CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR INTERVIEW
MAKERS: WOMEN WHO MAKE AMERICA
KUNHARDT FILM FOUNDATION

Christiane Amanpour
Journalist
5/9/2011
Interviewed by Betsy West
Total Running Time: 48 minutes and 15 seconds

START TC: 00:00:00:00

ON SCREEN TEXT:
Makers: Women Who Make America
Kunhardt Film Foundation

ON SCREEN TEXT:
Christiane Amanpour
Journalist

Christiane Amanpour

Journalist

00:00:07:00

BETSY WEST:
Okay, I want to talk a little bit about your upbringing. You've lived in several places. I'm wondering if you can talk about that and how living in different cultures influenced you.

00:00:17:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
I was born in England, but at the age of about eight months I was taken back to Iran where my parents were living. So I absolutely grew up in Iran, and that is my home and it's my formative structure if you like. I would say that I had a privileged but not overly pampered childhood. And I would also say that my only memories are of exquisite happiness, contentment, unconditional love, adventure, friendship. I strongly believe that it provided the solid rock foundation for who I am today.

00:00:50:00

BETSY WEST:
Given what you wound up doing in your life, were there any signs, early signs of fearlessness?

00:00:56:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
Well, you know what? Many people call me fearless, and I'm always a little bit embarrassed because nobody's really fearless. It's about how you manage fear. It's about whether you give into fear or whether you push through it. So I try to trace back where that may have come from. And I think it comes from when I was about five years old, I started as my sport, as my hobby,

horseback riding. Again, this was in Tehran, Iran. It wasn't little ponies. I was put on a big horse, like 15, 16 hands.

00:01:26:00

And I was little, I could barely get my legs around the horse. But nonetheless, that was my experience. And when I fell off, my fabulous instructor, who was an ex-cavalry officer in the Persian Army, would literally by the scruff of my neck, pick me up and slap me back on. So there was no time to be afraid. There was no time to give in to fear. You just had to keep pushing through it. And I do strongly believe that, that was my formative experience in terms of how to manage fear, how to be determined, how to be courageous, and how to have compassion.

00:02:06:00

Because when you are intimately involved with another living thing, whether it's an animal or a person, you must develop some kind of human compassion so that you're able to shape your relationship with that human or that animal thing. And I think that's what's grounded me and worked for me.

00:02:26:00

BETSY WEST:
So interesting how often sports plays a role for women and men in later life…

00:02:32:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:

Well, I think sports, and particularly one in which you're involved with a living thing, something so powerful and so big that you don't just manage it by brute strength, you manage it by subtle engagement with it. I think that does play a huge role in people's lives, because there you learn the fundamentals of success and failure, of hardship or ease of progress. And I've always believed—perhaps not at the time when it was happening—but I strongly believe in mistakes.

00:03:03:00

I believe in setbacks. I believe in failure to an extent, because you cannot learn and you can't push forward unless you have that. And I see around me so many of the younger generation, even women, who are afraid to fail and who think that any kind of setback is a career altering, life altering problem as opposed to an opportunity. I remember when I started to get good at what I do now and I started to win awards, I had a boyfriend who is currently and was a French photographer.

00:03:34:00

And he had that very French intellectual way about him. When I started to win awards and when I started to go and accept them, he said to me something very important. He said, "Christiane, beware of success. Don't trust success." And I was a little irritated because I was like, "Hang on a second, it's my moment. I'm thrilled." But boy, do I appreciate what he told me. Don't bask exclusively in your own success. Don't believe your own publicity. Don't read every clip and be buffeted one way or the other by it.

00:04:06:00

Remember that success is fleeting and that what really matters is your passion, your commitment, your mission, whether you like what you do, and whether you're doing something worthwhile and something with purpose.

00:04:18:00

BETSY WEST:
Talk to me a little bit, for a Western audience, about how women were treated in Iran at that time that you grew up? And how that might have affected you one way or the other?

00:04:29:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
When I grew up in Iran, I was born in 1958. So it was in a way the good old days, if you want to assume that under the Shah and the development and the progress that he brought to Iran were the good old days. For women, they were. Because women were not forced to wear the hijab or the chador. Women were given gradually increasing roles in government, in administrative positions, in the workforce. Women were always able to drive and able to go out without their husbands.

00:05:01:00

But nonetheless, there were issues that stopped some women from being able to do certain things. So I grew up seeing my mother and all her Persian friends—my mother being the foreigner, the English woman in Iran—able to be a woman in an Islamic country. And that was deeply affecting to me,

because I never assumed ever that because I was a woman, anything was off limits to me. And that was very empowering.

00:05:30:00

Additionally, my father is Iranian, and never said to my mother, or to us four girls—I'm the oldest of four girls—that you cannot do anything because you're a woman and because you live in this Islamic country. So from the very beginning, I grew up believing that I could do anything that I wanted to do as long as I put my mind to it and my heart into it and that I worked for it. And even beyond that, I grew up with an Islamic father, a Christian mother.

00:06:02:00

Again, learning from the very, very earliest age that cultures can mix, that the mix of culture provides tolerance and growth and richness. That it wasn't about a war and a clash between cultures. My experience has always been about how you can have a successful life, career, community, world, when cultures can be knitted together.

00:06:27:00

BETSY WEST:
Then everything changed, of course, in Iran. Tell me just a little bit about where you were in the Revolution, and what this was like for you and your family?

00:06:34:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:

I was 20 years old when the Revolution hit my country. And so at 20, I fully understood and was fully aware of what was going on. And I, and my family, had lived a privileged life comparatively. We were in the upper echelons of society, and everything we knew, overnight, literally collapsed.

00:06:55:00

Not just the system, but people who we thought were friends, people who I thought were good people, were my teachers, were the people who I had trusted, suddenly were vilified and were called the evil monsters. We were never political because in a monarchy such as the one we grew up in, there was no room for politics, certainly not in my family. And at that moment, I learned everything. It was a huge turning point in my life because I stayed throughout the Revolution.

00:07:28:00

I was in the streets, I watched, I did not take part, I was afraid. I also felt that the people who we had grown up respecting, were being thrown out. And I had not thrown my lot in with the revolutionaries. I still believed in what my father believed in. It was a moment of fear. And I saw gradually, people who I'd grown up knowing and respecting, executed, imprisoned. My own uncle was in prison, died in prison.

00:07:58:00

We believed for a long time that he was killed in prison. We never saw his body. And as I say, overnight, a whole system, a whole culture, a whole value system was shattered. But for me, despite the shock to the system of our nation, and of the world—because the Iranian Revolution changed the world,

and to this day we are dealing with a fallout of the Islamic Revolution in Iran—

00:08:26:00

For me personally, it was my open door to my adulthood and to my professional life. And I was old enough to understand what was going on, to be fascinated by what was going on, and to want to be there for the rest of my life, in the middle of those kinds of earth-shattering, history-changing, world-moving events. But not as a victim. I wanted to be there as the storyteller, as the person who would try to explain that for our viewers and for the world. And that's what put me into journalism.

00:09:00:00

BETSY WEST:
So that was your moment of thinking. I was just going to ask you the path to journalism. How did you think about this?

00:09:07:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
100% my path to journalism came through experiencing the Revolution in Iran, the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the first of its kind. It shattered our country, but it also completely changed the world. And I was old enough to understand that I wanted to be part of those kinds of events. Not as a participant or a victim, but as somebody who could explain it, as somebody who could take the pictures, tell the stories, interview the men, women, and

children who were involved, perhaps even hold leaders accountable. I hadn't quite thought of that yet, but that's what I wanted to do.

00:09:41:00

And I knew that, that's what I wanted to do and where I wanted to be. So then I came to the United States, which to me was the place where if you worked hard and you had a dream, even foreigners could make it. And this again was 27, 28, 30 years ago actually. And I went to university. I wanted to be a journalist. I studied journalism. I went to CNN. I started at the very bottom rung there, knowing that I wanted to build up and become a foreign correspondent. That was my dream and my mission.

00:10:09:00

BETSY WEST:
How did you latch on to the idea of being a war correspondent? Really, what made you think that you could do that?

00:10:18:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
I didn't know whether I could do it. I knew I wanted to be a war correspondent, or a correspondent in areas of crisis and upheaval, I suppose because that's where I came from. That was what shaped me. The Islamic Revolution in Iran shaped me. And that was very violent, and very politically extreme as well, and that's where I wanted to be. That's where I saw myself from the earliest moment of when I decided I wanted to be a journalist.

00:10:44:00

I think also, we know that if you're good at that—I'm not sure I knew this then, but now I know—that if you're good at that, it is a path towards being successful in this business. If you're good at crisis, if you've come back and have acquitted yourself well as a war correspondent, it is in our profession, a fast track. Actually it's not fast and it's not easy, but it's a track towards rewards and promotion. I don't think that's what motivated me, but I see now in retrospect, so many people write about why to be a war correspondent.

00:11:16:00

Many people accuse us of being war junkies, or adrenaline junkies, or disaster tourists. I have to say I reject that, because I think that's very shallow and it's very, I think, a little envious frankly. I think the people who haven't been able to do this, say the people who do do it, "Oh, there's something a little wrong with them. They're not satisfied with just going to City Hall, they need to be out there on the front lines facing the bullets." No, I think we are vital to our profession because we really do go out there.

00:11:45:00

We don't sit back and do armchair journalism, and we don't just put our opinions out. We go out there and we are the eyes and ears of our viewers. And we put our lives at risk, and our families at risk, and our sanity at risk, and we believe it. And there are only a few people who are constitutionally made for that. It's not for everybody. And I'm not saying that in any kind of snobbish way. I strongly believe that there are people who are born to do that

kind of thing, and I believe our profession and our societies need that kind of information that we provide.

00:12:21:00

ON SCREEN TEXT:
Christiane Amanpour
Bosnia, 1998

BETSY WEST:
What was your first experience as a war correspondent, and was it what you expected?

00:12:26:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
My first experience was the first Gulf War, and it was fantastic for me because it was my first big story. My first experience was the first Gulf War. For me, it was fantastic, it was my first big story as a young correspondent, but it was also CNN's big moment as an explosive force on the world. And it was the first Gulf War that created and cemented CNN's position as the indispensable news operation if you want to hear and know what's going on in real time.

00:12:50:00

So I'm not sure it's exactly what I expected, because it was a huge, huge war that required some 500,000 U.S and allied troops to push back Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait. My next experience was in the Balkans, as the Balkans

were falling apart, which was just some six months after the first Gulf War. When I landed after the first Gulf War in the former Yugoslavia, that to me was my toughest experience.

00:13:24:00

Because that was real war, hand-to-hand war against civilians in small towns and villages, in Sarajevo for instance, in Bosnia. And I was shaped much, much more strongly by that. And I believe also that myself and my colleagues, my generation of war correspondents also shaped foreign policy.

00:13:51:00

BETSY WEST:
Well, tell me, first of all, what was it about that war that made you risk your life and go through what you went through to cover that war?

00:14:01:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
Many things about the siege of Sarajevo and the ethnic cleansing around Bosnia and the Balkans shaped my life and my professional drive. First and foremost, we were telling the truth at a time when leaders around the world were not. They were trying to say that this was just centuries of ethnic tension, that this was all sides equally guilty, that there was nothing we could do about it and let the slaughter play out and let the chips form where they may.

00:14:32:00

That was the overriding political do-nothingness that was going on. So that was in complete contrast to what myself and my colleagues were seeing on a daily basis in a town like Sarajevo, which was multiethnic. Christians, Muslims living together, Serbs, Muslims and Croats, Bosnians living together in a town that, by the way, had, had all of the world's cameras there just 10 years earlier when it was the host of the Winter Olympics.

00:15:00:00

These were Europeans who were being slaughtered in a way that we had never seen except for in the Second World War. This was on our watch in Europe when we were journalists, in the age of global satellite television. Nobody could say, "We don't know. We don't see what's happening." Because we put it in their face day after day after day. So my generation grew up hearing from our parents and our grandparents, "Never again, the slaughter of Jews in Europe." We were tasked with never again, never allowing that to happen again, and it was happening on our watch.

00:15:36:00

BETSY WEST:
What about the civilian targets, that aspect of the war?

00:15:39:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
Having come from the first Gulf War, which was army against army on a massive battlefield, conventional war, to be dropped into the siege of

Sarajevo, where civilians now were the principal targets, where men, women, and children were being deliberately sniped by people in the surrounding hills, deliberately blown up by people mortaring and bombarding with heavy artillery, men, women and children on the streets of Sarajevo. This was something that we couldn't even imagine in our wildest nightmares, that even today it's hard to come to terms with.

00:16:15:00

Because to this day, especially now as a mother, I ask myself, what kind of human being put in his cross hairs the head of a five year old child and pulled the trigger, and what kind of a world did we live in that allowed that to go on for 3, 4, 5 years before they got serious and intervened after the terrible massacre of Srebrenica in July of 1995? That shaped us as journalists, but I strongly believe that it also finally shamed, and I will use that word, shamed the world into taking action.

00:16:54:00

ON SCREEN TEXT:
Questioning President Clinton
CNN, 1994

BETSY WEST:
Well, at one point you really shamed the President. Can you talk a little bit about that, in 1994, when you asked your question of President Clinton?

00:17:04:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
President Clinton was giving a foreign policy speech that was hosted by CNN. And some of us who were in foreign locations were asked to contribute by asking a question from the floor after his speech. I had listened to the speech. It was about 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning in Sarajevo. It was around the worst of times in Bosnia. And the President was laying out everything the United States had done to try to alleviate the suffering, leading humanitarian intervention, they had set up the International War Crimes Tribunal, but he stopped sort of there. There was no more.

00:17:37:00

There was no policy, there was no attempt to stop this. There was sort of a feeling that, this is all we could do and nothing more. And I must say, I was getting more and more upset listening, knowing what was happening just a few feet away in the streets of Sarajevo. And I just asked him, "Mr. President, how can you allow United States policy to be hostage to the Serbs in this case who had a policy," and theirs was killing and winning land,-

00:18:08:00

-and I asked him, "Why it appeared that US policy flip flopped so often?" And the President did get very angry with me. But because he is Bill Clinton and because he is so unbelievably smart, he came back and was generous to me in a later part of that press conference. And the truth of the matter is that later, a year later, the United States did lead a successful end to the Bosnian War, not just bombing the Serb military targets,-

00:18:41:00

-but then leading a diplomatic effort, the Dayton Peace Accords, to bring a final end to that war. And the peace holds until today. But my point was that I was there to hold leadership accountable, to ask a question based on my first hand experience, my eyewitness experience in the field. Not some gossipy question, not some gotcha question about what might have been happening at that time in the White House or wherever. But a real question based on what was going on. I had to, I couldn't ask any other question.

00:19:18:00

BETSY WEST:
Where did you get the confidence to ask? I think that's what a lot of women looking at you say, "Where did she get all this confidence to ask a question like that?" How did you do that?

00:19:26:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
Well, I'll be very frank, you do take your courage and screw it up in as tight a ball as you can and do your very best. It is not easy talking, confronting, holding accountable the most powerful people in the world. It is not easy, and you don't necessarily get praised for doing it. And I remember even my own family asked me why I was rude to the President of the United States.

00:19:54:00

And I didn't intend to be rude, I intended to ask the only question that I could ask as a journalist who was an eyewitness. So it's not about confidence and bluster, it's about your moral obligation, for me anyway.

00:20:14:00

BETSY WEST:
Do you ever second guess yourself in the middle of the night?

00:20:18:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
I always second guess myself in the middle of the night. I always say, "I wish I could've done that better, or I wish I hadn't been so bad at that, or if only I had been there in time, I might have, might have, might have." I always second guess myself. I think it's human nature. But if I look, now, back, I'm proud. I am proud. I'm proud not because of any awards or because of any kudos or anything. I'm proud that I had the fortitude and the support of my network and the support of my colleagues and the support of our profession,-

00:20:55:00

-because it is a brotherhood, it is a sisterhood. I'm proud that I did the right thing, and the right thing was to be there, wherever it is, day after day after day, week after week, year after year, really knowing your subject and really reporting. And I say I'm proud because I think that what we did in Bosnia changed policy, but also, it also ensured that a Bosnia could never have happened in Kosovo, which came up a few years later.

00:21:25:00

And President Clinton, his National Security staff, his allies organized an intervention into Kosovo that prevented the kind of slaughter we all witnessed for four years in Bosnia. The opposite and the worst nightmare is when you don't act, and that's what happened in Rwanda. Around the same time, 1994, where nearly a million people were slaughtered in some three months because nobody took any action.

00:21:53:00

And even the journalists weren't there at the critical weight, the tipping point that's needed to be able to affect policy and to be able to prevent decent people from turning their eyes and turning their face.

00:22:08:00

BETSY WEST:
How are you treated as a female reporter when you're on the front lines?

00:22:13:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
I think it has been very macho for sure. If you look at the evolution of war correspondents, it obviously started with so many men. There were a few women, but it was really a male dominated enterprise, as is much of our world today by the way. We are making progress in all sorts of spheres, but there is no equality yet. And we have to still keep fighting, not just in the field,

but in the executive suite and in government, in power. We have to keep fighting and keep putting ourselves there.

00:22:43:00

I had the confidence, I think, because of the way I was brought up. Because I didn't thump my chest as some kind of, "I am woman, hear me roar." Because I did the work, because I had a very good relationship with my male colleagues. And because I proved that I could do it. Because I did it. Many of my female colleagues, we did it. We got the exclusives, we went to the front lines, we took the pictures, we told the stories.

00:23:12:00

I had male colleagues saying, "Wow." I think also we live in a world where fortunately for us women, men are still- Their default action is to be polite to us. So they'll open the door to us. And then when we get our foot in, we keep it there. And I think that also, we benefited from the kindness and collegiality of our male colleagues as well. And yes, what we do is dangerous. And yes, what we do is frankly more than dangerous, it's an extreme endeavor.

00:23:43:00

But we can do it and we've proved it over and over again. I don't believe there's anything left to prove.

00:23:48:00

ON SCREEN TEXT:
Christiane Amanpour & Anderson Cooper
2009

BETSY WEST:
Do you feel that being a woman makes you a different kind of reporter than a man?

00:23:53:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
Possibly. Possibly being a woman makes it somewhat different. I think men probably tend to the big picture policy, they tended towards the hardware, they tended perhaps towards the acronyms of militarism. I think women, perhaps because they were forced to in the beginning, went very quickly towards the human story, towards how it's affecting the children, the women, the old men of non-military age, how it affects the community.

00:24:20:00

So I think possibly in the beginning, but I think now men also do that and do it very, very well.

00:24:28:00

BETSY WEST:
Does it bug you in our profession that there's a kind of different beauty standard for women and men?

00:24:35:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:

There may have been a different beauty standard for women and men, but if you look at the television today, you can see a lot of beautiful men on television. So I think they too are having to face that double standard that women are still having to face, but certainly did have to face in earlier incarnations.

00:24:52:00

I always say, "Look at me. I managed to do this without being the cutie pie." And I don't believe that looks are the motivating factor today, certainly not in the field.

00:25:06:00

BETSY WEST:
How about dress code in the field? I wonder what your thoughts are about that. You were sort-of known for wearing your flak jacket.

00:25:14:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
I quickly learned that dressing for camera is a major pain. It's a major distraction from what you're trying to do. So I very quickly adopted and created my own uniform. Just like when I was at school I had to wear uniform all through my boarding school years, I wear uniform in the field. And that is a safari kind of jacket, different colors, khakis or jeans or whatever, simply to provide a decent looking, easy set of clothing that looks good, that's functional and that I don't have to think about it.

00:25:46:00

Because boy, my brain is full, not of how my hair is, not of what my clothes are, but I need to concentrate on getting the story, on surviving, on bringing the story back, on getting it out. And you know we live in a 24 hour seven environment right now. The platforms and the ability to get the story out is exponentially much, much greater than it was when I first started. So we are constantly working.

00:26:12:00

We almost don't get any sleep when we're in the field. So if we then have to think about how our clothes are, how our hair is, whether we've got the right lipstick on, it just doesn't work. When I first started, all the women were blonde, Midwestern, had the same accent, all spoke American. And I was very, very different. I do dress with a certain modesty. Some would say, "Modesty becomes her. She has a lot to be modest about." But I do because I just don't want to get distracted by jangly jewelry or special beautiful clothing.

00:26:45:00

I like to do that when I'm not working. But when I'm working, I feel that I need to concentrate on the work. I also don't want to make myself somebody completely different from the people who I'm reporting on. I'm in some of the worst hovels. I'm in some of the worst violations of human rights. I'm in some of the worst violence where people are really bleeding literally. I can't go there in some super duper looking outfit with high heels. I can't do that.

00:27:11:00

BETSY WEST:
I remember reading once that you thought that you wouldn't get married or have a family. Why did you say that, and then what happened?

00:27:17:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
You know how some women, they have marriage and children and family on the top of their professional list? I didn't. Perhaps it was because I had experienced the Revolution, that I was a late student in college, my whole family life and my whole world was turned upside down. I knew that I had to rely on myself going forward, create my own income, my own world. I couldn't rely on my parents or family as I had done before. And as I say, I started late. I was a late freshman. I was 25 when I first started at CNN. And perhaps for me then it was a little too late to think about having a family.

00:27:57:00

I was on my professional track. But then when I went abroad and I started in the Gulf War, in Bosnia, in Rwanda, Haiti, all those places, and I spent literally 24/7 of my life doing that. I knew that I couldn't give the kind of passion and commitment if I had a husband or a family at home. I knew that I couldn't share myself to that degree, because I don't think I would've done either well, and frankly, I probably wouldn't have been able to do the job well. I would've defaulted to my family.

00:28:28:00

So what I'm saying is that if I had had a family, I would not be the journalist I am today. I don't think that I would've been able to do that then. So I delayed my family and I'm absolutely phenomenally proud of my family. But it has not stopped what I'm doing, but it has changed and tempered what I do and how I do it. And it has most certainly affected my relationship with violence and danger and fear, whereby I'm more careful, I'm more aware.

00:29:01:00

Not that I don't do it and I don't go into those situations, but I'm more aware. Before, without a family, I was not thinking of death. And I also think when you're younger, you do have a sense of immortality. But when you don't have a family, that sense of immortality is more acute. I was very glib when I was pregnant. People would ask me all the time, "Well, how is this going to affect you?" I said, "Well, I will put my son in a baby bulletproof vest. I'll put Kevlar diapers on him and I'll take him with me."

00:29:35:00

Well, of course the first thing that goes out of the window is reality. You're not going to take your child unless you're really irresponsible into some danger zone. So I didn't do that obviously, but I did keep doing what I was doing. But I would spend less time on the road. Whereas before I had a child, I would spend literally months. Here I would parcel it out in smaller increments. It didn't affect what I did. I definitely needed to be back home with my son. But I tell you what was very, very difficult, 9/11.

00:30:03:00

Because when 9/11 happened, my son was 18 months old. And I spent some three months in the field after that, barely coming home. I remember coming home for weekends from way across the other side of the world, and obviously not every weekend. But that was very, very difficult. I don't care what anybody says about being a woman and an extreme professional, it's very difficult.

00:30:33:00

That is not to say that you shouldn't do it, that's not to say you can't manage it. But I think many women of my generation are under so much self-imposed stress or stress from society, stress from what is expected of us as successful women and of the feminist movement, if you like, that we have to do everything perfectly, that we have to have it all at the same time and that we should be superwomen. I know that's beginning to dissipate, that sense now. But I'm proof positive that you cannot have it all.

00:31:04:00

You can't do it all at the same time. Something has to give. Either you're not going to be good enough at your profession or you're not going to be a good enough parent and something's going to suffer. So I think you can be smart and I hope I've tried to do that and I've developed a way to try to do both. And I'm sure both suffer around the margins, but I don't believe both suffer at the heart.

00:31:29:00

BETSY WEST:

Is there a trick you could tell women, other professional women juggling these things? Do you have a trick of how to deal with that stress?

00:31:36:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
Your trick is to decide in your life what is your priority. Is it your child and your family, or is it your work? And once you decide that, you have to figure out how to do that balance. I know it sounds sort of obvious, but it's not obvious. And particularly depending on what stage you are in your career, sometimes it's more obvious than at other times. And I'm seeing now, colleagues, people who are younger than myself, making certain decisions which are good for them. They've either decided to come in from the cold, do more studio work.

00:32:07:00

I started to do that as my son became more needy of me. Or to defer some of the more difficult, all consuming parts of their professional life until their child was a certain age. So there's a lot of balancing that has to go on. But somebody much more wise than me, Jackie Kennedy Onassis once said, "If you mess up raising your children, nothing else much matters." And I actually believe that, because you are setting the generations for the future.

00:32:39:00

And you can have, as one of my very wise producers told me once, this is before I was married, "So what are you going to do? Cozy up in bed to all your statues, Christiane, your awards? What are you going to do with your life?"

And it puts it in perspective. It puts life and work into perspective. And I think that is the big lesson that I learned, perspective.

00:33:02:00

BETSY WEST:
Do you consider yourself a feminist, and what does that word mean to you?

00:33:07:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
Yes, I consider myself a feminist. Obviously feminism has had different meanings. When women had zero rights, feminists behaved in a certain way, that it was a zero sum game. You have to fight, fight, fight. You cannot allow half the world to be told no, just because they have a different gender. So many parts of the world, the Arab part of the world for instance, the Muslim part of the world, is significantly less developed because the society keeps half the population down.

00:33:39:00

It's proof positive that it just doesn't work. That women are equal co-partners in every endeavor, every endeavor. So the people who've had to fight those battles came before me, and I am eternally in their debt, whether it's in government, whether it's in the military, whether it's in my profession. So I'm a feminist in that I believe in women's equal rights and equal opportunities and equal ability.

00:34:05:00

I believe that, intellectually, physically, and in every which way. I think that frankly we do things differently, sometimes better than men. Men do things differently, sometimes better than us. It's all about complimentary, and until we get that balance right, there will always be a struggle.

00:34:28:00

BETSY WEST:
What about people who say, "Oh, we're post-feminist. It's all over. We got it. What do you think?"

00:34:32:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
I don't believe we're post-anything. I don't believe we're post feminist, I don't believe it's over. I think the battle, the struggle continues in different ways than before my generation. I think now the battle is for more women in elective office across the board, whether it's at the highest presidency in the United States-

00:34:53:00

BETSY WEST:
When you look around and you see where women are now, what do you think?

00:34:56:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:

When I look around and I see where women are today, I think women in the United States have achieved a huge amount, but there is still a long way to go. In elective office, at the Presidency, in the executive suite, and for instance my profession, and across the board. There are many women doing it right now, but not enough. Not a tipping point amount. Not an equal amount. Also, women are still not getting paid the same kind of money for doing exactly the same kind of job and frankly sometimes more of the same kind of job. They're not getting paid the same dollar.

00:35:26:00

So I think that that is something that we need to continue to struggle for. And myself, having traveled all over the world and having seen in so many of these emerging democracies, constitutionally women are given certain rights and certain numbers in the parliament. It's over now the debate, should women be equal or not? We should. It's now about implementing it. And if the most powerful country in the world and the most evolved country in the world, the United States, has not yet got there, it does not behoove us to look down our noses at countries around the rest of the world.

00:35:59:00

In fact, in many countries in the rest of the world, there are many more women in government, many more women in the highest positions of power. It's not perfect anywhere. We've got to keep fighting. And still there are many, many wars on women around the world that I have the misfortune of having to cover. So we have a long way still to go.

00:36:21:00

BETSY WEST:
Women are still the targets.

00:36:23:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
Women are still the targets. They're targets of sexual violence, they're targets of lack of opportunity. They're targets of forced marriage. They're targets of a lack of educational opportunity. But dollars and cents show, and every indicator, every important indicator of social progress shows that when women are involved, either leading or participating, every indicator rises.

00:36:54:00

The economic indicator of a country, the health of a country, the education, the literacy, the government, every single indicator rises when women are involved.

00:37:05:00

BETSY WEST:
I'm wondering, given your background, you have a unique perspective on women wearing the veil. Do you see this as oppression or a choice or more complex than that?

00:37:16:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
I think it's complex. I think the veil is being used as a religious and political tool. Growing up in Iran, I grew up in the wake of the Shah having banned women from wearing the chador, the veil. That created its own backlash. Then I'm in the West, where again, you want to ban people from wearing their headgear. That creates a backlash. But then I go back to my home country today, Iran or Saudi Arabia or wherever it might be, and now we're forced to wear the veil. That creates its own backlash.

00:37:47:00

So the obvious is that it must be a matter of choice. It must be a matter of choice. Coupled with that though, I have also been living through this culture where Islam believes the West is at war with it. One of the symbols of nationalism in the Islamic world over the past decade or so, the early part of 2000, was wearing the veil. Where people said, "I am a woman. I am Muslim. Look at me." It didn't mean, "I hate you, I'm better than you, or I want to kill you."

00:38:19:00

It meant, "No, this is who I am." And I think you're going to see perhaps less and less of that as these democracies start flourishing around the Arab world.

00:38:27:00

BETSY WEST:
If you could think about what the best piece of advice has been that you ever received from someone?

00:38:34:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
The best lesson I was taught was never give in to your fears, never give up. It was my colonel teacher who would grab me by the scruff of my neck and put me back on that horse every time I was thrown off, from the age of five years old. The best advice and experience that I've learned is you must have a dream. You must have a sense of purpose. You must really want to do something that's worthwhile, that is not about the baubles, that it's not about the money. All of that is lovely.

00:39:05:00

But if that's your guiding and motivating principle, you will end up lonely and empty. Not everybody, I'm sure some people are very full with their money and their rewards, but I strongly believe that the happiest people I know are those who have a sense of community, who have a sense of shared purpose, who have a vision, and who have a mission, and who believe that what they're doing is worthwhile in the world in which we live.

00:39:31:00

And I strongly believe that journalism is one of the most noble professions, because without an informed world and without an informed society, we are weak. We are weak. Our democracy is weak without real facts and information and without a fully formed citizenry. Even the United States Founding Fathers said that, and I strongly believe it.

00:39:55:00

BETSY WEST:
What's your advice to those young women about achieving that vision that you talk about, that dream?

00:40:00:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
It comes from within you. You can't impose a vision or a dream or a mission on somebody. But everybody has inside them what they want to do in the world, and where they want to be in the world, and what their place is. And I say, find that place. Be authentic. Know who you are and what you can bring. And don't be afraid to try. And whatever, don't be reluctant to do the hard work. Because again, I think today's society is the easy come, easy go, the sense of entitlement.

00:40:28:00

Even despite the economic crises that we go through, people still believe, "Oh, I should have this. And if I don't, well, oh, my life is going to fall apart." No. Work hard, go through every step that that profession or that job requires. Really learn what you're going to do, so that when you achieve the pinnacle, the aim, you will have built those building blocks and you'll be secure in yourself and nobody will be able to say you don't deserve it. And nobody will be able to say, you're on the wrong path, because you will have built it for yourself.

00:41:00:00

BETSY WEST:
Being in Sarajevo, how did you deal with the fear of... What was it like? Tell me a little bit about the conditions, and how did you deal with that?

00:41:08:00

ON SCREEN TEXT:
Reporting from Sarajevo

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
Being in a city under siege was terrifying. There was nowhere for us to escape as journalists. There was no hotel that was out of the danger zone. The entire city was the danger zone. And it was ringed by the aggressors on the hills and we were down. So we were with the civilians, we were amongst those who were targeted. And it was terrifying. We had bulletproof vests for the first time.

00:41:37:00

Our organization started to get bulletproof cars. But so many of my colleagues were killed or wounded in Sarajevo, in Bosnia. At that time, it was the worst war zone for deaths and injuries to journalists ever. Ever in history. And it was terrifying because you just didn't know whether from day to day, from sunup to sun down, whether you were going to get home alive.

00:42:02:00

Because your job was not to sit back and what people do now, armchair journalism in so many instances. Your job was to go out there and be with those people who are in danger and report their story. And I remember so many times, each time I say this, I touch wood because I luckily have not been injured. So many of my friends have. But so many times going across front lines and a mortar would have slammed in just before or just after I went through. Or a bullet just went flying past me and didn't hit me.

00:42:39:00

Once I was lying in bed in the hotel in Sarajevo. There was one hotel, it was called The Holiday Inn, and it was right on the front line. And we journalists thought that we had occupied the safe side of it, not the side that had been shelled and mortared. But one morning I woke up and I heard the sound of incoming artillery and I tried to jump out of bed and opened the door and get out, and I couldn't because my door was locked. I couldn't find the key and I was in a fog.

00:43:07:00

Anyway, the sound went, I didn't hear anything. I thought maybe I dreamt it. About an hour or so later, my colleagues came banging on my door and they said, "Have you seen what's happened?" And I got out of my room. Two doors down, a 105 millimeter howitzer shell had come into the room next door. It was faulty so it didn't explode, but it pierced the wall and came in, destroyed the room. Had it exploded, it would've destroyed our whole floor and we would not be here to talk about it.

00:43:37:00

But there are a lot of near misses. And I had a terrible experience. My first camera woman in Bosnia, her name was Margaret Moth. And she was one of the first people who was shot by a sniper, and she was shot through her face and she nearly died. And the heroic hospital in Sarajevo gave her blood transfusions, stitched her up. She was airlifted out. She spent a long time at the Mayo Clinic getting her face fixed.

00:44:04:00

But she lived a life of pain and suffering. She went back into the field, she kept doing her work, and she was a real hero. And in the end, she died not so long ago of cancer. But she is the kind who believes in this dream. And all of those are lessons. David Kaplan, ABC producer, in my earliest times in Sarajevo, came off the plane. We were all on the same plane coming into Sarajevo.

00:44:32:00

He went off in his van into the city, and he died because a sniper shot right through the unarmored car and shot him through the back. But there for the grace of God go I.

00:44:44:00

BETSY WEST:
But the fear, how do you deal with that? How do you tamp it down?

00:44:48:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:

Fear is something that you either manage or you don't. And I think the only way I can explain it, because I don't know, it's not deliberate, it's something that I've learned. The only way I can explain it, must be compartmentalization. You're doing your job. You're so focused at that moment that you don't have time to be afraid. You're worried about yourself, you're worried about your crew, and you're worried about getting the story. So it's only afterwards when you come back and you talk to people about what happened, and you talk to your colleagues about, "Wow."

00:45:21:00

And you sit, have a drink after work, that you realize how dangerous it is what we're doing, and how lucky we are and how somebody is looking over us and watching out for us. Because I think we all have our time, we all have our time, and there will be one day when that bullet or that moment will be for us. And in a different way, emergency room doctors do what we do.

00:45:50:00

They are faced with people's bodies who are ripped apart and they're human beings as well. And they must feel horrible when they see those terrible injuries coming into the emergency room. Many, many per day or night. And yet they have to put their fear and loathing and their personal opinions aside and get that job done to save a life. So we have to as well, to save the story.

00:46:14:00

BETSY WEST:
What was your very first paying job?

00:46:17:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
My very first paying job was in the middle of the Iranian Revolution when I didn't know what to do with myself, and I took a job as a secretary to one of my father's friends and I got paid a little bit. And then I was waiting to go to university and get my job as a journalist, I worked in a bar and in a department store.

00:46:36:00

BETSY WEST:
Did you have a dream of what you wanted to be when you were young?

00:46:39:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
I thought I wanted to be a doctor when I was very young, but then I didn't get good enough grades to go to medical school. That's a whole 'nother story. And I then found my dream, which was to be a journalist. And I can't say I dreamed of that from my earliest years, I didn't. But with the Revolution in Iran, that became my dream. And so I pursued that relentlessly.

00:47:00:00

BETSY WEST:

So you're a different kind of doctor. Is there a person you've never met who really has had a huge impact, influence on you?

00:47:07:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:
I would say reading the stories of some of the war correspondents in the earliest, earliest years of World War I, II, and beyond who I never got to meet, has had a huge impact. Obviously Edward R. Murrow, he's the patron saint of what we do. But beyond just the hero that he was, reading his books and reading the courage, not just the physical courage, but the moral courage that he had to employ to do what he did, has had a huge impact on me.

00:47:34:00

But I would also say Nelson Mandela, who I've never met, has had a huge impact on me. Because he had the courage to accept decades of indignity and violence against his very nature, and he came out in peace, in love, and rebuilt a nation out of tolerance that he didn't have to do, and he did it. And I think that's the towering moral example for all time.

00:48:03:00

BETSY WEST:
What are the three adjectives you might use to describe yourself?

00:48:06:00

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR:

Serious, passionate, and full of heart.

END TC: 00:48:15:00