

*The New York Times's The Interview*

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LULU GARCIA-NAVARRO: Thank you so much for coming in. I know that this is a very difficult moment. You were just fired from the news organization, which you were at the heart of for 37 years –

SCOTT PELLEY: I can't believe I'm hearing those words.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: – CBS News.

PELLEY: Yes.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: I want to actually start by just asking you how you're feeling in this moment before we start how you got here.

PELLEY: Well, if we want to talk about it at an emotional level, the best thing that I can imagine in terms of describing it is that it's like your spouse was murdered. There's some moments of the day I feel fine. There are some moments of the day that I just frankly fall apart when I least expect it, not that there's any particular trigger, but I do want to be clear that I do not feel sorry for me. I don't care about me. I'm fine. I care about these people that I left behind, the people who are still trapped there, and this institution that I love so much. You said that I've been there 37 years. I've been married 42 years, so that's the depth of my devotion.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Let's talk about how we got to this moment. A few days before you're firing, several high-profile *60 Minutes* correspondents and leaders were fired. Leading up to that, there'd been a lot of reporting about changes that were coming to *60 Minutes*. Was that the sort of change you were expecting?

PELLEY: I – no one saw the Black Thursday massacre coming. This is our entire senior staff. People beloved, Tonya Simon, are executive producer. She's the boss, and this was her triumph. She's the first woman ever to be executive producer of *60 Minutes*, and she concluded this season with a growth in our audience of nine percent, which is unheard of in broadcast television, and a growth in our online presence of 190 percent. Last season, we had 2.5 billion views. That's a third of humanity, so we're riding high. This management team has been brilliant. Tonya has the best first year of any executive producer, and I've worked for all of them, and then the night before. Tonya and I and Draggan Mihailovich, her deputy, et cetera, were all at the Emmy Awards, and we win two Emmy Awards. Within hours, all of those people have been wiped out, and one third of our correspondence have been fired. And at the same moment that that happens, we are informed of our new executive producer. His name is Nick

Bilton. I'm sure he must be a wonderful man, but no one had ever heard of him. He has zero experience in television news, and no experience in management. So, imagine how we feel when someone like that comes into a shop like *60 Minutes*.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Explain to me exactly how you felt.

PELLEY: Shock, dismay, impossible to believe, searching desperately for an explanation, knowing that an explanation would be forthcoming and then not seeing that. No executive at CBS news, our editor-in-chief, Bari Weiss, coming over to *60 Minutes* to explain, to talk with us, to sit with us. That's a family at *60 Minutes*. My colleagues and I have worked together 10, 20, 30 years. We travel together, we dine together, we go into literal combat together. My former boss and former producer Bill Owens – [CRYING] – saved my life in a firefight in Iraq. So, Lulu, these bonds are pretty tight. And when somebody wipes out, murders a large number of your family members, people are hurt and shocked in disbelief and just desperate for some explanation. And as you and I sit here today, there still has been none.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: CBS leadership says that they tried to get in touch with you to talk about all of those changes before Bilton's first day. And you didn't speak to them. Why not?

PELLEY: I'm almost 69 years old. And if I've learned one thing in life, it is not to reflexively react when you feel that way. And I thought, you know, I'm going to give it a day or something. I'm too emotionally wrought up. I'm going to say the wrong thing. I'm not going to hear what they have to say. This isn't the moment. It was incredible to me that they did reach out to talk to me after wiping all these people out. I mean, within hours. So, we had a baby shower at the house. And we got through the weekend. And I learned that Nick Bilton was going to speak to the *60 Minute* staff on that next Monday morning. My wife and I had a long-planned hiking trip in the Canadian Rockies planned. And I wasn't going to be able to be at the meeting. And she and I talked about it, realized that this was an existential moment for *60 Minutes*. So, we canceled the vacation, so I could be there. And that was the first time that I had an opportunity to meet Nick Bilton.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: At that meeting, you spoke up very forcefully. You asked him why he'd taken the job knowing. And this is a quote that you will never be welcome here. Why did you decide to have that first interaction with your new boss and public and not behind closed doors?

GARCIA-NAVARRO: It wasn't in public. It was behind closed doors. I was with my family in a closed room. None of this was meant to be public. But Lulu, imagine I'm walking into this room with these people who have devoted their lives to *60 Minutes*. They have not received any kind of explanation. They are waiting for Bari Weiss to walk in the room in the hope that she's going to explain why this tragedy has occurred and why it was so necessary. And I'm waiting to see who comes in and it's Nick Bilton and one of Bari's deputies, no Bari. People are a little shocked

by this. As we're standing in there, Nick makes his way to the front of the room and does something absolutely jaw dropping to me. He pulls out his phone and begins reading a statement off his phone in a room full of 50 heartbroken people. The callousness, the tone, deafness of that, you could hear the groan in the room when that happened. They'd put out a big spread of bagels like we were all going to feel better. And also, if I can give you a little bit of context –

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Please.

PELLEY: – what had happened a couple of days before the meeting was so critical. Nick Bilton wrote an email to the staff, sort of introducing himself. And it was so insulting to the staff and so insulting to the history of *60 Minutes*. He told us in that email that it wasn't 1968 anymore. And he helped fully noted that gasoline doesn't cost 32 cents anymore. And suggested that we had all been frozen in amber in 1968 when the program first went on the air and that nothing had improved. And he said in his email that it was "strange" that *60 Minutes* is only on the air at 7:00 Eastern time on Sunday once a week. When we've been on the air 24/7 globally, online for well over a decade. It betrayed the fact that Nick Bilton and didn't know anything about us, didn't know anything about our culture. And yet, was being imposed on us as our new executive producer, our new leader. So, people read that memo. It's very concerning. It's heartbreaking. It's hard to compare this to anything other than something that actually could happen to your family. It's a very loving and empathetic organization. And we were met with cold callous indifference to what anyone thought.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Why did you feel that you were the person that needed to get the answers to the questions that you had and everyone had at that meeting? Why did you feel compelled to speak up?

PELLEY: It was fate. First of all, our entire senior staff had been wiped out there and out there. I looked around the room, I'm the only correspondent there, which surprised me very much. I learned that my colleagues were out shooting stories as they should be in the month of June. But I'm the only correspondent there, which surprised me. And I looked around at my friends and colleagues in the room and realized I was the senior person. Only I could do it. None of them could be asked to take that risk. So, when I saw Nick Bilton's email and then saw him reading to my broken-hearted people off his phone, I felt that somebody had to stand up for the broadcast, not just the broadcast, but the people. There are people in that room who go to war zones when they are pregnant. [SOBBING] Newsrooms are sort of like the military or the police or the beautiful people at the FDNY down the street. It is a life-threatening job in many instances. And very strong bonds, very emotional bonds are found or are developed in that kind of setting. And to have people running CBS News who don't know that, have never felt that, and don't understand it, is a tragedy I never expected to see.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: You know, Bari Weiss came into the job with a mandate to evolve and modernize CBS News to reinvent legacy media. In that meeting, you said, Weiss was, and I'm quoting him, "murdering 60 Minutes," language that you've used here. Can you explain to me what you mean by that? You're using words like massacre, murder. What do you mean by that?

PELLEY: It was the wholesale nature of it. Our senior staff wiped out after a triumphal year. Let's remember that. If the ratings had collapsed or there was some journalistic scandal about a story, then, okay, we deserve it. But we had a triumphal year. So, this is incredibly difficult to understand. Cecilia Vega, Sharyn Alfonsi, our very best correspondents, just summarily fired for no stated reason. And without explanation, this is one third of our correspondent core. So, this isn't like they fired our boss, which they did. They wiped out a large number of people. One of the things Nick Bilton said in that ill-fated email to the staff was that he was excited to tell – I'm paraphrasing here – he was excited to tell the staff about the new crop of correspondence. And when I saw that, I thought, okay, they're going to fire all of us. Eventually, that's the plan. He put it in writing for all of us to see. And so, that's why I use these admittedly for a journalist, hyperbolic terms. They capture the scale of what happened.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: You then do have a meeting with CBS leadership after this very contentious interaction. Can you tell me about that meeting? And if you were at that point going and expecting to be fired?

PELLEY: Oh, gosh. Furthest thing, for my mind, it hadn't occurred to me. The president, CBS News, Tom Cibrowski sent me a note and said, can you come by and talk to us? And I said, absolutely. I scheduled about an hour on my calendar for the meeting. I didn't know who was going to be there in the meeting. So, I walk in the door and I see Bari Weiss is sitting in there. And I think this is terrific of her. She's come to this meeting. And now I'm going to be able to ask her these questions. She's going to be able to explain what happened.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: But it really didn't occur to you that you could be fired after so many of your colleagues had been let go after you'd had this, you know, very contentious interaction with your new boss?

PELLEY: You know, some reporter, I turned out to be. I just didn't connect the dots. I mean, was this meeting contentious? Yes, but *60 Minutes* is known for two things, a ticking stopwatch and hard questions. And we ask ourselves those hard questions in the shop because they sharpen us and make us better. There was a screening once with Mike Wallace and Mike and the executive producer and founder of *60 Minutes*, Don Hewitt, got into a big argument about a script. Wallace jumps up in the middle of the screening, throws his script up in the air and yells at Don. Well, then you write the f'ing thing. One of those pieces of paper comes down and slices an associate producer across the face. He's bleeding now. He's got a paper cut on his face. That was

about a story. The meeting that I was in was about whether *60 Minutes* was going to even survive or not.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: So, you walk in, and what was the energy of the room?

PELLEY: Hostile, dismissive before I could take my seat. Tom Cibrowski said, this is a firing offense. I was confused. I wasn't sure who he was talking about in the room, but it became plain very quickly that they were talking about me and they were unhappy about the meeting that had occurred, a meeting that had ended in thunderous applause for me, if I may say so, because somebody had stood up for the broadcast. So, I said, damn, okay, well, let's talk about it. Tom accuses me of physically abusing Nick Bilton. This is a lie. I didn't come within 10 feet of Nick Bilton. In my life, I have never put my hands on anyone in anger, not one time. And when he was caught in that lie, he said, well, okay, I take that back. And I said, great. Conversation proceeded a little bit. I turned a Bari Weiss who was sitting to my left. And I said, but let's, you know, let's talk about the firings. Why were the firings necessary? I'm not answering that question. Well, how did Tanya Simon not lead the broadcast brilliantly? I'm not answering that question. Okay, Sharyn Alfonsi, Cecilia Vega, what possible reason could there be to take them off the air? I'm not answering that question. So, now I'm detecting a pattern. That's going to go nowhere. She is still going to stone wall about why she took all these people out. So, I'm thinking that the meeting's going to carry on, we're going to have a long conversation. I'm going to hear from them about what they think. They're going to hear from me about what I think. The temperature in the room is low, but it's very hostile from their side. I'm speaking about the way I'm speaking to you now. Very quickly after the meeting began, Tom Cibrowski said, this conversation is over. I was stunned. I didn't have a *60 Minute* stopwatch in that room. I don't know how long it lasted really, but I think it was about 10 minutes. So, they tell me that is – say - - Tom Cibrowski tells me as I'm walking through the door, you'll have our answer in a few minutes. I went over to my office and much to my surprise. All of my guys on my team were still there. They wanted to know what happened in the meeting. What was that all about? Did they explain why our people were fired? And I sat down in my office. It has a big plate glass window that looks out on the newsroom. And there were a whole bunch of people standing out there, but I didn't think anything of it. I'm waiting to find out what my fate is. I explained to my team, I think I just got fired, but they haven't told me that. And I look up and all those people are still out there and the staff members and I don't think anything of it, and then it hits me. This is a vigil. An hour goes by, two hours go by, three hours go by, four hours go by. And I go back outside and said, I'm leaving. You've been standing out there for four hours. I said, I'm leaving. You guys have got to go home to your families right now. I doubt they're going to tell me tonight, so I packed up and left just so those people would go home. And not long after that, the email came through and said that I'd been fired.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Just to understand your position in this, you would have been open to a path forward. You wanted to remain at *60 Minutes*?

PELLEY: Absolutely. A path forward to me was an obvious conclusion for what this meeting was going to be about. That's exactly what I thought. And I expected them to say, look, this is why we had to fire everybody. I mean, your question is Scott or valid. And here's why we did what we did. So, stay at *60 Minutes*? Absolutely. It didn't occur to me that this could happen.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: But, Scott, in a meeting, you accused Bari Weiss, the head of the network of wanting to murder the show, of coming into *60 Minutes* with the agenda to dismantle the institution. And you did not think that that was going to have repercussions that could lead to your firing?

PELLEY: We used to be able to have conversations like that at CBS News. The difference today is that the people running CBS News will not be questioned.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: I want to take a step back because, of course, all this didn't happen in a vacuum. The saga really at CBS News began when David Ellison, the son of Oracle billionaire, Larry Ellison, took over CBS as part of his purchase of Paramount. There was a lot of turmoil around that sale. The longtime previous owner of Paramount and CBS Shari Redstone told my *New York Times* colleague that she sold the company to Ellison in part because after Hamas's attack on Israel on October 7, she wanted to devote herself to causes around Israel. I'm sure there were other reasons as well. Did you ever speak to Ms. Redstone about the sale? And how did you feel about it?

PELLEY: I didn't speak to Shari Redstone about the sale. I felt the sale was very necessary. The company was in financial trouble. It wasn't clear what our path forward was going to be just as a company. Mr. Ellison came in with a lot of money behind it, a young man of vision, and I thought this is going to be very good for all of us. The very last thing that the previous ownership did was pay a multi-million-dollar bribe to the President to settle this frivolous, ridiculous lawsuit, and very shortly after that, somehow, the Trump administration approved the sale. So, that lawsuit against *60 Minutes* had caused a great deal of concern, *60 Minutes*, paying the bribe, broke our hearts. No lawyer thought that was necessary, but they did it to get the sale through. And at that point, my colleagues and I thought, great, that's behind us. We have bright new leadership with financial resources. We're in better shape than we were before. That was the theory.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Just to give the context here, President Trump had sued *60 Minutes* over an interview of Vice President Kamala Harris during the 2024 election. As you mentioned, Paramount, under Shari Redstone, settled the case, even though many legal experts believed that there was no merit to the suit, and they paid \$16 million to the president. Paramount

denied that those two things were linked, that payment, and then the deal going through. [PELLEY LAUGHS] And correct me if I'm wrong. Am I hearing you say that you supported the sale to Ellison? Had you lost confidence in the leadership of Sherry Redstone at that point?

PELLEY: They bribed the President to get the deal done. So, yeah, there was a massive collapse of confidence in the previous ownership.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: So, the deal goes through, and Ellison takes over. What assurances, if any, did you get from David Ellison and the new leadership that there wouldn't be interference at 60 minutes? Did you ask for those assurances? Did you speak with David Ellison?

PELLEY: The morning the merger was announced as complete, I was amazed that, as far as I know, the first stop that David Ellison made in his new empire was *60 Minutes*, CBS News. First thing in the morning, here he's walking through the *60 Minutes* offices. He comes and walks into my office and extends his hand and says, I'm proud to meet you, sir, he called me. I guess I'm just old. And I told him how wonderful it was to meet him. He walked out into our newsroom and made a very nice speech about independence, about how important *60 Minutes* was to the corporation writ large and essentially telling everybody that they were going to take care of us. We were walking on air. We liked him. He had the financial backing to back up his words and we thought a bright new era was coming after all the previous difficulty.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Ellison then hires Bari Weiss to run CBS News. Weiss, we should say, is a former opinion writer at *The New York Times* who left to start her own publication after claiming bias in *The Times's* opinion section. I never worked with her for the record. The Free Press, which she launched is generally pro-Israel. It builds itself as pushing against what it sees as the mainstream media. What did you make of her appointment?

PELLEY: I was not familiar with her name, so I did some research and discovered those things that you just outlined. She was going to be the new editor-in-chief at CBS News. There never had been a title like that at CBS News. It's sort of a print title. It doesn't really translate to television, but she wanted to call herself that. What concerned me was that she had zero television experience and had never managed a large global operation like CBS News. Those were red flags to me, but I thought, you know, David Ellison thinks she's the right person for the job. We are absolutely going to welcome her, listen to her, and give her the benefit of the doubt.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: I mean, I'm surprised that you hadn't heard of her. She's a lightning rod in journalism.

PELLEY: You know, she just hadn't crossed my radar, and if I hadn't heard of Bari Weiss at that point in time that probably tells you more about me than it does her.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: So, when Bari comes in, she has a meeting with senior *60 Minutes* staffers, and in that meeting, she asked, and I'm quoting, why does the country think you're biased? Is that a correct assessment of that?

PELLEY: I wasn't there, but that is what I've been told by my colleagues who were there, and they were shocked that was sort of her hello to the staff at *60 Minutes*.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: What was the feeling about that particular opening salvo to the team?

PELLEY: Uh-oh. She, I am told, said something to the effect of why do you think the country thinks you're biased, but she didn't offer any kind of a metric, you know, what's your metric? Why do you think so? Do you have a poll? Is there a – market research? What are you talking about? Because we certainly didn't believe that, and we just felt that she was making statements that perhaps she couldn't back up and was coming into the news division with hardened preconceived notions that didn't seem to be thought through.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: You have now accused Weiss of injecting, and I'm quoting, here, "falsehoods and bias." This was in your parting statement, into at least one of your politically sensitive stories. Can you tell me the nature of that complaint? What did she specifically ask for? What story are you talking about?

PELLEY: As I recall, that's February, and my team and I are doing a story about the protests in Minneapolis against the ICE crackdown there. We've interviewed Senator Rand Paul, Republican, because he's going to hold hearings into this, and the fact that Republican was going to do that was quite newsworthy. So, we interviewed Senator Paul, and then built out a story about what had happened, the killing of Renee Good, the killing of Alex Pretti, the protests. I felt it was very important to identify that the protesters themselves were being very aggressive, and that they were half of these confrontations. And so, I instructed my producers to find images over the past few weeks of these protests, in which we see the protesters acting aggressively. We found a picture of a protester, chest bumping, an officer. We found a picture of an officer being hit in the head with a snowball. We culled together a lot of video of protesters screaming in the faces of officers, because we were going to talk about the killing of Pretti, and the killing of Good. And it seemed to me important to tell the audience about the entire context. In fact, I remember writing a line in the story that said that the protesters were pushing the boundaries of what it means to peacefully assemble, taking the language from the First Amendment. And I thought we'd done a really good job with this. We also included a picture of Alex Pretti before he was killed kicking out a taillight on a police car. And made a point of saying, "this is Alex Pretti, and this is what he did." So, the story goes through screenings. It's very well received. There are notes as always, and we do rewrites as always. But this is on a very tight deadline. It's Sunday. We're going on the air that night. And in the case of stories that are, as we

say, crashing, meaning right against the deadline, our deadline on Sunday is noon. So, we work on all of these things. We get the piece approved by everyone. And about four hours after our deadline, Bari Weiss sends an email to my boss, Tanya Simon. Two of the things in the email include, "can we make the protesters look more violent?" Now, I'm paraphrasing. I don't have the quote. But that's what was communicated to me. And the other thing was, Renee Good's car. You need to describe her as driving toward the officer. This is not what you see on the video. On the video, you see the officer standing slightly off the front of the car. And you clearly see Ms. Good's wheels turned completely as far as they will go away from the officer. But he shoots her in the head, kills her, and says something about her in that moment that I can't repeat in polite company. So, we have gone out of our way in our plan from the very beginning to show the protesters for the responsibility that they had. We had already scrubbed the video archives, looking for those scenes. But somehow wasn't enough for Ms. Weiss. The video showed that the officer wasn't standing in front of the car and she wasn't driving toward him. But that's what the President said about that. And that's the way she wanted it described.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: To be clear, there were lots of videos that showed different moments of that interaction. And there was a big many analyses subsequently about what exactly through those various videos had actually happened.

PELLEY: Including an excellent one by *The New York Times*. The video that I showed in our piece clearly showed the officer's feet. So, if he's standing in front of the car, you can't see his feet. And it very clearly showed that the wheels were turned away from him. What appeared to be the maximum turn until the wheel had stopped.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: So, you get those suggestions, feedback from the sort of editorial chief of CBS News. What did you do? I mean, did you do as she asked?

PELLEY: I asked my producers, look, I told you to find violent video of the protesters so we could represent that accurately. Now, I want you to go back and look again. Did we leave anything out that's important? What did we make a mistake here? I don't think so, but go back and look. And then I sat down with a video editor and I went over the video of the Renee Good killing over and over and over again, stop motion, slow motion, etc., and realized that the event was not as the President said and not the way Bari Weiss remembered it. And so, it's late. Our deadline was noon. It's now almost five o'clock. That's dangerous as hell. And so, I decided that I wouldn't do those things. I wasn't going to get in a debate about it. I wasn't going to call Bari Weiss about it. I was just going to refuse to make those changes.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Did you change any language in the broadcast?

PELLEY: Anything not that I recall based on her notes, but as you probably are aware, when you're doing a story, especially on deadline, a lot of things happen. There's a lot of input and

you're just scrambling to save everybody's skin because you're going to have a crash if you, which is what happened. Next day, I didn't hear anything. Nobody called. Nobody said anything. It occurred to me that maybe Bari Weiss didn't see the broadcast and didn't realize that those changes hadn't been made, but that's how that happened. There was a thumb on the scale for the President's version of events that I felt was a level of political influence that I had never seen in 37 years at CBS News.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Why was that the interpretation? I mean, could she not have been trying to be fair to the administration at a moment of very high tension?

GARCIA-NAVARRO: She could have been trying to be fair to the administration except I felt that the story was abundantly fair to the administration and to the ICE officers and to the Border Patrol officers who were caught in that moment. We were being told to write a version of events that conflicted with the video account. I couldn't understand that. We had already done, in my view, the important work of journalism to balance the story – finally, the story is not out of balance. It's not out of balance, but there was a thumb on the scale to push the balance a little further in another direction.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Is it possible to see this as the system working? She had notes. You felt they didn't make sense to take the peace ran and there was no retaliation.

PELLEY: Well, it was the interference as a problem, especially a story that's been approved by the top editors. And the bigger problem, Lulu, frankly, is not any kind of political influence. The problem was the incompetence. You don't break a deadline. Now, this is four hours after. That episode of *60 Minutes* came within 19 minutes of not making air, the entire hour of *60 Minutes*. It was the night of the Grammys. *60 Minutes* was the lead in to the Grammys. And we almost didn't have a broadcast. 19 minutes. I can't imagine that's ever happened before. And I pledged to myself at that time that no matter what Bari Weiss wanted to do in a story, I would never break the deadline again because we put the entire network in jeopardy.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Scott, I want to ask you point blank. What did you think was going on with Bari Weiss? Why did you think she was asking for these things?

PELLEY: The impression that I had at the moment was that she was representing – let me try I either kind of need to be a little bit careful here because I don't want to be hyperbolic – my impression at the time was that she was putting a thumb on the scale on behalf of the administration. Just constantly looking out for the views of the President. We're reporting those views. There's nothing wrong with reporting those views, but it was it was never enough. Always needed more from the president, from the administration. That's sort of thing. The balance was off. We've been working for balance for decades, and for the first time in my career, the balance was off.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: I mean, we should say Cecilia Vega, who was recently fired, also alleged interference in *60 Minutes* after she was let go, Sharyn Alfonsi, as well. You are now doing the same. These are three highly respected, long-time journalists who are basically echoing the same claim. CBS has denied any bias or interference, saying in a recent statement that “changes and disputes were merely the normal back and forth between editor and correspondent that happens in every newsroom.” I just want to pause before we go on a more generous interpretation of Weiss’s tenure might be, that her missteps have been due to a lack of experience, not deliberate bias, or malice. You know, just thinking again about your comment, about her murdering *60 Minutes*, could in experience be the real problem and less a conspiracy to do away with CBS News?

PELLEY: I think inexperience is the larger part of the problem. At a certain point, I began to think that a political bias was going to be our big problem. And then later, it occurred to me that it was the inexperience, the incompetence that was the bigger problem, the breaking of deadlines, all that kind of thing. I will never do that again. That was an existential experience. I mean, we are required to do our jobs. And so, the most difficult thing I think for the staff is trying to make up for all of these missteps in terms of our production and in terms of the technical aspects of television. It’s been enormously stressful.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Another high-profile *60 Minutes* host Anderson Cooper declined to renew his contract to this year. And at the end of his final show, he went on air and said, I hope *60 Minutes* remains *60 Minutes*. That was seen as a swipe at Bari Weiss. Did you talk to Anderson about why he did not renew his contract and his reasons for leaving?

PELLEY: I did not.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Okay. Was his declining to renew his contract seen as a problem for *60 Minutes* or – or a sign that something was amiss? I mean, how did you receive that news?

PELLEY: Well, correspondents don’t resign from *60 Minutes*. It’s, for people like me, it’s a greatest job in the world. There is nothing else to aspire to. And so, if a person of Anderson Cooper’s stature decides that he has to leave the broadcast, that’s an indication that he has found his role there untenable.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: It’s been reported that Bari Weiss was upset that Anderson Cooper’s comments had aired in that way.

PELLEY: That’s my understanding.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Do you think that was part of the reason executive producer Tony Simon was let go?

PELLEY: Yes. My understanding from people directly involved in that interaction is that Bari Weiss was quite livid that Anderson Cooper was allowed to say those things and that she Bari was not consulted beforehand, which in our normal course of business would not have been done anyway. And I believe that that was part of the reason Tanya was let go. But she wasn't let go for a cause. She was let go to create a space for the new person, Nick Bilton, to come in. Tanya was completely blindsided by this. She was told that she was coming into a meeting to discuss the past season and the next season, kind of lessons learned and planning meeting. So, she doesn't go there with a lawyer or with a witness of any kind. She walks in. She sits down. I'm told that Tom Cibrowski and Bari Weiss are in there. And Tom starts the meeting with the nature of this meeting has changed. We're letting you go. And just told her she was fired and had to get out of her office by five o'clock. Can I give you a little bit of background? The Simon family is legendary at CBS News. Her father was a famous Vietnam correspondent and then Bob Simon covered every single war everywhere in the world throughout his entire career. I was with him in Kuwait during the Gulf War in 1990. We would stand on the roof of the hotel and watch the missiles come in. He taught me how to be a war correspondent. And then Tanya Simon comes in. She's at the broadcast 30 years. There is no respect for that. Get out of the office by five o'clock. What company in the world treats their precious people in that way? The callousness, the inhumanity, breathtaking, complete lack of empathy in this management for anyone who works there. How can you have someone who deserves so much respect? Tanya Simon – [CRYING] – spent her whole childhood waiting for the call that her father was dead. Never knowing if she would ever see him again. Her whole childhood! Get out by five o'clock. [CRYING] Make of that what you will.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: I can hear how much this has hurt you.

PELLEY: Yes, it's like your spouse being murdered. And I don't care about me. It's not about me. I am not emotional about this because I have lost this job. I've done it for a long time. I've had the greatest experiences, but the people I leave behind treated in this way, that breaks my heart. And it's going to take me a long time to get over it, to be perfectly honest.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: One of the arguments that Bari Weiss has made about *60 Minutes* in CBS news is that they need to be brought into the modern era. Nick Bilton also said in a staff meeting with you that broadcast is an ice cube that is melting. Do you think they have a point and that 60 minutes needs to change even if it's reaching a huge audience now? Does its metabolism do the kinds of correspondence that it has have to change to reach a younger audience that interacts with media in a completely different way and looks at journalists, perhaps like you as something from a different era?

PELLEY: Too old. Of course, we have to reach out to a younger and younger audience. But their argument about joining the internet age is disingenuous. It's almost as if Bari Weiss and Nick

Bilton were sealed in a time capsule in 1990 and it just cracked open. They've just discovered the internet and they're running around telling everybody how important it is. At CBS News, yeah, join the fight. We started our first *60 Minutes* online show – *60 Minutes Overtime* — in 2010. I shoot TikTok verticals or I used to shoot TikTok verticals on every assignment. I shot material for *Overtime* on every assignment. We're there. We're everywhere.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: So, you don't think *60 Minutes* needs to change?

PELLEY: My point is that *60 Minutes* is constantly changing, constantly innovating. So, I just find the charge that we at *60 Minutes* were frozen in amber in 1968 and nothing's ever changed since then, I find that absolutely absurd and the kind of argument that would be made by people who just don't know what we are.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Nick Bilton sent a very conciliatory note to the staff this past week.

PELLEY: At last.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: He promised editorial independence. He praised some of your long-time colleagues, Leslie Stahl, Bill Whitaker, Jon Wertheim. And I just want to say my producer just told me that while we've been talking, those three released a statement that they are staying at *60 Minutes*. How does that make you feel?

PELLEY: Same reason I was staying. We felt like – I haven't talked to them. I assume it's the same reason. And we have had conversations before this about staying to maintain the principles of the broadcast. If we leave, we can't help. And that was my opinion. There had been other times when Anderson left, when others were fired, that we could have stormed into a meeting and quit. But those very distinguished correspondents and myself did have conversations about this over time and decided that we were better working on the inside and that we could influence things for the better. And we did. And it was my intention to stay and do exactly that.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Do you think though they can trust those assurances?

PELLEY: No. No. I would venture to say that trust is broken.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Do you think Bari Weiss needs to be removed?

PELLEY: Oh, gosh, yes. She's a lovely person. And her Free Press organization that she founded has been very successful. She's proven that great for her. But television's not her thing. She brings an ideology into CBS News where that is just anathema. And so, it's a terrible fit. It's probably not her fault. But it's just a terrible fit. She doesn't know television. She doesn't understand how it works. She doesn't have management experience for a large organization like CBS News. So, yes, I do think that we would be far better off without her. Maybe she goes back to The Free Press and has a sterling career. But this is like somebody walking up to me and

saying, there's a 747. There are 400 people on it. We need you to fly it to Paris. I'm going to decline because I don't have a clue. And it would have been so much better if Bari Weiss had been offered this job and said, oh, that's not for me. I don't know how to do that.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: President Trump reacted to your being fired.

PELLEY: Did he?

GARCIA-NAVARRO: He went on a podcast and called you a stiff. And he also –

PELLEY: I'm surprised that the president of the United States would bother to notice. But okay, please tell me. I'm not aware of this.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: He also said you were part of this gang of stupid crooked people that don't care about your country.

PELLEY: Stupid. I can take that. Stiff, yeah, probably. Don't care about the country? [CRYING] I've never worn the uniform, but I've been in combat for this country in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait, been shot at. Spent nights in foxholes filling up with water in the desert. I'm not aware that the President of the United States has ever done any of those things for his country. Please correct me if I'm wrong. You become a journalist because you love the First Amendment. You become a journalist because you love the country. And while all the other descriptions that the President used about me might be applicable, not that one. [CRYING] There is no democracy without journalism. It can't be done. And that is why I am a journalist.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Last few questions.

PELLEY: You know, in Fox News are going to just run the parts where I'm crying and say I'm a lunatic.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: The era we live in.

PELLEY: It is the era we live in.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Scott, you joined CBS's reporter in 1989.

PELLEY: Proudest day of my life.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: You know, as I was preparing for this interview, I was thinking about in many ways how the story of modern CBS is the story of your own career too. When you look back, because your tenure is now over, what do you hope your departure does? What do you hope will happen now?

PELLEY: My hope is that the leadership of Paramount will say to themselves, okay, this isn't working. We have broadcast that almost don't get on the air. We have respected journalists

saying that there is a thumb on the scale for one political party over another. We have a broadcast which is among the most important in America, the most successful in the history of all of television, it was doing great, so why are we making these changes? We need adult supervision. And at the moment, we don't have it. We have people who have been installed in these jobs who, through no fault of their own, have no experience in television. It's not their fault, but they don't know what they're doing, and there's a subtle political bias that I've never seen at *60 Minutes* before, and so – or at CBS News before. And so, that is my hope. A return to sanity, a return to honor, a return to courage. We used to have all of those things in abundance. And now, we don't. We can save this. It's possible to land this plane. But right now, CBS News, in my view, is on fire.

GARCIA-NAVARRO: Scott Pelley, thank you so much for coming in today.