

Why do harasssment cases take so long to come to light?

SEEN FROM SEASIDE

R.J. MARX



One of the most vexing things about the Harvey Weinstein case — and many of the “#MeToo” movement cases, against Bill Cosby, CBS exec Les Moonves, Fox News’ Bill O’Reilly and others — is why did they take so long to come to light?

Was it really just a cultural norm for men in power to routinely bully, harass and sexually intimidate women? If so many people were affected, and so many women victimized for so long, how did it all become just a matter of “business as usual” for decades?

In “She Said: Breaking the Sexual Harassment Story That Helped Ignite a Movement,” New York Times journalists Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey follow the history of sex charges and subsequent arrest of Miramax founder and film producer Harvey Weinstein, who was charged in May 2018 with rape, sex abuse and sexual misconduct.

Weinstein, who is out on bail, awaits trial. If convicted, he could go to jail for life.

“She Said” is based on three years of reporting, from early 2016 through the spring of this year.

“Dozens of Mr. Weinstein’s former and current employees, from assistants to top executives, said they knew of inappropriate conduct while they worked for him,” Kantor and Twohey write.

“She Said” not only illuminates the particular misdeeds of Weinstein, co-founder of the film company Miramax with his brother, Bob, offers a case study in the journalistic steps necessary to follow the lead of a story from its first inklings to its publication in print, and the many steps — and powerful will — necessary to bring it to light.

For journalists, along with dogged determination comes an imperative to be willing to stand up to intimidation, while being sensitive enough to tell a victim’s personal story.

Kantor and Twohey do just that. But without the backing and support of a powerful and deep-pocketed news entity, The New York Times, this story may have never been told — NBC decided not to tell the story and The



New York Times

Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey, authors of “She Said.”

New Yorker held back. The Times itself faced pushback and legal threats that could have cost the newspaper millions.

A three-decade pattern

In their preface, the authors share the origins of their story in 2017, a time of unprecedented opportunity for women, but also a time when “all too often women were harassed with impunity.”

When cases rose to the next level, as at Fox News, where a system of harassment thrived under news manager Roger Ailes, “women who spoke up were frequently dismissed or denigrated.”

Victims were isolated, pressured or fired. Their best option was to trade money for silence, carved out in lawyers’ offices in the form of binding nondisclosure agreements.

In contrast, perpetrators often “sailed to ever-higher levels of success and praise. ... Serious consequences were rare.”

Harvey Weinstein’s alleged misconduct spanned decades — actress Annabella Sciorra said Weinstein raped her in 1993 or 1994.

In 2017, actress Rose McGowan alleged an unnamed producer had raped her at the Sundance Film Festival in 1997. She was planning a memoir — released in 2018 under the title “Brave” to expose the industry’s treatment of women.

The point of the Times investigation was to “dig for what had never been reported, bringing to account people and institutions whose transgressions had been deliberately concealed.”



McGowan’s allegations spurred the reporters to go to editor Dean Baquet to find out if McGowan’s story could withstand editorial scrutiny.

Going public

Winning confidence in their sources was a major victory for the reporters.

“She Said” chronicles the slow and painstaking efforts of following the many women who had similar interactions or stories to tell — and getting them to tell their stories publicly.

They included stars like Ashley Judd, Rosanna Arquette and Gwyneth Paltrow, and a litany of assistants, company staffers and employees — a list that was to exceed 80 women.

The reporters tracked down California Department of Fair Employ-

ment complaints, reached out to former employees, and knocked on doors of reluctant witnesses.

Their reporting turned up a lengthy record of predatory behavior.

As evidence mounted, so did the pressure to drop the story. Weinstein’s legal team — among the brightest and most prestigious in America’s legal panoply — did what they could to stifle the allegations.

Code of silence

A code of silence hung over many past and current Weinstein employees. Victims felt reluctant to dredge up the past, or afraid of the consequences if they did. Victims feared breaking settlements.

As Kantor and Twohey pursued their story, the big guns came out: attorneys threatened, cajoled, negotiated, and sought to squelch the story by approaching higher-ups at The Times.

Weinstein’s team came up with a six-point plan for “positive reputation management,” including a Weinstein Foundation to develop and promote films directed and produced by women.

The producer hired private detectives to protect his reputation, and an internet firm to “scrub” negative search results that might come up — paying \$100,000 a month to shield his behavior from scrutiny.

“Weinstein was going to fight,” Kantor and Twohey write.

He painted his accusers as mentally unstable. He tried to pre-empt the story with a puff piece in the industry paper, The Hollywood Reporter.

#MeToo

By 2017, the climate had changed. It was the year of #MeToo.

Harvey Weinstein’s brother Bob Weinstein voiced his concerns. A company accountant became alarmed about the number and magnitude of the years of settlement agreements. A board member feared future corporate liabilities. The inevitable day of publication came — and even with lawyers, editors and witnesses, the story came with the threat of a \$100 million Weinstein lawsuit.

The ensuing 3,300-word article caused a crisis for the Weinstein Company. The story documented episodes of harassment from 1990 until 2015. It landed Weinstein in jail with \$1 million bail.

“You are finished, Harvey,” his brother Bob said.

Who doesn’t love a Santa dog?

VIEW FROM THE PORCH

EVE MARX



Last Saturday I urged Mr. Sax to accompany me to the Lovell Tasting Room at Fort George in Astoria for the annual December holiday party and fundraiser for Clatsop Animal Assistance.

There are loads of parties and fundraisers to go to this time of year, all of them worthy, but I have a soft spot for shelter animals having rescued or adopted many. It is also my custom this time of year to spread my donation dollars, few as they may be, to animal charities.

When we arrived on the early side, the tasting room was already packed with folks with and without their pets perusing the large array of silent auction tables, purchasing raffle tickets, and buying scrumptious baked goods. Mr. Sax, who can’t resist a terrific loaf of bread, purchased a huge and beautiful round loaf as well as a couple of chocolate brownies that were super moist and delicious. Among the local businesses who donated auction items, baked goods, services, and in-kind donations were Josephsen’s Smokehouse; Karalee’s Sweet Treats, Maggie’s on the Prom, Vintage Viaje, West of the Moon, Buddha Kat Winery, the Astoria Coffee House and Bistro, Ecola Seafoods, Finn Ware, the Pig ‘N Pan-



Eve Marx

She’s not an easy model, but Santa and Lucy bond at Fort George.

cake, Sesame + Lilies, Mo’s, Safe Harbor Animal Hospital, Curly Tail Pet Massage and about 60 others.

Although advised by a friend with a sweet tooth that the baked goods alone were a tremendous draw, I was determined to have our min-pin, Lucy, get her picture taken with Santa Claus. The last time I had anyone’s picture taken with Santa, it was our son, and he was four years old. Our son is 32 now, but

Lucy just turned four. Like all min-pins, she is a bit standoffish and skittish, so I wasn’t sure how it would go.

Santa was taking a brief break from his photographic duties outside the Lovell Tasting Room when we arrived. He put out a gloved hand to greet Lucy but she was upset by his costume. She started barking, which was a tad embarrassing. To the best of my knowledge, this was her first experience meeting Santa.

A nice lady helped us figure out what we had to do to get our Santa picture. You got a ticket and a number and you paid up front in cash. Then you got in line to have the picture taken. There were a few dogs already in line including a pair of adorable Labradors, one light brown, one black, and they were experts at standing quietly by Santa’s knee and posing. Lucy, by contrast, wasn’t sure what to do. I picked her up and plunked her on Santa’s knee. I was a little worried she might growl or worse. She is a miniature pinscher after all.

Santa offered her a bit of biscuit, which she immediately snatched from his fingertips.

I let out a sigh of relief.

Now they were friends.

It was all over a moment later when the photographer got the snap. She took a few images, but I imagine Lucy was squirming or not looking at the camera in most of them.

Luckily there was one perfect picture and it is a doozy.

A keepsake to remember forever in an attractive, old school black and silver cardboard picture frame.

Great job, Clatsop Animal Assistance.

As always, you’re amazing.

It’s not too late to make a charitable donation to the shelter. They’ve got mouths to feed and cats and dogs to re-home and vet bills to pay. For more information, contact them at 503-861-0737 or visit at 1315 SE 19th St., Warrenton.