

The Pioneers of the Misinformation Industry | The New Republic

By Moira Weigel

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There is an hour on the west side of Los Angeles, before the evening traffic slows to a crawl, when the falling light turns thin and clean. But young Andrew Breitbart often had to drive all day. After barely graduating from Tulane, Andrew had gotten hired as a runner at a low-budget production company in Santa Monica through a friend, and now he was being paid \$230 a week to carry scripts from his boss to other bosses all over town. Within a year, he had put 22,000 miles on his Saab convertible, and started to hate the world he was still desperate to break into, the sycophancy and cliquishness of Hollywood, the people at parties always glancing over his shoulder for someone more important.

The saving grace of the gig was that it gave him time to listen to AM radio. Not long after graduation, his girlfriend's father, the actor Orson Bean, had turned him on to Rush Limbaugh. Andrew had felt skeptical at first—he was still a Democrat, and he'd heard Democrats call Limbaugh a Nazi—but soon found himself hooked. In his gravelly solemnities and arpeggios of anger, the shock jock seemed to speak directly to you; he told you why you felt the way you did. Limbaugh painted a picture of the world that Breitbart and everyone he knew inhabited but that he could only now see clearly: the Democrat-Media Complex. Breitbart could not get enough; he would keep listening on his radio cassette player, during the minutes it took him to walk from the parking lots where he left his Saab to the offices where he dropped off scripts, and back.

At least, this is the way Breitbart would later tell it, in a memoir that—as he also tells it—he had to write on an airplane because that was the only way he could get himself off-line long enough to focus. Breitbart may have been adopted and raised by a Jewish father, as he mentions early on. But his book *Righteous Indignation* follows the familiar pattern of the Christian conversion narrative. He was blind; then he saw. The LA freeways were his Road to Damascus.

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