experience. That has always been my experience. You go out into the country. Go to a Trump rally. Somebody will get in your face. And then you ask them two questions, and they're your best friends. Anytime – well, because people then understand what your function is. You're asking questions. You have an open mind. I think when they just see this caricature of us – and I think local media, in addition to providing texture and holding local officials accountable, gives the public a real connection with reporters that they don't have.

MR. SCHWARTZ: What about the technology of journalism these days, and the – and the delivery systems? Do you think it makes it more accessible? We have podcasts, we have briefings, we have newsletters, we have blogs, we have video. You know, every news organization now is so much greater than it was when it started years ago, it does so many more things.

MR. THRUSH: Well, look, I think podcasts are the best innovation – you know. Hopefully I will get to resurrect my Politico podcast.

MR. SCHWARTZ: I was going to ask that.

MR. THRUSH: Yeah. I really want to – we're working on it. I have a pretty complex day job, so that kind of messes things up. But I think this is the best – but I'm actually going to throw that question to Bob, because he's got a longer time frame on this. I mean, how do you think – you know, how do you think that changed from having – you know, waiting for the paper to hit the pavement at 5:00 a.m. versus what we have now?

MR. SCHIEFFER: Well, the thing is, we have access to more information. And the Post, the Times, they've completely overhauled themselves, even more than they realize, I think sometimes. I mean, they are now media companies and they're multiplatform media companies, and they're finding more and more ways to reach people. But the part that really concerns me is, you know, we have so much information now that we simply can't process it. Walt Mossberg, who is just now retiring – you know, was at The Wall Street Journal for so long – he said: The problem now is we have a lot more information, but the curation is – the curation hasn't caught up with the amount of information we have.

Because, what's a newspaper? It's a curated collection of news stories. And so we're going to get there, but we're just not there yet. Anne Applebaum in the Post wrote at one point talking about – that Martin Luther said that the printing press was God's greatest extremist gift. I mean, that's a quote from Martin Luther. He said that. But while the printing press changed the world – we had the reformation, the counter-reformation and all of that – there were also 30 years of religious wars. And as Anne Applebaum said, eventually equilibrium was reached. We are not there yet. We haven't reached equilibrium yet.

MR. THRUSH: I wonder if Trump isn't actually the mechanism for that equilibrium to be created, because he has adopted such an extreme – well, Kellyanne Conway, who I think is – again, personally, is someone who I like a lot dealing with personally – when she – she did the world a great favor by coining that phrase, alternative facts. I mean, I think that was an immense favor. And I think Trump by calling us enemies of the people has done us an immense favor, because I think people really had to decide which side of this battle are you on.

And I think ultimately, people will – because the point that you made about Trump talking with the Times is the same reason why people read the Times. You may bitch about us, you may complain, you may think we're biased, but you keep coming to us because you know intuitively what you're going to get is the truth. And I think people, regardless of what they might say or yell, they will keep coming to – and curation, I think, is exactly right. Editorial control of the product, you can't get away from that. You as an editor or as an anchor or as a reporter are making qualitative decisions every step of the way.

And that's why this – the old notion of – I think we are very much undone by kind of the 1950 to 1980 vision of, quote/unquote, "objectivity." I think there was a greatest generation effect, where I think reporters tended to identify themselves as completely neutral arbiters. That was never the case. It will never be the case. The best that we can do is sort of put our biases off to the side and give you the best version of what we know is the truth. And you, as a reader, need to make that judgement.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Glenn Thrush, it has been a thrill. I must say, I mean it's – and it's been a whole lot of fun to talk to you. I love to talk about reporting. I love to talk about journalism. And I love to talk about news. And it was just one of the highlights of the year for me to have you come and talk to us. It was just great.

MR. THRUSH: Wow. Well, can I add the highlight of my year two years ago was – I don't know if you remember this – we were in the Louvre – do you remember running –

MR. SCHIEFFER: Yes.

MR. THRUSH: I am walking into the Louvre, and all of these tourists are taking selfies with the Mona Lisa, and there's some guy standing next to me doing what I'm doing, taking a picture of people taking pictures of themselves.

MR. SCHIEFFER: (Laughs.) Yeah, exactly.

MR. THRUSH: And I say, excuse me. And it's Bob Schieffer. (Laughter.) And of course, what we did, is we took a selfie.

MR. SCHIEFFER: Of course we did. (Laughter.) But was – it really kind summed up where we are.

MR. THRUSH: It did, totally.

MR. SCHIEFFER: It really did. Well, it's a great to see you again. And thanks so much.

MR. THRUSH: Great to see you.

MR. SCHIEFFER: For Andrew Schwartz, this is Bob Schieffer. Thanks for listening.

(Music plays.)

(END)