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## CNN Reports the Death of Hunter Thompson

PORTER FOX

KYRA PHILLIPS: Journalist and author Hunter S. Thompson, who pioneered the concept of "gonzo journalism," fatally shot himself in the head Sunday at his home near Aspen, Colorado. With us today is Bruce Morton who covered the '72 campaign for CBS and remembers Thompson as a bigger-than-life presence who wrote "good stuff." Bruce?

BRUCE MORTON: I've worked for CBS for forty years, Kyra.

KYRA: You were a close, personal friend of Mr. Thompson's?

BM: We were intimate, yes.

KYRA: When was the last time you spoke with him?

BM: About 30 years ago.

KYRA: In your professional opinion, Bruce, would you say that Mr. Thompson will be extolled in the annals of political journalism?

BM: He perked up the campaign plane and bus a whole lot. He'd come out and say, "Hey hey, weird stuff's going to happen, Hunter is here."

KYRA: Could it be said that Mr. Thompson revolutionized political writing?

BM: Revolution is a strong word. *Manipulate* perhaps.

KYRA: And yet he never seemed to gain the momentum in his career that someone such as yourself did.

BM: Forty years, Kyra.

KYRA: What exactly is it you cover now, Bruce?

BM: Foreign events. Color. Florida.

KYRA: The twilight of a prestigious career.

BM: I seem to have developed an overwhelming passion for golf.

KYRA: Why do you think, Bruce, Mr. Thompson shot himself?

BM: It's a disease, Kyra. All those little white balls flying around.

KYRA: I certainly didn't expect suicide.

BM: This country desires peace. We're tired of all the yelling. The debating. Stand for this, burn that. And what actually happens? I've been covering this beat for forty years—Nixon, Ford, Carter—and I honestly don't know what's *changed* in all that time.

KYRA: What do you think Mr. Thompson would say to that?

BM: Something loud. But the proof is in the news.... So we've adjusted a few civil liberties, staged a shootout or two, the women's thing, Russia. But what's really *happened*? The fact of the matter is, audiences are *over* it, as the young say. Bring on a Jacuzzi and a fun, refreshing energy drink.

KYRA: The new Typhoon Jacuzzi ads are pretty great aren't they?

BM: *Exciting* is the word. Did anyone ever think hot tubs could be so easy? And *clean*?

KYRA: Comfort collars? Mood lights?

BM: I couldn't *make* a wooden utility cabinet that looked so real.

KYRA: Hunter never worked for television, did he, Bruce?

BM: It's a different game up here. No hiding behind the pen.

KYRA: Was there a lot of rabble-rousing in '72? I heard it was quite the battle—on the campaign trail *and* in the newsroom.

BM: I've been with CBS for four decades, Kyra. In two years.



KYRA: Did you know I was born in '72?

BM: Good for you.

KYRA: What was the field like? McGovern. Shriver. Agnew.

BM: There were brief periods in which it seemed Ed Muskie should have had more security.

KYRA: How about Shirley Chisholm?

BM: A woman, I believe.

KYRA: Of color.

BM: "Catalyst for change."

KYRA: Did you know that in high school she used to shoot people with rubber bands?

BM: I wouldn't doubt that.

KYRA: '72 was a Rogue's gallery of sorts.

BM: Muskie sometimes frightened me.

KYRA: My father built me a sandbox the day Nixon was inaugurated.

BM: The business with The Shah.

KYRA: I loved building sandcastles.

BM: It was spooky just being around Ed.

KYRA: I got one of the neighbor's kids building for a while. I had her lug in extra sand in exchange for candy.

BM: He was like a giant bird.

KYRA: We found a turtle burrowing in the box one morning.

BM: Snapper?

KYRA: Digger.

BM: Straight down?

KYRA: Kind of to the side.

BM: Contextual detail is the poison arrow of good journalism, Kyra.

KYRA: Bruce, would you say Mr. Thompson followed the path of truth?

BM: To be honest, we've had difficulty defining just what the truth is.

KYRA: Did you ever think Mr. Thompson followed an agenda of some kind?

BM: You read his stuff in *Rolling Stone* magazine, and maybe it wasn't what you've seen and maybe it wasn't what had happened, but by golly, it was good stuff and it was *fun*.

KYRA: How long have you been with CBS?

BM: 40 years, almost.

KYRA: In the time you spent with him, did you find Mr. Thompson a *convincing* man?

BM: I've just about talked myself to death in all that time.

KYRA: Do you think if he were approached by, say, a woman who'd built an empire of sandcastles he might be inclined to ask revealing questions of her?

BM: Trying to make everything sound interesting can be exhausting.

KYRA: Probe for some motivation behind her desire to build?

BM: Sometimes I have a hard time remembering the truth.

KYRA: Accuse her of *being* a certain way?

BM: There are so many words to describe things, Kyra, who's to say which is *more true*?

KYRA: Do I strike you as the kind of person people should keep an eye on?

BM: Is my nose red? Or jaundiced, with red in it?

KYRA: A person who might build *allegorical* castles of the people and situations around her?

BM: My hands here. Claw-like or web-ish?

KYRA: An empress of ambition.

BM: The ocean: blue or green?

KYRA: Handmaiden of utility.

BM: Great sex or great triumph?

KYRA: I imagine today's a sad day for some, Bruce. Maybe his family.

BM: I wonder what I've created in the last 40 years, Kyra.

KYRA: The young.

BM: Creating a world based on speculative assumptions.

KYRA: Foreigners.

BM: The mere transmission of an idea over airwaves *making it true*.

KYRA: Motorcycle enthusiasts.

BM: That's kind of frightening.

KYRA: What?

BM: The news.

KYRA: How so?

BM: Whom does it serve?

KYRA: Us.

BM: But we make it. So how do we know if it reflects what's actually happening?

KYRA: Polls.

BM: Do something for me, Kyra.

KYRA: You're more affected by Hunter's death than you let on.

BM: Tell me one true thing.

KYRA: You really *were* close to him.

BM: Just one.

KYRA: My first apartment in New York was on Perry Street, a five-minute walk from the White Horse.

BM: Now me. Outside my new front door this morning, the street was full of leaves. And right next to the car was a cord of new firewood: pine, elm and cherry.

KYRA: I often drank there, but I was never accepted because I wore a tie.

BM: When a man gives up drugs, he wants big fires in his life.

KYRA: I did some drinking there on the night I left for San Juan.

BM: I burn a vicious amount of firewood these days.

KYRA: Phil Rollins, who'd worked with me, was paying for the ale, and I was swilling it down, trying to get drunk enough to sleep on the plane.

BM: All night long, every night, huge flames in the fireplace and the volume turned all the way up.

KYRA: I remember a rotten night in the middle of January.

BM: I have ordered more speakers to go with my new McIntosh amp—and also a fifty-watt boombox to go with the FM car radio.

KYRA: Everyone else had on heavy jackets and flannel suits.

BM: You want good, strong seatbelts with the boombox, they say, because otherwise the bass riffs will bounce you around inside like a goddamn ping-pong ball...

KYRA: The last thing I remember is standing on the dirty bricks of Hudson Street...

BM: ...a very bad act in traffic; especially along these elegant boulevards of our nation's capital.

KYRA: ...shaking hands with Rollins and cursing the freezing wind that blew in off the river.

BM: One of the best and most beneficial things about coming East now and then is that it tends to provoke a powerful understanding of the "Westward Movement" in U.S. history.

KYRA: Not to mention hot tubs.

BM: Is there a cleaner truth?

KYRA: Contoured seats, walk-in steps.

BM: Seating for up to eight people.

KYRA: Easy-to-use chemicals.

BM: A price every family can afford.

KYRA: A few more years of this anchor gig and I could move into sales, Bruce.

BM: I taught you well.

KYRA: Get some momentum going.

BM: And stop asking questions.

KYRA: Is that it?

BM: That and stop thinking.

KYRA: Really?

BM: And golf.

KYRA: Do you remember what it was like the night Nixon won, Bruce?

BM: Like anything else.

KYRA: You knew.

BM: We all knew.

KYRA: So why the reporting?

BM: We're supposed to make it interesting.

KYRA: Indeed we are. Thank you for your time, Bruce.

BM: Thank you, Kyra.

KYRA: And good luck on the links.

BM: I'll try.

KYRA: Hey Bruce?

BM: Yes?

KYRA: One more thing.

BM: What?

KYRA: Hunter's dead.

BM: Thank God.