

It is 4:00 am on the first day of my new life as an accused predator in the universe of American journalism. I was ambushed and then perp walked across the pages of The Washington Post and Variety as an avatar of male misogyny, taken to the guillotine and stripped of any honor and achievement I had earned in more than a half century of journalism and citizenship.

I am angry, hurt and unmoored from what I thought would be the final passage of my life and career, a mix of written and broadcast journalism, philanthropy and participation in environmental and social causes that have always given extra meaning to my life.

Instead I am facing a long list of grievances from a former colleague who left NBC News angry that she had failed in her pursuit of stardom. She has unleashed a torrent of unsubstantiated criticism and attacks on me more than twenty years after I opened the door for her and a new job at Fox news.

Linda Vester was given the run of the Washington Post and Variety to vent her grievances, to complain that I tickled her without permission (you read that right), that I invaded her hotel room, accepted an invitation to her apartment under false pretenses and in general was given a free hand to try to destroy all that I have achieved with my family, my NBC career, my writing and my citizenship.

My family and friends are stunned and supportive. My NBC colleagues are bewildered that Vester, who had limited success at NBC News, a modest career at Fox and a reputation as a colleague who had trouble with the truth was suddenly the keeper of the flame of journalistic integrity.

Her big charge: that on two occasions more than 20 years ago I made inappropriate and uninvited appearances in her apartment and in a hotel room. As an eager beginner, Vester, like others in that category, was eager for advice and camaraderie with senior colleagues. She often sought me out for informal

meetings, including the one she describes in her New York hotel room. I should not have gone but I emphatically did not verbally and physically attack her and suggest an affair in language right out of pulp fiction.

She was coy, not frightened, filled with office gossip including a recent rumor of an affair. As that discussion advanced she often reminded me she was a Catholic and that she was uncomfortable with my presence. So I left, 23 years later to be stunned by her melodramatic description of the meeting. A year or so later, as I passed through London after covering end of WWII ceremonies in Moscow, I saw her in the office, chatted and agreed to a drink later. (If NY was so traumatic, why a reunion?) She knew a bar but by that late hour it was closed so she suggested her nearby apartment (not, "Well, no where to go. See you tomorrow").

Again, her hospitality was straight forward with lots of pride in her reporting in the Congo and more questions about NY opportunities.

As I remember, she was at one end of a sofa, I was at the other. It was late and I had been up for 24 hours. As I got up to leave I may have leaned over for a perfunctory goodnight kiss but my memory is that it happened at the door – on the cheek. No clenching her neck. That move she so vividly describes is NOT WHO I AM. Not in high school, college or thereafter.

She came to NY and had mixed success on the overnight news. As I remember her try out on TODAY did not go well. Her contract was not renewed.

Here is a part of her story she somehow left out. I think I saw her in the hallways and asked how it was going. She was interested in cable start up and I said I didn't think that was going anywhere. What about Fox, which was just building up? She was interested and followed me to my office where, while she listened in, I called Roger Ailes. He said, "send her over."

She got the job. I never heard from her or saw her again. I was aware that she became a big fan of Ailes, often praising his considerable broadcasting instincts in public. But when he got in trouble on sexual matters, not a peep from this woman who now describes her self as the keeper of the flame for Me:Too.

I am not a perfect person. I've made mistakes, personally and professionally. But as I write this at dawn on the morning after a drive by shooting by Vester, the Washington Post and Variety, I am stunned by the free ride given a woman with a grudge against NBC News, no distinctive credentials or issue passions while at FOX.

As a private citizen who married a wealthy man she has been active in social causes but she came to Me:Too late, portraying herself as a den mother. In the intervening years since we met on those two occasions, she had no reason to worry I could affect her career.

Some of her relatives by marriage are very close friends. She couldn't pick up the phone and say, "I'd like to talk. I have issues from those two meetings 20 years ago?" Instead she became a character assassin. Strip away all of the hyperbole and what has she achieved? What was her goal? Hard to believe it wasn't much more Look At Me than Me:Too.

I deeply resent the pain and anger she inflicted on my wife, daughters and granddaughters - all women of considerable success and passion about women's rights which they personify in their daily lives and professions. We'll go on as a family that pursues social justice in medical emergency rooms, corporate offices, social therapy, African women's empowerment and journalism. And no one woman's assault can take that away.

I am proud of who I am as a husband, father, grandfather, journalist and citizen. Vester, the Washington Post and Variety cannot diminish that. But in this one woman piece of sensational claims they are trying.

Tom Brokaw