In the summer of 1970 I wrote a story for Scanlan's Monthly, the short-lived magazine Warren Hinckle and Sidney Zion had founded earlier that year. The piece was a light-hearted take describing how President Nixon's Operation Intercept -- a government plan to stamp out weed in the United States by interdicting marijuana coming across the Mexican border – had created an economic boom in Lawrence, Kansas, where I lived, by turning the low-grade cannabis that grew wild thereabouts into the biggest cash crop in Douglas County, Kansas.

Inspired by my story about the Kaw Valley Hemp Pickers, a couple of young Kansas filmmakers decided to create a quick-turnaround documentary on the subject. They interviewed me and a few gun-toting hippie desperadoes, got the expected reaction from terrified civic leaders, and accompanied the Hemp Pickers on a nighttime harvesting excursion. Having created their masterpiece, they were then faced with the question of what to do with it.

This dilemma was resolved in short order. They threw their reels of film into the trunk of their car, drove to New York, and went straight to the offices of CBS News. Not ten days later, along with the rest of a spellbound nation, I watched myself being interviewed on "60 Minutes -- no longer by my filmmaker friends, but, thanks to a bit of deft splicing in the CBS editing room, by Mike Wallace himself. Even though to the best of my knowledge Wallace never left New York that week, he appeared to be in my living room as he conducted our "conversation.

Which begins to explain why I've never exactly put a lot of faith in "60 Minutes.

Faking an interview with me was hardly the most egregious journalistic sin "60 Minutes has committed over the past four decades, but our understanding had been that the program had tightened up its standards in recent years. Which made it all the more surprising to watch Bob Simon's breathless profile of Manny Pacquiao Sunday night. It may have been the most singularly embarrassing "60 Minutes segment since Gunga Dan Rather donned a turban for his cavalry excursion into Afghanistan.

A veteran newsman, Simon is the program's Senior Foreign Correspondent, which, we're guessing, is how he ended up with the assignment on the Filipino Congressman, and he opened the segment by stating the obvious: "We haven't done many stories about boxing – and then proceeded to illustrate why.

It's no secret where I stand on the Pacquiao-Mayweather argument, but to hear Simon tell it, the subject isn't even fit for debate: That Pacquiao "is, quite simply, the best boxer in the world today, was offered up as a matter of irrefutable fact, even though some might question whether he will even be the best boxer in the ring next Saturday night.

Simon then proceeded to inform his audience that "Pac-Man, as he is known, holds [that's right; present tense] world champion titles in seven different weight divisions, from 105 pounds to 148, and next Saturday night in Dallas he will be going for his eighth. That's never been done

before.

Leaving aside the facts that two of Pacquiao's "titles were conferred by a boxing magazine and not by any recognized sanctioning body, or that for all his gifts, he certainly didn't hold the titles simultaneously, there's a pretty good reason for its never having been done before, which is that the two weight classes specifically cited by Simon don't even exist. (In case you're keeping score, Manny's first title was at 112 pounds, his most recent 147, and in actuality he has never weighed as little as 105 or as much as 148, though he presumably will against Antonio Margarito on Saturday.)

Viewers should have considered themselves warned when Simon introduced his subject by noting that Pacquiao "brings excitement not seen in the ring since Mike Tyson (Mike Tyson?), and when the veteran newsman gushed "I've never seen a fighter walk toward the ring smiling you wanted to ask, "Uh, exactly how many fighters have you seen walk toward the ring, Bob?

In enumerating Pacquiao's gifts, Simon noted that "It doesn't disturb him when he gets hit, because retaliation is instant. Fair enough, but this pronouncement was accompanied by footage of Manny not getting hit – he slips a jab and splatters Ricky Hatton with a left.

Simon then went on to inform his viewers that "after a fight, Manny always goes down on his knees in prayer; that's the closest he comes to the canvas, which would doubtless come as news to Medgoen Sinsgsurat, et al, who has been laboring under the delusion all these years that he put Manny on the canvas.

Bob Arum, who described Pacquiao as "the best fighter I've ever seen, is identified as Muhammad Ali's promoter, but not as Pacquiao's. (When Simon asked Arum "greater than The Greatest? Arum dismissed Ali as "essentially a one-handed fighter. Simon didn't ask Arum the obvious next question: "Which hand would that be, Bob?)

Needless to say, it would have been a major upset if the footage of Pacquiao in the gym hadn't included, sans elaboration, the obligatory reference to Freddie Roach's Parkinson's Disease.

Look, we love Manny Pacquiao, but in the end this piece wasn't merely dismissive of Money, it insulted the intelligence of even casual boxing fans.

Somewhere among all its vast resources you'd think that CBS employs a fact checker who knows there's no such thing as a 148-pound division, or even if he didn't, was willing to look it up.

EDITOR NOTE: That being said, many ate up the piece. Heres a link to an extra morsel from the 60 Minutes crew. www.cbsnews.com/8301-504803_162-20021984-10391709.html