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>> [Background Music] This is Matt Raymond at the Library of Congress. Each year thousands of book lovers of all ages visit the nation's capital to celebrate the joys of reading and lifelong literacy at the National Book Festival, sponsored by the Library of Congress and hosted by First Lady Laura Bush. Now in its eighth year, this free event held on the National Mall, Saturday September 27th, will spark readers' passion for learning as they interact with the nation's best-selling authors, illustrators, and poets. Even if you can't attend the festival in person, you can still purchase or pay it online. Podcast interviews with well-known authors and other materials are available through the National Book Festival website at www.loc.gov/bookfest. It's now my honor to talk with a very familiar voice, I think, to millions of people. He is a broadcast news legend, Bob Schieffer. Mr. Schieffer joined CBS in 1969, where he anchored the Saturday edition of CBS Evening News for 23 years. He served as the networks chief Washington correspondent since 1982 and currently anchors "Face the Nation". Among Mr. Schieffer's many honors are 6 Emmy Awards and 2 Sigma Delta Kai Awards. The National Press Foundation named him Broadcaster of The Year in 2002, and he is also a member of the Broadcasting Cable Hall of Fame. In April, he was also named "A Living Legend" by the Library of Congress. His latest of 4 books is "Bob Schieffer's America", a collection of personal essays from his long-standing broadcast news career, which hits stores this September. Mr. Schieffer, it's a pleasure.

>> Well, thank you. I always like to come to the Library of Congress. It's a place I used to go before they honored me and before I spoke at the National Book Festival, which is also something that's among other things just a lot of fun to do.

>> Well, we appreciate your time. And why do you like to do the National Book Festival?

>> Well, it's almost like going to a county fair. There is such a festive air about it. I mean, you have you know thousands of people out on the mall and people who are interested in books. And you can just wander from tent to tent. You can -- in one tent you'll hear your favorite mystery writer talking about her latest book, her latest mystery. You'll go to another place, and you might find David McCullough talking about his latest historical work. It's -- if you like books, this is sort of like going to the all-star game. They're all there, and you can hear them, see them, even touch them. And so not just as an author, but as a reader, I really like to take part. It's a wonderful idea.

>> I assume that folks will be hearing from you about your latest book?

>> Yeah. The latest book is a collection of the commentaries that I have been writing over the years for the end pieces on "Face the Nation". It's a little different than the books I've written in the past. And the interesting part from me was going back and going through all of these various commentaries that I've been writing since about 1995. I'll tell you one of the sobering parts of it is when you go back and look at your work over a long period of time like that, you discover that it does not

all stand the best of times. Some of it lasted for about a week. But we picked out -- there were about 700 of them in all, and we whittled that down to 171. I put in the book to -- we narrowed it to about 171, and the reason I said that because it was kind of a little inside joke. I wrote one little commentary on the -- all the good things about a grilled cheese sandwich. And I said that's just about a half a commentary, so we have about 171 in there, 169 1/2 really.

>> Don't underestimate the power of a good grilled cheese.

>> Right.

>> Are there any commentaries, or anything that really stands out that you're particularly proud of or particularly memorable?

>> Well, I think the ones that I wrote about politics. Politics is my life. That's what I've spent most of my life doing is covering politics. And so I have some in there that are my personal favorites. I have one on the joys of voting. You know, some people, some journalists don't vote. They think they can't remain non-partisan by voting, but I love to vote. I think it's our duty as a citizen to vote, and as my mother always said, "Go vote! It makes you feel big and strong." And I wrote one of my commentaries about that. But I have to say, overall, the ones that I kind of got the biggest kick out of and I enjoyed seeing them in print because somehow I thought they worked in print as well as they did on the air. The ones that I did about holidays and the ones I wrote at Christmas or Thanksgiving or Mother's Day or Father's Day. One commentary, for example, on Father's Day I point out that more telephone calls are made on Mother's Day than any other day of the year. But more collect calls are made on Father's Day. Or there used to be more collect calls, before we got into the cell phone era. And I think that just surprised me as a commentary in cell phone on old dad's roles in the family. We're there to pick up the check.

>> Well, now for folks who aren't familiar, walk us back a little bit and talk about how you got to where you are today in your career.

>> Mostly by accident, I think would be the one sentence to sum it up. I always wanted to be a reporter. When I was a little boy, I was the -- I used to write news stories. When I got to high school, I was the editor of the high school annual. I was the sports editor of the newspaper, same thing in college. My mom had the idea that I ought to be a doctor. So I spent the first 2 years of my college in pre-med. It hated me. I hated it. And somewhere in my sophomore year, I said, "This is it." I got a job working the news department in a little radio station, switched my major to journalism, and that summer I got -- at that job I was paid a dollar an hour, worked 44 hours a week the last two years that I was in college. But from that summer on, I had gotten a weekly paycheck for being a reporter. And that's something I'm kind of proud of. I'm in my 51st year now of getting paid to do something that, if the secret were to be told, I probably would have done for nothing if I couldn't have found a way to get paid for doing it.

>> Now early on when you were in Ft. Worth, you covered the assassination of President Kennedy. How did that change both you as a person and also your career?

>> Well. it was one of the most unusual things, and I'm not sure that I've covered a story since that was kind of as unusual as that was. In those days, after college, and after 3 years in the Air Force where I edited a series of military publications, I went to work for the "Ft. Worth Star Telegram", and I was the night police reporter. The day that Kennedy was shot, I was -- I had rushed into the office just to try to help answer the phones. I worked on the night shift. And I picked up the telephone on the city desk, and a woman said "Is there anybody that can give me a ride to Dallas?" And I said "Well, lady, we don't run a taxi service here. Besides, the President's been shot." She said "Well, I heard it on the radio. I think my son is the one that they've arrested." And it was Lee Harvey Oswald's mother. I immediately dropped that business about we don't run a taxi service. I asked her what her address was, told her I'll be out to get her. Another reporter and I went out. The reason I got another reporter to go with me, I had a Triumph sports car in those days, and I couldn't imagine taking this woman to Dallas, which was about you know about an hour drive. It was about 35 miles away. In that Triumph, I had the top down. It took about 20 minutes to put the top up anyway. Well, I just didn't do that. So the guy who was the auto editor of the paper was named Bill Foster, and the local car dealers would give him a car to drive every week. And then on Sundays, he'd write a review of it. And they were generally pretty good reviews, free car, free gas for a week. See, the morals, the ethics of journalism has sort of changed since then. But anyway, he was driving a Cadillac that week. So I got him, and we went out in that Cadillac sedan, picked her up. She was standing on the curb at the address she had given me. And I got in the back seat with her, and he drove, and we actually drove her to Dallas. And on the way over there, she gave me an interview. She was weepy and deranged at first to be quite honest about it. And she began to complain even on that ride, that her -- that Oswald's wife, that people would feel sorry for her, but that they wouldn't feel sorry for her. And she'd starve to death. I mean, it was just bizarre. But anyway, once we got to the police station, we were there, and I -- in those days we never told people who we were. They ask, we didn't lie, but if they thought we were detectives, we'd let them think that. So I always wore snap brown pants so I'd look like Dick Tracy. So when I walked into Dallas Police Station, I just went up to the first uniformed policeman, and said I'm the one that brought Oswald's mother over here. Is there some place we can put her where these reporters won't bother her? And this bur man [assumed spelling] said, "Well, sure." And he took me back to the Burglary Squad. And there was a little office there, and he said "Will this be okay?" And I said "Sure." And the good news was there was a phone in there. Now in those days, being able to find a phone was one of your most important jobs as a reporter. We didn't have the cell phones. So I would go out in the hallway where all the other reporters were, gather up information, and then go back in and use that phone to call back to the -- my newspaper, the "Star Telegram", because we were putting out extras. As night fell, she asked could she see her son? And I said "Well, let's find out." So I went to the Chief of Homicide, asked him, and he says "Well, I suppose we ought to do that." He took us all into a holding

room. Just myself, Oswald's mother, and by this time his wife had shown up. And I'm standing there thinking, "I'm going to get the biggest story of my life." They're going to bring this guy down. I'll hear whatever he says to his mother. Maybe I can interview him, and finally a guy in the corner said "Who are you?" and I said "Well, who are you?" And he said "Are you a newspaper man?" And I said "Well, uh, aren't you?" And he said. "Listen, son," he said, "you better get out of here because," he said, "if I ever see you again, I'm going kill you." And I think he about halfway meant it. It turned out he was an FBI agent simply doing his job. He was the first person, and I had been in the police station at least 6 hours, who had asked me who I was. And the story ends there. It's the biggest story I almost got and didn't. But it just shows you the difference in you know the access that we used to have in those days. You look like you belong somewhere, you generally could get in. Nobody had identification, or press passes, any of that kind of stuff. But, you know, when I looked back on it, I think, you know "How in the world did that happen?" But it really did. Well after that, you know, I went back to the police beat for a while, and then mainly I guess a lot of the reason that they chose me, I convince the newspaper to send me to Vietnam, after that. The War was just heating up. And so I reported from Vietnam and then came back to Ft Worth in 1966 and went out to a local television station that invited me out to talk about the War. And I did. And afterward, they offered me a job. And it was \$20 a week more than I made in the newspaper. So I took it. I really needed the money. So that's how I got into TV, and from there, of course, that lead to CBS and where I've been ever since. But I was one of those reporters that I basically got into TV for the money. I needed the money. \$20 more seemed like a lot of money to me, so that's sort of how I got from there to here.

>> Now suppose apart from the obvious over those past 50 years, how has journalism evolved and changed? What have been your own personal observations about the field?

>> Well, up until that weekend of the Kennedy Assassination, most Americans depended upon print, on newspapers for their news. From that weekend on, after the entire nation had focused on that one awful news story, the death of this young president, from that weekend on, most people depended on television to get their news. Now we see that is changing. You have these great technological breakthroughs. There is no telling where people get their news. We know a lot of people get it off the web. We've had the development of cable television. The thing that has changed it more than any other thing is the Web, of course. This is the first conveyor of news on the national and international scale that has no editor. Even the worse newspaper has an editor. The editor of the worst newspaper knows where the information in his newspaper comes from. Maybe he made it up, but he knows that. You don't know where information comes from that pops off on the Web. It may be true. It may be false. But we know this. It travels at lightning speed. We spent most of our time at CBS on 9/11 simply correcting incorrect information that had popped up on the Web somewhere. You know normally up until that time in journalism, if you made a mistake, you felt it was your responsibility to correct it. If your competitor made one, you generally ignored it and waited for them to correct it. We couldn't wait on 9/11. I mean, if we had not corrected this stuff, we might have-- you know, it might have set off mass

hysteria, panic in the streets. And so we spent most of our time doing that. And that's what we're all dealing with now in journalism. Politicians, people running for public office, people in government, and those of us who are covering politics and covering politicians and covering everything else is this -- the way that this information just pops up out of nowhere. Suddenly everybody knows about it. If it turns out to be false, if you don't get it corrected in the first 30 seconds, it's part of the lore. It becomes part of your file. It becomes part of your biography you know on Wikipedia, as it were. So that's what's changed and that's -- you know, there are no deadlines anymore. And we're having a whole new definition now of privacy, a whole new definition of what libel is, a whole new definition of what a copyright is. All of that has changed, and it's changed with the coming of this new technology that's brought us the Web.

>> To me, even with a bit of a shorter term view perhaps than you have, it's astounding to see how it's changing news, and changing political campaigns, and so forth. Do you think it is a net positive or a negative?

>> You know, I suppose, we can never have too much information. But the question is, are we getting accurate information? Do we have time for reflection? You know, we sort of -- it's -- we have a gut reaction when somebody -- when something happens -- to go out, and we question the first person that we can find who has something to say. Well, generally the first person who has something to say hasn't thought it out. What he has to say doesn't amount to very much. But it has just put new pressure on all of us. I think, on the whole, we're better off with more information than less information. But it's made it all a lot more complicated.

>> Now as someone who depends on journalists to help get out messages, I have to say that some of the changes that are going on in the news business are a bit alarming. And I think, frankly, might be a bit alarming to a lot of people. First, I would ask, do you see a resolution or an answer to that? I mean, are there business models that can change or evolve in order to deal with that? I think nobody could see a positive coming out of journalism going away and becoming this sort of unfettered you know Wild West on the Web like you were talking about.

>> No. You can't have a democracy unless citizens can base their decisions, what they do as citizens, who they vote for, the part they take in their communities. You can't have that as we know it without accurate information and access to information, and a free and unfettered press. You just -- it just doesn't work without that. And that's the part that really bothers you. Are people getting the right story? Are they getting accurate information? You know, one of the things, and I think one of the reasons we may have, one reason for the partisanship that we have now is you can sort of order up your news in any style you want it. If you want it from a conservative point of view, you can get it from that. If you want it from a liberal part of view -- point of view, you can get it from somebody on that side. But I think more and more, people are finding they're having to get their news from multiple sources. I mean, I think one of the main responsibilities of the mainstream media, as it were, is we need be the place where people can at least agree on

facts. There must always be a place where the information that is given, people can rely on and feel that it's accurate. And that's what we have to do. So much of the problem for journalists today is finding the sources of revenue to maintain these very expensive enterprises like newspapers. We need newspapers. I don't know how we would operate this country if we didn't have newspapers, and yet more and more we're seeing these newspapers they're becoming so expensive to operate that people can't make a profit doing it. And that's the problem for newspapers. It's not so much the problems of journalism. It's the problems of finding the money to finance these very expensive institutions. I mean the editor of the NY Times, Bill Collier told me that his newspaper spends more than \$2 million a year just for security costs to maintain their bureau in bank debt. Now you are not going to find a blogger that can -- you know has \$2 million to spend in protecting himself, while he goes to Bagdad to report what's going on there. This is very expensive stuff, and how the newspapers find the advertisers that will make it profitable for them to keep operating. And that's the problem that they're all facing now. We face similar problems in broadcasting, not as severe as the newspapers. But we are going to have to figure out some way that we can -- we'll always have printed sources of information, it seems to me. You know, one of the reasons we need newspapers is, if you go on the Web, you're generally looking for something, you searching for something, you're looking for a specific story to check out information on a specific thing. You pick up a newspaper, and you're going to get a lot of information that you didn't ask for. And you are going to find valuable information that you weren't particularly looking for as you're reading through the newspaper to find the story that you picked up the paper to find out about. And I think that's where newspapers have it over the Web at this particular time. How this is all going to evolve, how this is going to finally break out, nobody really knows right now.

>> Now you've covered just about every possible beat in Washington from the White House, to Congress, and the Pentagon, and the State Department , and as far as I know, you are only person who's done that, or at least, at your level. Which of those did you enjoy most, and for any particular reason?

>> Well, I think Capitol Hill. To me, the United States Capitol is what Washington is all about. The White House seems to be a very glamorous place. And you know, it's always been the glamour beat, you know because the President is the most powerful person in the world. But to me, the Capitol is where it all really happens, and seeing all those politicians of every stripe, I said at one time that I thought the U.S. Capitol was sort of our national zoo. You have one example of every kind of American down there at the Capitol. When you -- the President comes up there to address the joint session, you will find out on the floor of the House of Representatives smart people, not so smart people, tall people, short people, black ones, white ones. Every kind of American is represented out there. And getting to see them all together helps us understand what a diverse country it is. From a reporter's standpoint, the great thing about covering the Congress is they're all independent contractors. And when you cover the President, everybody at the White House works for the same guy. They work for the President. And so unless you find some, you know, disgruntled person, or somebody who takes a different point of

view, you're going to get pretty much the same story, no matter who you talk to. You go up to the Capitol, and you will find people on every side of an issue, and that's how you find stories. I also enjoyed very much covering the Pentagon, which to me, is like just a giant courthouse. One of the things I found when I was a courthouse reporter at the "Ft. Worth Star Telegram" is the best stories about the Sheriff came from the country commissioners, the best stories about the county commissioners stories came from the Sheriff because you had two separate elective officials that were all competing for the same tax dollar for their budget. You go out to the Pentagon, it's just the same. The best stories about the Air Force come from the Navy. The best stories about the Navy come from the Air Force. If you want to find out what's good about land, you know what's good about Naval Air, you can go talk to the Navy, and they'll tell you about it. But if you want to find out how much it really costs to put out an aircraft carrier out there in the ocean, you go the Air Force. They can tell you exactly how much it costs. On the other hand, if you want to find out about the vulnerability of land-based Air Forces, go talk to the Navy. They've got all the stats on that. So when two separate entities are competing for the same tax dollar, that's when you find proof. It's also where you find news.

>> Now you talked about our national zoo. And I think you've covered politics longer and more intensely than just about any one today. What's your assessment of the state of American politics? It seems like every few years, people like to say, oh, it's never been more partisan than this. The system has never been more broken. Give us the benefit of the long view.

>> Well, it probably has been more partisan at some times in our history. I mean you know when we were voting on the Constitution and deciding what to do about that, it was much nastier than anything we talk about today. But I do think that in modern times, we are going through a very, very partisan time. And I think we do have some things in our system that need to be repaired. Is it broken? Yeah. Can it be repaired? I think it can. The way we elect officials, I think right now, and the fact that money has become such a big part of the process I think it is where we start to do the repair. When we went to the primary systems, when we stopped electing delegates to the National Conventions, the Political Conventions, at the precinct level, then the county level, then the state level, then they all went to a National Convention where they actually chose the delegates. It was frankly just cheaper than going to the primary system. We turned retail politics into wholesale politics, and these enormous cottage industries have grown up around our politics now, the consultants, the pollsters, all that stuff. And the growing use of computers, we need to reform that. We also need to reform the way we draw the district lines for members of Congress. And I think we're going to have to eventually do with that what we have done with the way we go about closing military bases. You know we have now put that in the hands of an independent panel who are appointed by the Congress. But what they do is they listen to the military, they take testimonies from the local communities, and then they present a plan every year to the Congress, and the Congress has to vote on it up or down on which bases to close and which bases to keep open. But they have to vote all of them at once. They can't vote on individual bases. What was happening was the Congressman

whose district in one base would say to Congressman who has the district -- who has a military base in his district, you know you vote to keep mine open, I'll keep yours open. And they couldn't get anything. They couldn't close any of these bases, no matter whether they were any use to the military or not. I think we're going to have to have an independent panel appointed by the Congress that will draw up the Congressional District lines, they will vote on them each year that they have a census, and they will vote on all of them up or down. And maybe we can get back to some semblance of order because what we are doing now is we're just -- we've created an incumbent protection society. They all take care of each other. The Democrat is happy to give any Republican in his district to the Republican in the next district so he doesn't have him in his district, and they won't vote against him. And the Republican over there are happy to give the Congressman in the adjoining district who's a Democrat an all the Democrats in his district, so they won't vote against him. And the result is once these people get into office, it's very, very difficult to get rid of them. I think those are two of the things that we simply have to do to get this thing back on track because what's happening now is you're finding politicians who must sign off with so many special interest groups in order to get the money to run for Congress, that once they get here to Washington they can't compromise on anything. And when a legislative body loses its ability to compromise, it can't get anything done. So the recent Congresses that we've seen they nibble around the edges of these issues. They vote on abortion a lot. They vote on flag burning a lot. They vote on things like that. They vote on gun control a lot. But they never are able to directly take on major issues head on and get anything done because they can't compromise.

>> Now you're, of course, uniquely positioned I think to play a very important role in the political campaign, particularly this year, in that you're going to be moderating the final Presidential Debate of 2008, and of course you've moderated past debates. Talk a little bit about your approach to that role. What kind of preparation goes into it? How do you choose questions even?

>> Well, we're going to do it much differently this year. And I think it's going to be a much better debate. We'll actually have follow up questions this time from the candidates themselves. We're going to divide each of these debates. We were -- I was going to do foreign policy as the last debate because the issues with Russia and so forth have come right to the front. They've decided now they want to move that to the first debate. So I'll be doing domestic issues. But what we're going to do is we're going to divide each debate into 8, 10-minute segments, you know each addressing a different subject. And then I will pose a question and try to get the two candidates to engage on that. And in other words, I might say, "You know we've got \$4 a gallon gasoline here. What are you going to do about that, Senator McCain?" And then he'll give his answer. And then I'll say, "Well, Senator Obama, what's your -- how do you come back on that?" I'll try to get them to engage directly on it. The job I will have to do before we get to that debate is decide what are the 8 domestic issues that I consider most important. That'll be my job to draw that up. Obviously, I'm going to have to get myself beefed up on what's the latest. Where is Social Security right now? What is the latest on drilling off shore or not? I'll have to familiarize myself with the 2

candidates' positions. But what we are trying to do this year we've never been able to do in the past, but this year we've gotten both campaigns to agree is -- you know if I -- I would consider it a great success, if I just posed one question, and then for 10 minutes the two of them went at it on that. You know? What are you going to do about the housing market? And you know, my job will be if they don't come up with good follow ups or you know don't hit the pertinent points I'll interject myself into it. But the idea here is to make this as much as we can about the candidates, and not about the moderators. That may be why they've chosen 3 fellows who have been around for a while here, Tom Brokaw, me, Jim Lehrer. We don't have anything to prove. You know? So we can make sure the spotlight stays on the candidates. That's where it should be.

>> Well, Bob Schieffer, I could go on in this vein all day. But I know you're a busy person. But before we let you go, what's coming next for you? Either perhaps additional books in the future? And I also like to ask can we look forward to seeing you at CBS for a while to come?

>> You know, I have signed a new contract with CBS. And this is going to be the only place I'll ever work from here on in. I was thinking of retiring last year, and then they said, "Well, don't you want to be around for this election?" And I thought, "Well yeah, probably I do." And then I was going to retire after the inauguration, and I'm not. I've sort of unretired. I'm going to continue to do "Face the Nation" until we come up with someone to replace me. That question is wide open right now, but obviously I can't do this forever. But sometime over the next couple of years I think we'll find a new moderator for "Face the Nation". And I'll help in the transition on that. And then after that I will still work at CBS, but with no specific duties. I'll just be around for big events, major events. I'll be around to help out any way I can, in much the way that Tom Brokaw, the role that he now has at NBC. I told him that he was going to be my guide for the Golden Years, as it were. And maybe I'll write another book down the line. But we'll just sort of see how it goes. I'm feeling good, and as long as my health holds out, I intend to be involved around here in some way or the other.

>> Well, you have a lot of admirers and fans, and that's all obviously very good news for them. Bob Schieffer, thank you so much for taking time out to talk with us today.

>> Well, it was a real pleasure.

>> And we are excited to hear more from you at the National Book Festival. That is Saturday, September 27th, on the National Mall here in Washington, DC, from 10 am to 5 pm. The event is free and open to the public. If you'd like more details as well as a complete list of participating authors, visit www.loc.gov/bookfest. From the Library of Congress, this is Matt Raymond. Thank you for listening.

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