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By **Brian Stelter** and the CNNMoney Media team. [View this email in your browser!](#)



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Roger Ailes died on Thursday, but his legacies live on. Scroll down for complete coverage of Ailes' passing...

The "believe me" president

Two words stuck out during President Trump's joint presser: "Believe me."

It's one of Trump's favorite phrases. On Thursday he employed it while talking about Russia -- "believe me, there's no collusion, Russia is fine" -- and walls -- "they work, believe me, they work."

Every time he says it, Trump is leaning on his credibility. But **how much credibility does he really have right now?** With a [hat tip to David Joachim](#), Trump is the "believe me" president...

NYT's latest scoop: Comey friend goes on the record

[According to Michael Schmidt's latest scoop](#) in the NYT, **James Comey**, during a ceremony in the Blue Room at the White House two days after Trump's inauguration, "tried to blend in with the blue curtains in the back of the room, in the hopes that Mr. Trump would not spot him and call him out." What's important about this story: Schmidt has one of Comey's friends, **Benjamin Wittes**, speaking on the record...

>> Wittes also wrote a **LawFare** blog post [about WHY he talked...](#)

Is the White House really going to scale back on daily briefings?

Last week Trump said it was a "good idea" to do away with daily briefings. Might it really happen? Here's **Josh Dawsey and Annie Karni's** Thursday morning [Politico scoop](#): "Trump is considering scaling back White House press secretary **Sean**

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Spicer's public role, according to several officials familiar with the president's thinking, as Trump also weighs a broader shakeup of his communications shop..."

--> **There's no briefing scheduled for Friday...** it's possible that the press team will hold a gaggle on Air Force One, but that's not expected either...

I asked Spicer...

...To comment on the **Politico** report, and he did not respond...

Tune-in alert

I'll be talking about all of this on CNN's "New Day" at 6:50am Friday...

Reporter says he was "manhandled" at the FCC

Roll Call's John Donnelly, who doubles as the chairman of the National Press Club's Press Freedom Team, says he was "manhandled" by security guards at the FCC for asking questions of FCC commissioners. [The Press Club has a full report here...](#)

-- *Open season on journalists? Mickey H. Osterreicher emails: "The goon squads are feeling very enabled these days...."*

Deny, deflect, downplay.

Those are three types of spin I'm seeing from pro-Trump partisan media outlets. On Thursday's "AC360," I spoke with **Anderson Cooper** about the conservative media counter-narratives... [Here's video of the package and discussion...](#)

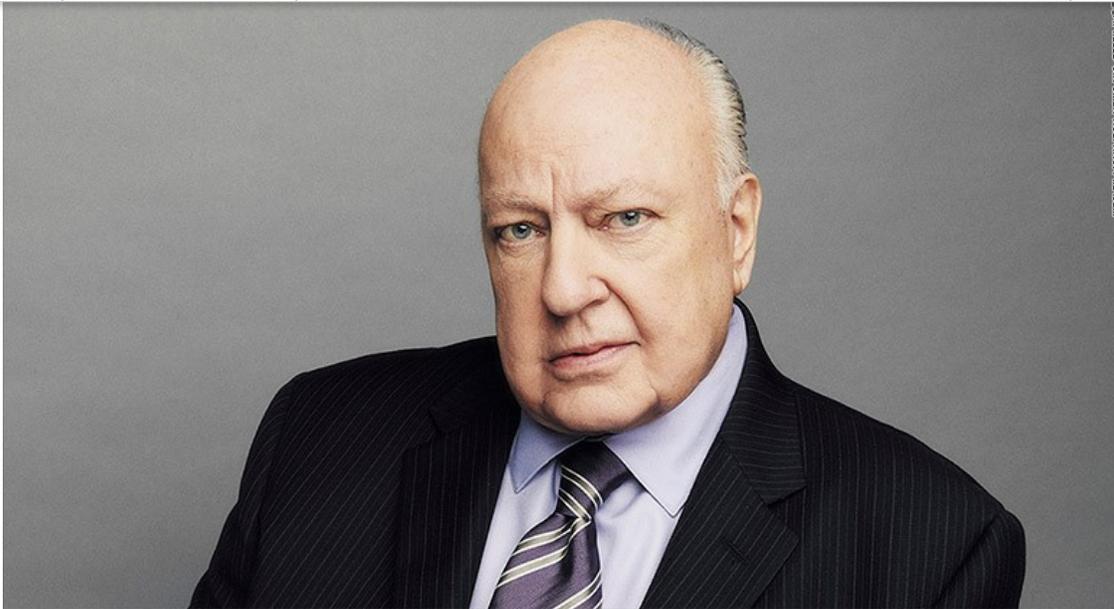
For the record, Trump edition

-- Thursday's "AC360" began with a "Keeping Them Honest" segment: ["Trump reverses course on Comey explanation"](#)

-- Headline of the day? In the LATimes: ["Fictional political TV shows face dilemmas as reality outpaces anything they could imagine"](#)

-- **Graydon Carter's** newest letter from the editor [says you must "resist..."](#)

Remembering Roger Ailes

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"Rest In Peace Roger Ailes, a complicated day for many at Fox News, but what you heard from us all day is the most honest assessment of him."

--Jay Wallace, president of news, Fox News, [in a Thursday night tweet](#)

What a rise... what a fall

One year ago today, **Roger Ailes** was riding high. Fresh off the "Fox News primary" and a pack of GOP debates, Ailes had just aired a highly anticipated sit-down between his longtime friend **Donald Trump and Megyn Kelly**, one of the journalists he had lifted to true TV stardom. Little did he know that **Gretchen Carlson** would sue him in July, spurring other women to come forward with disturbing claims of sexual harassment and abuse. He did not anticipate that the Murdochs, who granted him so much autonomy for so many years, would force him out. **The only thing more incredible than Ailes' rise was Ailes' fall.**

On Thursday morning, Ailes died. [If you missed our SPECIAL MID-DAY EDITION of the newsletter, jam-packed with reactions, click here to get caught up...](#)

Cause of death: bleeding on the brain

"Ailes died of bleeding on the brain caused by an earlier fall at home," [The AP reports](#). The fall occurred in a bathroom at Ailes' Palm Beach home on May 10. The Palm Beach County Medical Examiner's Office said he "died of a subdural hematoma — or bleeding on the brain — caused by the fall. [The death has been ruled accidental and there was no evidence of foul play...](#)"

"Recently, he has done very, very little"

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Ailes' largely faded from the public eye in recent months, [NYT's Emily Steel notes](#). Ailes' friend **Robert L. Dilenschneider**, a PR exec, told her: "Recently, he has really done very, very little. He spent time with his wife and son."

Michael Wolff says Ailes was "taking calls..."

[In this THR column](#), **Michael Wolff** responds to the "anti-Ailes press" and provides insights into Ailes' post-Fox life: "Roger and I spoke a week ago... and, invariably, the subject was Fox's quickly eroding fortunes and the possibilities for a new conservative network. Roger, yet proscribed by the non-compete provisions of his separation agreement, nevertheless had a plan in his head, and was taking calls. 'I can't call. But I can't stop people from calling me,' he said."

[Read Wolff's full piece here...](#)

Bill O'Reilly weighs in

Bill O'Reilly penned a remembrance [for Friday's USA Today](#), and [this portion is notable](#):

"We are living in a rough age, with technological advances changing behavior and perspective. The downside of that is turning us into a nation where hatred is almost celebrated in some quarters. **Roger Ailes experienced that hatred and it killed him. That is the truth. But he would not want to be remembered that way. He did both good and bad in his life and in that, he has something in common with every human being.**"

ROGER AILES 1940-2017

Broadcast visionary kicked off right-wing revolution

Pioneer in TV news hit highs and lows during career

Mike Snider and Roger Yu
USA TODAY

Roger Ailes, who died Thursday, forever changed media and political discourse in America.

Ailes birthed conservative television news coverage in the mid-1990s by launching Fox News and encouraged the careers of numerous pundits, such as Bill O'Reilly and Sean Hannity.

He left Fox News Channel defiantly last July after allegations of sexual harassment at the network.

"Roger played a huge role in shaping America's media over the last 30 years," said Rupert Murdoch, chairman of 21st Century Fox, who hired Ailes as Fox News' first CEO. "He will be remembered by the many people on both sides of the camera that he discovered, nurtured and promoted."

The Palm Beach County, Fla., medical examiner ruled Thursday that Ailes dies from bleeding

► [STORY CONTINUES ON 2A](#)



Sex harassment suits will continue

Many of the cases target Fox News, 21st Century Fox, [IB](#)

USA TODAY EXCLUSIVE

Roger Ailes endured hatred 'and it killed him'

Bill O'Reilly

OPINION To say that Roger Ailes led a full life is a massive understatement. A force of nature with an agenda, RA, as fellow executives called him, was a man on a mission.

That quest was to infuse America with traditional philosophy and see to it that conservatives like him were heard loud and clear.

The list of legendary Americans that Roger helped is long

and impressive. From Ronald Reagan to George Bush, the elder, to Rush Limbaugh, Ailes gave them all blunt advice that led them to success.

And it was that bluntness that made his life difficult, as enemies accumulated — some armed with a brutal hatred.

It was the Fox News channel that crowned Roger's career of achievement. In 1996, the cable news start-up was mocked by CNN's Ted Turner. Few thought Ailes and his inexperienced crew would dethrone the mighty international news

► [STORY CONTINUES ON 2A](#)

Notice what's right next to O'Reilly's column... a tease to an inside-the-paper story titled "Sex harassment suits will continue..." [Here's that story...](#)

How Ailes changed America

"Because of the allegations of sexual harassment, Ailes' legacy as a dynamic television executive may be muted. It surely will not be obliterated," [Bill Carter](#)

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[writes in a blunt column for CNN.com](#). Carter covered the rise of Fox News in the 90s and 00s.

He says "American television, and American society, have changed unalterably [in the wake of the revolution Ailes kicked off...](#) The notions of 'news,' of facts, of what constitutes truth, have been opened up to new questioning, new 'interpretation.' **No one is putting what Roger Ailes let loose back into the bottle...**"

Matt Taibbi's take

"Roger Ailes was one of the worst Americans ever" is the headline on [Matt Taibbi's scathing column for Rolling Stone](#). He concludes: "The extent to which we hate and fear each other now – that's not any one person's fault. But no one person was more at fault than Roger Ailes. **He never had a soul to sell, so he sold ours. It may take 50 years or a century for us to recover.** Even dictators rarely have that kind of impact. Enjoy the next life, you monster."

Jack Shafer's take

Francesca Giuliani-Hoffman emails: This [Jack Shafer story on Ailes got significant traction on Twitter](#) Thursday evening. The lede: "The great boogeyman of liberals everywhere, Roger Ailes, has been gathered in by his creator, and will never haunt their dreams again. **The reinventor of Richard Nixon and the image-enhancer behind Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, he dragged the Republican Party into modernity.** But it was as auteur of the Fox News Channel, which he launched in 1996 with media scoundrel Rupert Murdoch, that he seized the liberal amygdala and jolted it with the scariest right-wing agit-prop his underlings could fashion..."

Quote of the day

"He was as divisive in death as he was in life."

--Jim Rutenberg [in Friday's NYT...](#)

Links to CNN's full coverage

- [Our main Ailes obituary](#)
- How the [media and political worlds reacted](#)
- What Fox News [hosts and reporters said on the air](#)
- A timeline of [the past ten months](#)

Shep Smith's incredible tribute

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if you didn't catch it live, watch [Step Smith's 10-minute essay about Ailes here](#). "I loved him," Smith said, recalling how Ailes steadfastly supported him both professionally and personally. **"It's all so complicated. Everything here was and is... as he was..."**

"Shock" in the newsroom

Oliver Darcy emails: The news of Ailes' death reverberated throughout the newsroom. One longtime Fox employee described the newsroom as in "shock" -- "No one saw this coming," the person said. Another Fox employee said there were "many people tearing up" and that **the workplace had a "very somber mood" filled with "lots of conflicted conversations..."**

How Ailes paved the way for Trump

CNN's **Chris Cillizza** says [Ailes' "greatest creation is the president of the United States..."](#)

Private funeral for family only

According to Ailes' lawyer **Susan Estrich**, the funeral will be private for family only. Perhaps a public memorial service later? Estrich told me there will be an "appropriate tribute at a later date..."

Making donations in Ailes' honor

In a statement, **Elizabeth Ailes** encouraged people to donate in her husband's honor to [the Marine Corps-Law Enforcement Foundation](#). Her statement concluded: "At this time of sorrow and grief we ask you to respect our privacy..."

The federal investigation will continue

[Gabriel Sherman tweets:](#) "Sources briefed on federal investigation of Fox News told me US Attorneys office says probe continues even after Ailes's death..."

THURSDAY'S OTHER NEWS...

For the record, part one

By **Francesca Giuliani-Hoffman**:

-- *Spoiler alert:* **Robin Wright** said [during a talk at the Cannes Film Festival](#) that

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Trump has stolen all of our ideas for season six of House of Cards...

-- American Press Institute has a new report about non-profit news partnerships like Vice/The Marshall Project and ProPublica/Vox. ["At their best, they benefit both sides..."](#)

-- This week The Onion's **ClickHole** debuted a new vertical called PatriotHole, spoofing alt-right websites. Readers may get fooled: the content is "ridiculous enough to qualify as parody and yet sufficiently within the realm of established conservative outrage that your racist uncle could still share them on Facebook," [according to Slate...](#)

Fox #3 in prime time again on Wednesday

For a third day in a row, Fox News ranked #3 in prime time in the 25-54 demographic on Wednesday. MSNBC was #1, CNN #2. For the full day, CNN was #1 in the demo, Fox was #2, and MSNBC was #3, which underscores how much **Rachel Maddow** is responsible for MSNBC's overall success...

-- *However:* Fox notes that it is still #1 in the demo for the full month of May to date...

BuzzFeed wants "official communications related to Trump's tweets"

Oliver Darcy *emails:* BuzzFeed filed a lawsuit in federal court Thursday against the Department of Justice... asking for official communications related to Trump's tweets. [Read the full lawsuit here...](#)

Remembering Chris Cornell

Chloe Melas *emails:* Soundgarden frontman **Chris Cornell** died early Thursday morning after performing in Detroit. [His death has been ruled as suicide by hanging.](#)

-- **Elton John** tweeted: "Shocked and saddened by the sudden death of @chriscornell. A great singer, songwriter and the loveliest man."

-- Recording Academy President **Neil Portnow's** statement: "Chris' extraordinary talent will forever live on and inspire fellow musicians and fans worldwide. We have lost an innovative member of our creative community..."

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The entertainment desk

Getting ready for the return of "Twin Peaks"

Brian Lowry emails: Premiering in 1990, "Twin Peaks" was, as Showtime's **David Nevins** said earlier this year, a social-media phenomenon before social media existed. The show returns this weekend, perhaps too late for such a revival, but in a climate that's much more hospitable to this sort of surreal, limited series.

Lowry says the series premiere is perhaps appropriately shrouded in mystery... [read his full column here...](#)

For the record, part two

By **Lisa France:**

-- The mayor of an Indiana city wants an apology from NBC [for a recent racially charged episode of "Chicago P.D."](#)

-- The new season of "The Bachelorette," which starts Monday, [is even newer than you thought. Here's why...](#)

TV UPFRONT WEEK

The CW's pitch

Brian Lowry emails: On Thursday The CW closed out upfront week, billing itself as being "at the leading edge" of the TV industry's transformation, as president **Mark Pedowitz** put it, with its "multi-platform success." Pedowitz also shared an interesting stat, which might explain why executives are having sleepless nights about traditional TV's future: **While the median age of CW viewers on the network is 45, the median age for its digital audience is just 26...**

"The best superhero shows anywhere"

Lowry adds: With Marvel upping its TV presence, Pedowitz also noted that the CW has "the best superhero shows anywhere" **Those titles — "Supergirl," "The Flash," "Arrow," "DC's Legends of Tomorrow" and the new "Black Lightning" — all synergistically come from the network's half-owner, Warner Bros., and DC Entertainment...**

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Lowry's end-of-the-week analysis

"Those waiting for the fast-shifting digital tide and the political currents that swept in Donald Trump to influence TV programming [didn't see much evidence of it in the lineups announced this week by the major networks...](#)"

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