

Lies Catch Up to You

For journalists, nothing can beat the adrenaline rush of seeing their own names in print and the notoriety a byline brings. At 25, Stephen Glass, an up-and-coming reporter at *The New Republic* knew that feeling well, and his desire for it cost him his career.

A reporter who began at *The New Republic* in 1995 as an editorial assistant, Glass was the author of several high-profile, attention-getting stories in his own magazine and other national publications. The only problem? He made up people, places, events, organizations, and quotations. Sometimes, he even fabricated entire articles. Glass went to extremes to cover his deception, creating fake notes, voicemails, and in one case, a completely fake Website. Every lie he told led to another series of lies to cover up his initial deception.

“My life was one very long process of lying and lying again, to figure out how to cover those other lies,” he said in an interview with Steven Kroft for the CBS newsmagazine “60 Minutes.”

First assigned to write a short story on a piece of legislation about to be passed, Glass wanted the perfect quote to give the story a little more interest. Sadly, though, none of his interviews had yielded such a quote. So instead of using what information he had, he typed the perfect quote onto his screen and looked at it, and decided to let it stay. It went to print, and Glass moved on from beefing up his stories to making them up entirely.

“The general trend of the stories is that they started out with a few made up details and quotes,” he said in the “60 Minutes” interview. And then they progressed into stories that were completely fabricated.

“I loved the electricity of people liking my stories,” he continued. “I loved going to story conference meetings and telling people what my story was going to be, and seeing the room excited. I wanted every story to be a home run.”

Glass’ actions didn’t come without circumstances. His lies eventually caught up with him, and the careful steps he’d taken to cover his fabrications unraveled. He was fired and dropped out of sight as a journalist. He eventually went to law school and earned a law degree. He’s since passed the bar exam, but has yet to begin to practice law because of questions regarding his character.

“What I did hurt the people I worked with,” he said. “It hurt my editors. It hurt my family. It hurt my friends. It hurt the readers.”¹

¹Quotes taken from “Stephen Glass: I Lied for Esteem” CBS “60 Minutes” [online]. Cited August 17, 2003 [Accessed 9 September 2004] as cited in Lifetrak 5.3 Sunday School curriculum, Nashville: Lifeway, Spring 2005, on CD-Rom.