Fox News Channel dismisses O'Reilly, its biggest star

NEW YORK (AP)
— Fox News Channel's parent company fired Bill O'Reilly on Wednesday following an investigation into harassment allegations, bringing a stunning end to cable news' most popular program and one that came to define the bravado of his network over 20 years.

O'Reilly lost his job on the same day he was photographed in Rome shaking the hand of Pope Francis.

The downfall of Fox's most popular — and most lucrative — personality began with an April 1 report in *The New York Times* that five women had been paid a total of \$13 million to keep quiet about disturbing encounters with O'Reilly, who continued to deny any wrongdoing in a statement hours after he was fired. Dozens of his show's advertisers fled within days, even though O'Reilly's viewership increased.

O'Reilly's exit came nine months after his former boss, Fox



O'Reilly

News CEO Roger Ailes, was ousted following allegations of sexual harassment.

Following the *Times* story, 21st Century Fox said it had asked the same law firm that investigated Ailes to look into O'Reilly's behavior. 21st Century Fox leaders

Rupert Murdoch and his sons Lachlan and James said in a memo to Fox staff that their decision to ax O'Reilly came following an "extensive review" into the charges.

"I understand how difficult this has been for many of you," Rupert Murdoch said in a memo to Fox staff.

O'Reilly, denied a chance to say goodbye to his Fox viewers, did so via a statement.

"It is tremendously disheartening that we part ways due to completely unfounded claims," he said. "But that is the unfortunate reality that many of us in the public eye must live with today. I will always look

back on my time at Fox with great pride in the unprecedented success we achieved and with my deepest gratitude to all my dedicated viewers."

O'Reilly's dismissal doesn't signal any change of direction for the network: Fox said conservative pundit Tucker Carlson would move into O'Reilly's time slot — the second time in three months he's replaced an exiting prime-time personality. Carlson, a veteran who has hosted shows on CNN, MSNBC and PBS, had taken over for Megyn Kelly in January when she announced she was moving to NBC News. "The Five," a talk show with five rotating hosts that regularly airs at 5 p.m. ET, will move into the 9 p.m. time slot. Eric Bolling will host a new show that airs at 5 p.m. starting next month, the company said.

O'Reilly, 67, had ruled the "no spin zone" on television with a quick smile and an even quicker temper. He pushed a populist, conservative-leaning point of view born from growing up on Long

Island, and was quick to shout down those who disagreed with him. Fans loved his willingness to talk back to power or point out hypocrisy among liberal politicians or media members.

O'Reilly and President Donald Trump are both "crowd-pleasing showmen who know how to signal to loyalists in their audience that they are not taking themselves quite as seriously as their detractors are," said news consultant Andrew Tyndall. "Half of the fun that they have with their audiences comes from watching the outrage that they manage to provoke."

"What Rush Limbaugh was to talk radio, Bill O'Reilly has been to conservative television," said Mark Feldstein, communication professor at the University of Maryland. "You can't underestimate the influence and the profits that he brought into Fox News for all these years and that's why they hesitated so long in doing the right thing."

His show generated \$178 million in advertising revenue in 2015, according to Kantar Media.

Before the advertising boycott, there was the prospect of even more: his audience was larger in the first three months of 2017 than it has ever been. With a profit center gone, 21st Century Fox stock fell almost 1 percent Wednesday in heavy trading.

O'Reilly's pugnacious personality wasn't just an onscreen affectation, with one of the settlements going to a woman who complained about being shouted at in the newsroom. O'Reilly was alleged to have slowed the careers of women who spurned his advances. One former Fox personality, Juliet Huddy, said she pulled away and fell to the ground when he tried to kiss her, and he didn't help her up, the *Times* reported.

One harassment case, from a former producer who said O'Reilly called her and described sexual fantasies and appeared to be masturbating, dated back more than a decade and was widely reported. While O'Reilly survived then, the accumulation of cases outlined in the *Times* damaged him much more.

April 20, 2017

10:30 | 11 AM | 11:30

Odd Squad Wild Kratts Business

WordGirl | Odd Squad | Wild Kratts

BRIEFLY

Ex-NFL star Aaron Hernandez hangs himself in his prison cell

BOSTON (AP) — Hours before his former New England Patriots teammates were due to visit the White House to celebrate their Super Bowl victory, prison officials say, Aaron Hernandez tied one end of his bedsheet to a window and the other around his neck and hanged himself.

In a maximum-security prison outside Boston, about an hour from the stadium where he played alongside stars like Tom Brady and Rob Gronkowsi, Hernandez jammed the door to his one-man cell lest guards try to stop him and put an early end to the life-without-parole sentence he received for a 2013 murder.

He was 27. It was the last act in the downfall of an athlete who once seemed to have everything, including a five-year \$40 million contract extension, and threw it all away.

The former NFL star's death left friends, family and his legal team shocked and in disbelief, searching for an explanation. Just last Friday, Hernandez was acquitted in a separate murder case.

Guards found Hernandez shortly after 3 a.m. Wednesday at the state prison in Shirley, Correction Department spokesman Christopher Fallon said. The former tight end was taken to a hospital and pronounced dead about an hour later.

Fallon said he was not aware of any suicide note and officials had no reason to believe Hernandez was suicidal.

Emirates cuts U.S. flights, blaming Trump security measures

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Emirates, the Middle East's largest airline, slashed its flights to the United States by 20 percent Wednesday, blaming a drop in demand on tougher U.S. security measures and Trump administration attempts to ban travelers from some Muslim-majority nations.

The Dubai governmentowned carrier's decision is the strongest sign yet that new measures imposed on U.S.-bound travelers from the Mideast could be taking a financial toll on fast-growing Gulf carriers that have expanded rapidly in the U.S.

Dubai was one of 10 cities in Muslim-majority countries affected by a ban on laptops and other personal electronics in carry-on luggage aboard U.S.-bound flights.

Emirates' hub at Dubai International Airport, the world's third-busiest, is also a major transit point for travelers who were affected by President Donald Trump's executive orders temporarily halting entry to citizens of six countries.

"The recent actions taken by the U.S. government relating to the issuance of entry visas, heightened security vetting, and restrictions on electronic devices in aircraft cabins, have had a direct impact on consumer interest and demand for air travel into the U.S.," the carrier said in a statement.

Since Trump has been in office, there has been what the airline called "a significant deterioration in the booking profiles on all our U.S. routes, across all travel segments."

Managers made errors in handling of dam crisis

OROVILLE, Calif. (AP)
— Late in the afternoon
of Feb. 12, Sheriff Kory
Honea was at the emergency
operations center for the
tallest dam in America when
he overheard someone say
something that stopped him
in his tracks:

"This is not good." Over six straight days, the operators of the Oroville Dam had said there was no immediate danger after water surging down the main spillway gouged a hole the size of a football field in the concrete chute. But now suddenly they realized that the dam's emergency backup spillway — essentially an unpaved hillside — was falling apart, too, and could unleash a deadly torrent of water.

Honea reacted by ordering the immediate evacuation of nearly 200,000 people downstream.

In the end, after frantic action by the dam's keepers, catastrophe was averted. But an Associated Press examination of state and federal documents, emails obtained under public records requests and numerous interviews reveal a sequence of questionable decisions and missteps, some of them made years ago, some of them in the middle of the crisis.

Among other things, the dam's federal and state overseers overestimated the durability of the two spillways. And in public statements during the emergency, they failed to acknowledge — or perhaps recognize — that while they were busy dealing with one crisis, they were creating a possible new one.

During the darkest hours of the emergency, the fear was that if the hillside collapsed, "it was not whether people would die, but how many would die," Honea recalled.

State water officials have defended their handling of the crisis at the 770-foothigh dam in the Sierra Nevada foothills 150 miles northeast of San Francisco, saying it was managed as effectively as possible under extraordinary circumstances, including one of the wettest winters on record.

William Croyle, acting head of the California Department of Water Resources, likened the spillway failures to a car getting a flat tire or running out of oil. "This happened.

Stuff happens," he said.
The crisis began Feb. 7
with the rupture in the main
spillway.

AFTERNOON

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