



Five Questions

FOR A NEWS ANCHOR AND SOLDIER'S DAUGHTER

Bedtime stories from Vietnam

By Joe Gould

jgould@militarytimes.com

Harris Faulkner is a six-time Emmy Award-winning anchor of Fox Report Weekend who has interviewed the powerful and famous, such as Bill Clinton when he was running for president, Olympian Gabby Douglas and Guion Bluford, the first African-American in space.

But she never forgets she was born into a military family at Fort McPherson, Ga.

[HARRIS FAULKNER] Faulkner said her sense of humor and appreciation for the plain truth come from her dad, an aerospace engineer and retired Army aviator. Lt. Col. Bobby R. Harris flew fixed-wing jets in Vietnam and eventually worked for then-Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Colin Powell at the Pentagon.

"My dad always said he was a soldier at heart, and he was proud of that," she said.

Soldiers would recognize the quality Faulkner says is her secret to reporting the news: "controlled tenacity."

"You want to get to the end of the story, yes, you want to get to the truth and have passion and energy, but you also have to communicate authority," she said.

She spoke with Military Times after a week of big stories — the Boston Marathon and Texas fertilizer plant explosion — which recalled her experience covering the Oklahoma City bombings. These are her edited responses.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HARRIS FAULKNER/FOX NEWS

ONE

Q. What got you interested in journalism, and what is your favorite part of the job?

A. When my father was serving in Vietnam, my mom and dad wanted to find a way for me to keep connected with him, so my dad sent cassettes from the field and would record bedtime stories for me. So, I didn't know it was journalism when I was 2, but that incredible thirst and wonderment started at a very young age because of my dad. Fast forward, and I still use those skills to communicate difficult subject matter, breaking news, to weave together the facts of a story in a way that's valuable.

TWO

Q. What stories have you covered that have stayed with you?

A. April 19, Oklahoma City, 18 years ago was the first time I reported from what looked like a war zone in our country. I worked for Fox in Kansas City. We got there quickly, and I was on the air for 37 hours straight. It was the first time we had seen that kind of attack, that kind of response and manhunt; not knowing who hit us, really talk of terrorists. There was the hurt, the pain of those little children in the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. It was a horrible place to stand.

THREE

Q. What did you learn from that experience and covering other tragedies?

A. It was an incredible time for me as a journalist and a maturation period for me as a human being. I learned that you come at every story with everything you have. I refuse to believe there is one person who is 100 percent objective. That would be boring and unnecessary. What we need are real people to tell us what's going on. At Newtown, Conn., in December and Boston [in April], and in Oklahoma City, my heart hurt. I cried for those children when I had the time to process it. You compartmentalize for the moment, but later I pray and I cry like everybody else.

FOUR

Q. What was your worst gaffe as a rookie?

A. Working at the Fox station in Kansas City, in the middle of the newsroom, we were in some programming and they had routed the newsroom mic as open. I dropped something on my foot and screamed, "Oh ..." rhymes with "it." In the middle of someone's talk show, you heard it. Then you heard the conversation from the newsroom, someone asked, "Did you break your toe?" Finally, someone figured it out. I apologized profusely. The news director did, too. I thought I would never survive it, and it became a teaching moment.

FIVE

Q. What was your most memorable interview, and who would you most like to interview?

A. Going back to Oklahoma City, I interviewed a grandmother about her journey in faith and about her fights with God because her two grandchildren were taken in the bombing. It's always stuck with me because the layering of her pain and breaking through and finding her hope — and I lean on that sometimes and can still hear her voice. For the future, I don't play golf, but I'd like to play a round of golf with Condoleezza Rice and find out what makes her tick ... Also, for a lighter where-are-they-now, where is ["Sunglasses at Night" musician] Corey Hart?



Harris Faulkner is shown with her father, Bobby Harris, whose military career included service in Vietnam.

