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THE FOGHORN

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“Cutting Through the Fog of War”

Bill O’Reilly Has His Own Brian Williams Problem

The Fox News host has said he was in a “war zone” that apparently no American correspondent reached.

—By David Corn and Daniel SchulmanEmail

After NBC News suspended anchor Brian Williams for erroneously claiming that he was nearly shot down in a helicopter while covering the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, Fox News host Bill O’Reilly went on a tear. On his television show, the top-rated cable news anchor declared that the American press isn’t “half as responsible as the men who forged the nation.” He bemoaned the supposed culture of deception within the liberal media, and he proclaimed that the Williams controversy should prompt questioning of other “distortions” by left-leaning outlets. Yet for years, O’Reilly has recounted dramatic stories about his own war reporting that don’t withstand scrutiny—even claiming he acted heroically in a war zone that he apparently never set foot in.

O’Reilly has repeatedly told his audience that he was a war correspondent during the Falklands war and that he experienced combat during that 1982 conflict between England and Argentina. He has often invoked this experience to emphasize that he understands war as only someone who has witnessed it could. As he once put it, “I’ve been there. That’s really what separates me from most of these other bloviators. I bloviate, but I bloviate about stuff I’ve seen. They bloviate about stuff that they haven’t.”

In his 2001 book, *The No Spin Zone: Confrontations With the Powerful and Famous in America*, O’Reilly stated, “You know that I am not easily shocked. I’ve reported on the ground in active war zones from El Salvador to the Falklands.”

Conservative journalist Tucker Carlson, in a 2003 book, described how O’Reilly answered a question during a Washington panel discussion about media coverage of the Afghanistan war: “Rather than simply answer the question, O’Reilly began by trying to establish his own bona fides as a war correspondent. ‘I’ve covered wars, okay? I’ve been there. The Falklands, Northern Ireland, the Middle East. I’ve almost been killed three times, okay.’”

In a 2004 column about US soldiers fighting in Iraq, O’Reilly noted, “Having survived a combat situation in Argentina during the Falklands war, I know that life-and-death decisions are made in a flash.”

In 2008, he took a shot at journalist Bill Moyers, saying, “I missed Moyers in the war zones of [the] Falkland conflict in Argentina, the Middle East, and Northern Ireland. I looked for Bill, but I didn’t see him.”

In April 2013, while discussing the Boston Marathon bombing, O’Reilly shared a heroic tale of his exploits in the Falklands war:

I was in a situation one time, in a war zone in Argentina, in the Falklands, where my photographer got run down and then hit his head and was bleeding from the ear on the concrete. And the army was chasing us. I had to make a decision. And I dragged him off, you know, but at the same time, I’m looking around and trying to do my job, but I figure I had to get this guy out of there because that was more important.

Yet his own account of his time in Argentina in his 2001 book, *The No Spin Zone*, contains no references to O’Reilly experiencing or covering any combat during the Falklands war. In the book, which in part chronicles his troubled stint as a CBS News reporter, O’Reilly reports that he arrived in Buenos Aires soon before the Argentine junta surrendered to the British, ending the 10-week war over control of two territories far off the coast of Argentina. There is nothing in this memoir indicating that O’Reilly witnessed the fighting between British and Argentine military forces—or that he got anywhere close to the Falkland Islands, which are 300 miles off Argentina’s shore and about 1,200 miles south of Buenos Aires.

“Nobody from CBS got to the Falklands,” says Bob Schieffer. “For us, you were a thousand miles from where the fighting was. So we had some great meals.” Given the remote location of the war zone—which included the British territory of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, more than 1,400 miles offshore—few reporters were able to witness and report on the combat that claimed the lives of about 900 Ar-

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gentine and British troops. The government in London only allowed about 30 British journalists to accompany its military forces. As Caroline Wyatt, the BBC's defense correspondent, recently noted, "It was a war in which a small group of correspondents and crews sailing with the Royal Navy were almost entirely dependent upon the military—not only for access to the conflict, but also for the means of reporting it back to the UK." And Robert Fox, one of the embedded British reporters, recalled, "We were, in all, a party of about 32-34 accredited journalists, photographers, television crew members. We were all white, male, and British. There was no embedded reporter from Europe, the Commonwealth or the US (though they tried hard enough), let alone from Latin America."

American reporters were not on the ground in this distant war zone. "Nobody got to the war zone during the Falklands war," Susan Zirinsky, a longtime CBS News producer who helped manage the network's coverage of the war from Buenos Aires, tells Mother Jones. She does not remember what O'Reilly did during his time in Argentina. But she notes that the military junta kept US reporters from reaching the islands: "You weren't allowed on by the Argentinians. No CBS person got there."

That's how Bob Schieffer, who was CBS News' lead correspondent covering the Falklands war, recalls it: "Nobody from CBS got to the Falklands. I came close. We'd been trying to get somebody down there. It was impossible." He notes that NBC News reporter Robin Lloyd was the only American network correspondent to reach the islands. "I remember because I got my butt scooped on that," Schieffer says. "He got out there and we were all trying to get there." (Lloyd tells Mother Jones that he managed to convince the Argentine military to let him visit Port Stanley, the capital of the Falkland Islands, but he spent only a day there—and this was weeks before the British forces arrived and the fighting began.)

Schieffer adds, "For us, you were a thousand miles from where the fighting was. So we had some great meals."

O'Reilly did see some action in Argentina—just not war action. He writes in *The No Spin Zone* that shortly after he hit Buenos Aires—where CBS News had set up a large bureau in the Sheraton hotel—thousands of Argentines took to the streets, angry at the military junta for having yielded to the Brits.

As he tells it in his book, O'Reilly, then 32 years old, raced to cover the event: "A major riot ensued and many were killed. I was right in the middle of it and nearly died of a heart attack when a soldier, standing about ten feet away, pointed his automatic weapon directly at my head." A television cameraman was trampled, journalists were banged up, and O'Reilly and others were teargassed. "After a couple of hours of this pandemonium," he recalls, "I managed to make it back to the Sheraton with the best news footage I have ever seen. This was major violence up close and personal, and it was an

important international story."

The rest of the book's section on this episode is a resentful recounting of how O'Reilly was "big-footed" when CBS used his best-ever footage in a news report that featured Schieffer, not him. "I got the hell out of Argentina fast, landed in Miami, and raised a major ruckus at the CBS offices there," O'Reilly writes. Soon he "parted company" with CBS and took an anchor/reporter job in Boston. Schieffer notes that he and other CBS reporters also covered the protest, and that per common practice, all the footage gathered that day was pooled together for the report filed by the Buenos Aires bureau.

The protest O'Reilly covered in Buenos Aires was not combat. It occurred more than a thousand miles from the war zone—after the fighting was over.

O'Reilly's account of the protest in Buenos Aires is at odds with news reports from the time—including the report from his own bureau. The CBS Evening News that night aired about a minute of video of the protest, apparently including some of the footage that O'Reilly and his camera team had obtained. It showed angry Argentines yelling and denouncing the junta that had lost the war. The only act of violence in the spot was a man throwing a punch against the car of a Canadian news crew. On the segment, Schieffer reported, "There were arrests throughout the day. The police threatened to use tear gas at one point. Several North American television crews were jostled...An ABC camera team's car was stoned before the crew escaped." The CBS report said nothing about people being killed. It does not match O'Reilly's dramatic characterization of the event in his book; the video on the broadcast did not depict "major violence up close and personal."

Dispatches on the protest filed by reporters from the New York Times, the Miami Herald, and UPI note that thousands did take to the street, setting fires, breaking store windows, and that riot police did battle with protesters who threw rocks and sticks. They say tear gas was deployed; police clubbed people with nightsticks and fired rubber bullets; reporters were assaulted by demonstrators and by police; and a photojournalist was wounded in the legs by gunfire. But these media accounts did not report, as O'Reilly claims, that there were fatalities. The New York Times noted, "Several demonstrators were reported to have been injured, along with at least two reporters."

During a 2009 interview with a television station in the Hamptons, O'Reilly talked about reporting on the Buenos Aires protest, which he claimed other CBS journalists were too fearful to cover: "I was out there pretty much by myself because the other CBS news correspondents were hiding in the hotel." ("We were all out with our camera crews that day to cover the protest," Schieffer says. "I'd been out there with a crew too.")

O'Reilly noted that soldiers "were just gunning these people

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down, shooting them down in the streets” with “real bullets.” And he told of rescuing his South American cameraman, who had been trampled by the crowd: “The camera went flying. I saved the tape because it was unbelievable tape. But I dragged him off the street because he was bleeding from the ear and had hit his head on the concrete... The sound man is trying to save the camera... And then the army comes running down and the guy points the M-16. And I’m going, ‘Periodista, no dispare,’ which means, ‘Journalist, don’t shoot.’ And I said, ‘Por favor.’ Please don’t shoot... Then the guy lowered his gun and went away.”

The protest in Buenos Aires was not combat. Nor was it part of the Falklands war. It happened more than a thousand miles from the war—after the fighting was over. Yet O’Reilly has referred to his work in Argentina—and his rescue of his cameraman—as occurring in a “war zone.” And he once told a viewer who caught his show in Argentina, “Tell everybody down there I covered the Falklands war. They’ll remember.”

O’Reilly has frequently represented himself as a combat-hardened journalist—he has visited US troops serving in Iraq and Afghanistan and reported from those countries—and he has referred to his assignment in Argentina to bolster this impression. On his television show in 1999, O’Reilly responded to a letter from a retired Air Force colonel, who said he had flown 123 missions over Vietnam and who criticized O’Reilly for supporting military action in Kosovo, by citing his Falklands war days: “Hey, Colonel, did you ever have a hostile point an M-16 at your head from 10 yards away? That happened to me while I was covering the Falklands war.” In his 2013 book *Keep It Pithy*, he writes, “I’ve seen soldiers gun down unarmed civilians in Latin America.” During his radio show on January 13, 2005, he declared, “I’ve been in combat. I’ve seen it. I’ve been close to it.” When a caller questioned him about this, O’Reilly shot back: “I was in the middle of a couple of firefights in South and Central America.” O’Reilly did not specify where these firefights occurred—in *The No Spin Zone*, the only South America assignment he writes about is his trip to Argentina—and then he hung up on the caller.

In *The No Spin Zone*, O’Reilly does write vividly about an assignment that took him to El Salvador during the country’s civil war shortly after CBS News hired him as a correspondent in 1981. As O’Reilly recalls in the book, he and his crew drove for a full day to reach Morazán province, “a dangerous place,” and headed to a small village called Meanguera, where, a Salvadoran captain claimed, guerrillas had wiped out the town. “Nobody in his right mind would go into the guerilla-controlled area,” O’Reilly writes. But he did, and he notes he found a horrific scene: “The place was leveled to the ground and fires were still smoldering. But even though the carnage was obviously recent, we saw no one live or dead. There was absolutely nobody around who could tell us what happened. I quickly did a stand-up amid the rubble and we got the hell out of there.” He does not mention being in any firefight.

O’Reilly’s account of his El Salvador mission is inconsistent with the report he filed for CBS News, which aired on May 20, 1982—shortly before he was dispatched to Buenos Aires. “These days Salvadoran soldiers appear to be doing more singing than fighting,” O’Reilly said in the opening narration, pointing out that not much combat was under way in the country at that time. O’Reilly noted that the defense ministry claimed it had succeeded in “scattering the rebel forces, leaving government troops in control of most of the country.” He reported that a military helicopter had taken him and his crew on a tour of areas formerly held by the rebels. (This fact was not included in the account in *The No Spin Zone*.) From the air, O’Reilly and his team saw houses destroyed and dead animals “but no signs of insurgent forces.”

As part of the same 90-second story, O’Reilly reported from Meanguera, saying rebels had been driven out of the hamlet by the Salvadoran military after intense fighting. But this was not a wiped-out village of the dead. His own footage, which was recently posted by *The Nation*, showed residents walking about and only one or two burned-down structures. O’Reilly’s CBS report gave no indication that he had experienced any combat on this assignment in El Salvador.

When O’Reilly was excoriating Brian Williams last week for telling a war-related whopper, he said of his Fox television show, “We’ve made some mistakes in the past but very few... We take great pains to present you with information that can be verified.” And he asserted, “Reporting comes with a big responsibility, the Founding Fathers made that point very clearly. They said to us, ‘We’ll give you freedom. We’ll protect you from government intrusion. But, in return, you, the press, must be honest.’”

Research assistance: Sam Brodey

Next VFP56 meeting will be held
on Thursday, June 4th at
7:00 PM.
Meeting will be held at 24 Uni-
tarian Fellowship Way, Bayside,
Jacob Creek Road. Veterans and
non-veterans are more than wel-
come to come and help us dialogue
about what we together can do to
bring about peace in this complex
world.



To All:.....

The project currently has more than two dozen volunteers and paid personnel actively involved, either actual hands on the restoration or serving on committees. We've set up groups for fund raising, event planning, strategic planning and logistics. Much has and is being accomplished. In response to my request for help removing the boat house last month a dozen people showed up on Monday and in one day completely disassembled and stacked the parts in neat piles. This was a feat I thought might take as much as a week. With drought conditions continuing we're able to work every day, next to zero rain fall.

Normally I try to name individuals that work on the boat but there are so many now I'll merely list what is done or being worked on as of today. There was a polarity problem in our electrical system that was causing small shocks when ever anyone touched the engine. We couldn't locate the problem so we called in a electrical guy that only works on boats, he located and fixed the problem in less than an hour and charged us nothing. Good people do exist and there's a lot of them. The bunks in the main cabin are in as are the settees (bench seats, port and starboard). Mattresses and seat cushions are coming along fine. Galley shelves for the cook tops are in. Teak and Holly laminate running fore and aft is simply beautiful. The counter top of the engine box which also holds the galley sink will be a star pattern also of Teak and Holly. The exhaust system is complete as is the sea water intake for the heat exchanger system. The fuel filler line and cap is done. Drains for the foot well and galley sink are 90% finished, the through holes and valves are done. Footing for the Mizzen mast is being worked on today and wedges and boot for the main mast are either done or being finished. Toe rails are 85% finished and the life line stanchions have been fitted and then removed awaiting deck paint. Rigging is progressing. Radar dome is fitted to the Mizzen mast and wired in place. Mounts for the radio antenna and mast light have been manufactured. The stern light is in place and working as are some of the deck lights. Wooden cleats for the masts are cut out and are being finished. Rudder blocks were shaped and screwed into place on the rudder.

The sails have arrived. We ordered Tan Bark sails (Tan Bark is the color, rusty red) because it's easier on the crew on bright days and will stand out in a crowd of white sails. We think the black and white VFP logo will also show better on the main sail and the peace sign on the mizzen. We have an artist to do the painting but still lack a work area with 30 foot ceilings so we can stretch the sails out, it also needs to be fairly dust and draft free. There must also be electricity for the projection devise.

Applications for crew members are arriving and they'er some very qualified VFP members out there. It looks as though we will be taking turns. The response to our cry for help for funds was answered and nearly 20 thousand dollars were donated last month.

We are almost there people, the Rule will sail again. The stress level is going up fast and we're working 7 days a week. THANK YOU to all that have contributed or helped, it's history in the making or is it remaking.....

With time getting short we're now holding committee meetings every two weeks and so a progress report every two weeks. Last week we put the mizzen mast in place to measure and mark the stays. After lowering the mizzen back onto the ground Steve affixed the radar dome and VHF antenna and hooked up all the appropriate wires. Now that we have the proper lengths the stays are being put together. Toe rails are complete with a coat of varnish for protection from moisture. Life line stanchions have been fitted, holes drilled and then removed awaiting deck paint. Michael is assembling the anchor windless and chain rollers on the fore deck. About a dozen wooden cleats have been cut out shaped, sanded and oiled for the masts. Steve and Dave are doing this at home and bringing the finished product back to the boat yard. Richard brought out a number of samples of vinyl to see which ones would adhere to the sail cloth the best. The VFP logo and such will be on the sails. We're still looking for a place to hang the sails in order to project drawings onto the material so that Richard can outline them.

Foot well drains are finished, as is the fuel fill hose and the fuel tank is now connected to the engine. The Dutchman has finished the settee back rests and installed them. The frames for the bunks are finished only awaiting another coat of paint before being assembled. Mattresses and seat cushions are being sewn together now. Seven port holes have been cut out, the frames only need one more coat of paint and then we'll install all seven which have all been cleaned up and look almost new. A new companion way ladder is also being painted and has also been fitted to a new floor (deck). The galley is complete and looks perfect, we have the micro wave and cook tops but won't put them in until construction is finished. Jason the Viking is building a door for the head. Last but not least, the decks have been painted. We choose a pale blue semi flat in order to reduce glare for the crew, the same reason we choose red sails. The blue stripe on the sides of the hull will be glossy as will the white portions of the hull.

Mark your calenders for June 20th. Launch and party. Everything starts at the boat yard around 2 p.m. and then moves to the Aquatic Center for food and drink and meet and greet. Sea trials should start the next day.

Respectfully submitted by Chuck DeWitt, Restoration Coordinator "The Golden Rule Project" Finn Town, Humboldt Bay CA.



Some of the participants of the 5th Annual Peace Poetry Celebration held on May 10th 2015. All photos taken by Nate Lomba, coordinator of the celebration and VFP56 photographer



6th Annual Redwood Coast Peace Poetry Celebration - 10May2015 - Poetry Honors Recipients
L to R: Jon Reisdory (VFP Award Presenter); Olivia McGahan, 1st Honors (Northcoast Preparatory & Performing Arts Academy); Zoey Knox, 2nd Honors (Arcata HS); Giancarlo Campagna, Emcee.



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High School participation winners in the 2015 Peace Poetry and Art contest



6th Annual Redwood Coast Peace Poetry Celebration - 10May2015 - Best Presentation Honors Recipients
L to R: Jon Reisdory (VFP Award Presenter); Felicity Mindus, Best Presentation (Eureka HS);
Leo Stafsnes, Runner Up (Arcata HS); Steve Nystrom, Best Presentation Judge (English & Drama, Mckinleyville HS).





6th Annual Redwood Coast Peace Poetry Celebration - 10May2015 - Art Honors Award Recipients
L to R: Jon Reisdorf (VFP Awards Presenter); Annapaola Imberti, 1st Honors;
Phoenix Spoor, 3rd Honors; Nurul Nisa Matshalleh, 2nd Honors (all Arcata HS); Giancarlo Campagna, Emcee.



*Students who participated in the 5th Annual Peace Poetry and Art celebration held on
May 10th*





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Chapter 56**

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VEOP: Carl Stancil, Jon Reisdorf
VSC: Ernie Behm, John Mulloy

LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

If you would like to submit an article, opinion, comment or response to anything you have read which might interest the members of VFP-56, please e-mail it to turtldncer@aol.com, in word format, or mail to Jim Sorter at 1762 Buttermilk Lane, Arcata, CA 95521. Submissions will be included on a first come basis until the newsletter is full. Late arriving submissions will be archived for future issues.

The Veterans For Peace Golden Rule Project cordially invites you to attend the Christening and launch of the newly restored Golden Rule sailboat, the world's first nuclear testing protest vessel and peace boat.

This celebration will honor this historic boat and courageous 1958 crew, and the amazing team and contributors that made her restoration possible. Representative speakers from important groups and distinguished individuals are part of the program.

WHAT: Christening, presentations, and launch.

WHEN: Saturday June 20th 2015, 2pm. Launch at 4pm.

**WHERE: Zerlang and Zerlang Marine Services,
1493 Fay Avenue, Samoa, CA 95564**

~ AND ~

**WHAT: Public viewing of the boat, food & Drink
Guest speakers, and PARTY !!**

WHEN: 5pm to 8pm

**WHERE: Humboldt Bay Aquatic Center
921 Waterfront Dr, Eureka, CA 95501**



Veterans For Peace
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