

Don't Speak, Memory

May 17, 2012

TIME:

I've always been proud that my columns are 100% accurate, which isn't all that hard since I write only about me. But it turns out that I'm an awful source. I get dates and places wrong. I replace former girlfriends with my lovely wife Cassandra in many stories, despite the fact that after 14 years together it would be far more exciting to do the opposite. I know about these errors because camp friends e-mail me corrections, IMDb.com shows that the movie I thought Cassandra and I went to see together had left theaters before we met, and the mullet photos of me on the Internet prove that I could not have lost my virginity at 17.

A guy I was interviewing told me a story he has told hundreds of times over several decades: He was about to have sex for the first time, realized he needed music and jumped out of bed to put on Chicago's first album. As they started, he heard the first track, which was a recorded chant from the 1968 Democratic National Convention: "The whole world is watching! The whole world is watching!" which added a lot of pressure. As he was telling me this, I loaded the album on Spotify. That chant doesn't appear until track 10. Unless he was completely unlike every other boy who has lost his virginity, there is absolutely no chance he even got to track two.

It is a universal truth among journalists that nothing ruins a story like reporting. You hear an insane fact, like Newt Gingrich is still running for President. A few phone calls later, you find out he's actually just sleeping 13 hours a day and forgetting to take his name off ballots. The problem is, our own personal stories are now being reported. That night we fell in love instantly with our spouse? There's a wall post on our Facebook Timeline and a Gmail to our best friend about how we weren't sure if we wanted a second date. If I tell my son that I walked six miles in the snow to school, he'll GPS it on his Google Goggles and tell me it was only 1.7 miles. Then he'll spend a lot of time on Wikipedia trying to figure out what this pre-global-warming "snow" stuff was.

Read the whole story: [TIME](#)