

Preface to the Third Edition

More than half of Americans answering a 2020 Pew Research survey say they don't have confidence that journalists are serving the public interest. Only 9% have "a great deal of confidence." So, what better time than now to revisit a story of journalistic heroism?

The fact that this story took place decades ago is irrelevant. It happened, it's true and the story of these journalists deserves to be told. It is a tale of journalistic achievement for all those who doubt that local television is capable of telling the most difficult stories.

The story I witnessed and retell in this book is how the men and women at a television station put their heads together to bring the man-made cataclysm that climaxed on May 13, 1985, directly to the people of Philadelphia, sometimes at great risk. It was an effort that earned those men and women an Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award, one of the highest achievements of broadcast journalism.

This account draws on actual experiences and conversations, air checks of WCAU-TV (denoted in caps), transcripts of the MOVE Commission hearings, my own recollections and other sources as noted. In 1985, personal cellular phones didn't exist. There was no computerized newsroom, so there was still the clatter of typewriters and wire-service teletype machines. The internet was not a daily part of our lives. Portable video cameras were bigger and bulkier and required outboard recorders. WCAU was owned by CBS and people, places and things in Philadelphia may now be moved, renamed or deceased.

In the ensuing 36 years, the City of Philadelphia has tried to close this chapter of its history without success. It stands as a monument to the failure of government and, to many, a cautionary tale about police violence aimed at people of color.

My thanks to all my former colleagues at Channel 10 who endured weeks of me asking and re-asking what they did and said at various times and places.

TK
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