



---

Volume 23

Issue 1 *Sacred Heart University Review, Volume  
XXIII, Numbers 1 & 2, Fall 2002/ Spring 2003*

Article 6

---

March 2010

## An Evening with Bob Edwards

Bob Edwards

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/shureview>

---

### Recommended Citation

Edwards, Bob (2010) "An Evening with Bob Edwards," *Sacred Heart University Review*. Vol. 23: Iss. 1, Article 6.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/shureview/vol23/iss1/6>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the SHU Press Publications at DigitalCommons@SHU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sacred Heart University Review by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@SHU. For more information, please contact [santoro-dillond@sacredheart.edu](mailto:santoro-dillond@sacredheart.edu).

---

## An Evening with Bob Edwards

### Cover Page Footnote

Bob Edwards was the longtime host of National Public Radio's Morning Edition, and is now the host of a morning show on XM Satellite Radio. He spoke at Sacred Heart University on June 16, 2004, interviewed by Tom Kuser at an event sponsored by WSHU. The transcription published here is lightly-edited, and makes reference to but does not include the text of clips from various radio broadcasts played during the talk.

BOB EDWARDS

---

*An Evening with Bob Edwards*

*Introduction*

My name is Tony Cernera, and I have the wonderful privilege of being the president of Sacred Heart University. My job tonight is to welcome you to a very special event. As a university committed to a liberal arts education, Sacred Heart University, like many other colleges and universities, recognizes that we have a very important role to play in the future of our democracy. Every democracy depends on a well-educated citizenry. We need women and men actively engaged in the political process, willing to debate the great public policy issues of our times. But in order for them to do that, they need to be well-informed and well-educated. So universities with a liberal arts commitment and a commitment to the education of its students play a vital role in helping prepare that next generation of citizens.

National Public Radio, and its particular manifestation here in our own community, WSHU, also help to play a vital role in educating the citizenry so that we can exercise our responsibility and our rights in our democracy. And in our particular case, we have the very good fortune that WSHU and Sacred Heart University are part of the same family. Sacred Heart University considers WSHU one of the great jewels in the crown of this very fine \_\_\_\_\_

*Bob Edwards was the longtime host of National Public Radio's Morning Edition, and is now the host of a morning show on XM Satellite Radio. He spoke at Sacred Heart University on June 16, 2004, interviewed by Tom Kuser at an event sponsored by WSHU. The transcription published here is lightly-edited, and makes reference to but does not include the text of clips from various radio broadcasts played during the talk.*

institution, and for all of you who help to support the radio station, to

keep it commercial-free and on the air providing the wonderful public service of news and information and excellent music, thank you very, very much.

Tonight is an important night for us. We really have one of the greats of NPR. How many times have you sat on the Merritt Parkway in traffic, or on I-95, listening to Bob Edwards. And if it wasn't for him, your probably would have committed murder. So Bob not only has provided a wonderful service to you and to me: he's also probably saved thousands of lives by distracting us from the horrors of 95 and the Merritt Parkway. You'll hear now from Tom Kuser, who will more formally introduce Bob and his topic tonight, and say more about Bob's new book about that wonderful hero of American journalism, Edward R. Murrow. So thanks for being here tonight.

*Tom Kuser:* I'd like to say good morning, but I know that's the wrong time of day. Good evening, and welcome, and thanks for coming out tonight and supporting WSHU public radio. It's great to see a large group of public radio listeners and supporters in one room at the same time.

Although I work in a studio here in Fairfield every morning, in what was the front room of what still looks like a Cape Cod house, and Bob Edwards is in a studio in NPR in Washington, looking quite a bit more modern and up-to-date, I like to think that we work together, all of us, to bring you *Morning Edition*. I can fantasize, right? It really has been a privilege to be a part of a broadcast that's marked by his really unique brand of broadcast journalism, getting to the core of an issue or the core of a person with that polite, calm, succinct way he has of asking the questions that we'd like to ask. And of course there's that voice, that has been described as cured like good tobacco and good Kentucky bourbon. Bob is a professional through and through, a personality that really has endeared him as a personal friend to all of us, stopping by in the morning for so many years to talk with us about what's going on in our worlds. And of course we'll be looking forward to more visits from time to time in his new role.

For a few minutes this evening, we'll all be in the same space. No radio magic to deal with to make it happen. So please without further ado, welcome NPR senior correspondent, Bob Edwards.

I think I can speak for everyone here in telling you that we miss

you at breakfast. And I've enjoyed working the local end of *Morning Edition* for the past several years. You've got an incredible set of coattails. We appreciate it.

*Bob Edwards:* Do you have to work in the morning?

*Kuser:* Bedtime's in fifteen minutes.

*Edwards:* Yes, it's way past my bedtime. Staying up with the grownups.

*Kuser:* Now *Morning Edition* aside, this book tour must be playing havoc with your rhythm.

*Edwards:* I can hardly complain, though, because I get to go out to a different station almost every day and meet the brightest audience in all of broadcasting. So I have no complaints at all about this.

*Kuser:* Now you got up at one o'clock in the morning for twenty-four-and-a-half years. What was that like? What did that do to your life in general, getting up so early for so long?

*Edwards:* Well, what's worse is going to bed at six. Everything is back-timed in order to get me to bed at six. It just ruins the whole day that way. Actually, getting up at one is secondary to that.

*Kuser:* Didn't you tell a newspaper once that you are not a morning person?

*Edwards:* I'm not. I like to go to bed at one o'clock in the morning. I don't know anyone who is a morning person, although there are a few who talk about getting up at four and running or some ridiculous thing like that.

*Kuser:* Because they want to. What's going to be normal now, personally?

*Edwards:* I don't know, because the book tour is not normal. But it's delightfully not. I don't know. I guess I'll be in a rush hour for the first time in decades. I'll find out what that's like.

AN EVENING WITH BOB EDWARDS

67

*Kuser:* I understand there was a story about a puppy you're now allowed to have?

*Edwards:* We had a dog, once upon a time, but the dog did not respect naps. The dog would bark and wake me up, and we couldn't have that. So when she went to her reward, she was not replaced with a new dog, until now. When I got the news, I called my wife and just said, Well, you can have a dog.

*Kuser:* What did you get?

*Edwards:* We have a border collie named Sam.

*Kuser:* Sam the border collie.

*Edwards:* I'm going to be reunited with Sam tomorrow. I'm looking forward to it.

*Kuser:* How about professionally? Of course most of us heard the World War II memorial story that you did not long ago. Any hints about pieces that are coming up in the future?

*Edwards:* I am to do profiles of people in the news.

*Kuser:* When did you know that radio broadcasting, the on-air aspect of it, was something that you really wanted to do?

*Edwards:* I was tiny. I couldn't reach this chair when I concluded that. I was maybe three or four. I loved the radio. I was fascinated by it. I wanted to be a voice in the box. That's what radio was to me: this voice coming out of the box. I wanted to be a voice in the box too.

*Kuser:* What do you remember listening to, early on?

*Edwards:* I was born in 1947, so "old-time radio" was still going. I listened to *The Lone Ranger* on radio. I listened to the soap operas on the radio with my grandmother. I listened to Ed Murrow.

*Kuser:* And that was through the Louisville station?

*Edwards:* Yes, WHAS was the Louisville station then. And of course I saw Murrow on television, on *See It Now*, *Person to Person*, and *Small World*, a program that not many people remember but was fascinating. It was about conversation: conversation among intellectuals, world leaders, writers, in different parts of the world. It's fascinating what he did. They were filmed in four different locations. They would hear each other by telephone. They wouldn't see each other, of course; there were no satellites or anything like that. And then the reels of film would be flown to New York and then synchronized, so that the viewers saw split-screen, way ahead of its time. The split-screen interview for *Nightline* is routine now: Ted Koppel talking to someone and you see both of them on the screen. But this was the film age, and pre-satellite. It was fascinating. The conversation. We don't have conversation any more. We have a lot of talk. We don't have much conversation.

*Kuser:* You mentioned about wanting to be a voice in the box, and I think we have some very early *Morning Edition* tape. In fact, it's *Morning Edition*, day one, from 1979. [plays tape of the voice of Bob Edwards over theme music: ``Good morning. Today is Guy Fawkes day. Guy's plot to blow up Parliament was discovered on this day in 1605. Today is the beginning of National Split-Pea Soup week, and it's the debut of this program. I'm Bob Edwards."]

*Edwards:* Well, we were still kind of working it out.

*Kuser:* I guess things changed a bit, from day one to the most recent programs you've done.

*Edwards:* Yes. Thank goodness.

*Kuser:* Now in that time I understand that you've done something like twenty thousand interviews. I won't ask you to pick one.

*Edwards:* Good.

*Kuser:* But in general, did you have a favorite type of interview? You've

## AN EVENING WITH BOB EDWARDS

69

talked with world leaders and scholars and celebrities, all sorts of people. Did a certain type appeal to you more than another?

*Edwards:* I liked the interviews where I learned something. They could happen in any field. I think I had an amazing number of Nobel Peace Prize winners. I can't imagine that there's a living Nobel Peace Prize winner I didn't interview. And you always learn something from them. But I preferred a lot of feature stories, because they were just more fun. I enjoyed talking to musicians and to writers and to artists and to people who were communicators, as opposed to politicians. You needed to do those interviews, and you tried your best to get them off of the message of the day, but it's difficult. They're very defensive. They're not very forthcoming, and they are afraid that they're going to say something that will get them into trouble. So the artists and musicians were a lot more fun.

*Kuser:* I was going to say, they seem to be, listening to them, they seem to be the most fun in terms of what came out on-air. The Johnny Cash interviews particularly, I can remember. And I understand you went to his house for one of those interviews?

*Edwards:* Oh sure, I went to a lot of them. I went to Toronto to interview Oscar Peterson, for example, a jazz pianist, a fabulous, gifted musician. I wanted him for a long time. I was after Cash for thirty years, and always got very close to an interview and then something would happen: he would go on tour, he would have an engagement he couldn't break, or go to the hospital. But it finally happened, and thank goodness I got there in time.

*Kuser:* Yeh, it was near the end of his career and life. What was special about Dolly Parton?

*Edwards:* What was *not* special about Dolly Parton. For one thing, she interviews herself. Says things like, ``Costs a lot of money to look this cheap."''

*Kuser:* As interesting as all those conversations were, there was something very special about the Friday conversations you had for such a long time with Red Barber. You guys seem to have a real



repartee. You matched. Something flowed well. Did you have a feeling for that beforehand or did it just happen on-air?

*Edwards:* Red was very fond of taking care of his partners. He worked with partners for years. He was the play-by-play man. He'd have a color commentator with him, or they would rotate play-by-play. For this bit I was his partner, as Vin Scully once was, as Connie Desmond once was, as others were, like Ernie Harwell. But for twelve years I was his partner for four minutes on Friday morning, and he took care of me. When I was away, he would ask where I was. They generally didn't know. ``Well, he's off raising money for a public radio station somewhere." [imitating Red Barber's voice] ``Well, I don't know any organization doesn't know where its anchor man is. What have you done with The Colonel?" He's one of the founders of our business. When he started in radio, it was just ten years old, in 1930, as a commercial enterprise. So they were still making it up as they went along in those days. When you can talk to one of the founders of your business, you realize first of all how young the business is. It's a real treat.

*Kuser:* Was that planned originally as something that would occur every Friday, or did it just begin so well it was decided to continue it?

*Edwards:* It was his idea that it be live, and that it be a conversation with the host of the program, with me, rather than reading text, a prepared essay or whatever. That plus of course Red's personality is what made it: the fact that it was live, it was spontaneous. I didn't know where it was going. Listeners didn't either. We kind all held on for the ride and we had a real good time.

*Kuser:* That was my next question: the topics. Did they just come up as you thought of them?

*Edwards:* No, we tried, we tried very hard. On Thursday, on the day before the broadcast, we'd call him up and go over some ideas, what had been happening in sports that week and what we might talk about, and then by Friday he would have completely changed his mind.

*Kuser:* Now I understand there was one conversation with Red that

NPR considered not airing, I guess the only one. Why did that happen?

*Edwards:* It was the day of the beginning of the Persian Gulf war, the other one, in 1991. The vice-president for news wanted no features on the program, nothing frivolous like sports, as if I could ever get Red to talk about sports: he was talking about his cat and the squirrels and the birds and flowers. But we knew that he would rise to the occasion, and we pleaded with the vice-president of news, and ultimately prevailed. And of course Red didn't disappoint us. He hit a home run. [plays tape from that program]

Red was the first person hired by Ed Murrow when he was vice-president for news, after the war and when he came home in 1946. He hired Red as director of sports, and he had that job for nine years. He was very, very proud that he was hired by Ed Murrow.

*Kuser:* In the years since Red has been gone, has that kind of repartee come up again with anyone else you've talked with on a regular basis, that same flow?

*Edwards:* No, because Red's unique. Red was one of the very few people who just arrests a listener, and you have to just stop what you're doing and listen for those four minutes. I can't think of another one. Maybe Arthur Godfrey had that sort of power and impact. The man had three or four programs going simultaneously, I remember. But no, what Red has is something I would do almost anything to get. Most broadcasters would.

*Kuser:* How did you become ``The Colonel"?

*Edwards:* In Kentucky, they make you a member of the honorary order of Kentucky Colonels. It's not a terribly elite organization. Probably half of this audience are Colonels. They probably give them to you in speed traps or something. But every state has something. I don't know what you do in Connecticut or in New York. In Indiana they make you a Sagamore of the Wabash, and in Maryland, you are an Admiral of the Chesapeake. But in Connecticut, I don't know what you do.

*Kuser:* I don't know what we do here. I think we give out nutmeg or something like that. Red Barber was the topic of *Fridays with Red*, your first book. I understand that your new book, *Edward R. Murrow and the Birth of Broadcast Journalism*, is a nationwide best-seller.

*Edwards:* It's doing quite well.

*Kuser:* How did you have the time to write that and get up at one o'clock in the morning and do *Morning Edition*?

*Edwards:* It's part of a series of books that John Wiley and Sons puts out called "Turning Points." And they are all that size, they're all 40,000 words. It's not a very big book. There are three existing long biographies of Murrow, and I figured you didn't need another one. My book focuses on a very narrow aspect of his life, which is what he did to establish first radio and then television as an important news medium. So there's a definite turning point. They asked me just to be an author in the series. I picked Murrow, because he was somebody I knew something about. It was very easy to research, and I wouldn't have to take time off from *Morning Edition* to do it. In fact, I would talk to one of our correspondents in the morning in Baghdad, with the bombs falling on her, and then go home in the afternoon and write about Murrow and the bombs falling on him in London in 1940. That was kind of strange. But I didn't want a project that would take me away from the microphone. There was the war on, and I did not want to leave the program, not then, not ever.

*Kuser:* You mentioned researching the Murrow book. You had an indirect, practically a direct connection through a gentleman named Ed Bliss. Could you tell us something about that?

*Edwards:* Well, there's several. One of them certainly was Ed Bliss, because he had written for Murrow in the '40s and '50s, and being his radio writer, would travel with him. When Murrow would go on the road for speeches or stories or other engagements he had, Bliss would go with him and they would do the broadcasts from some remote facility, some CBS bureau or whatever. And Bliss later, when retired from CBS, founded the broadcast journalism department at the American University. I chose AU as my grad school because of Bliss. I

figured this guy could teach me something. He had worked closely with Murrow, closely with Cronkite. I could get something out of him. And I certainly did, particularly writing. Then there were others. Dan Schorr, of course, with NPR, was hired by Ed Murrow postwar. And I corresponded and spoke with Richard C. Hottelet, who was part of the fabulous wartime reporting team that Ed Murrow assembled.

*Kuser:* I'd like to look back a little bit before Murrow. In general, what was radio like before he came on the scene?

*Edwards:* There was news on the radio, but it was of a different order. There were a lot of commentators, former newspaper columnists who had fifteen-minute radio programs where they would just go on about their take on world affairs. Lowell Thomas and Fulton Lewis, H.V. Kaltenborn, and the like. And there was events coverage: they would send announcers out to cover speeches, press conferences, political conventions, trials. The Scopes trial of 1925 was on the radio. The Lindbergh trial was a big radio phenomenon. But these were events. There was no enterprise journalism, no original reporting on the network level of any substance.

The war changed all that, of course. Murrow was based in Europe. He wasn't supposed to go on the air. He was supposed to arrange broadcasts by other people in Europe that New York wanted: political leaders, professors, labor leaders, choirs, bands. I imagine he did Wimbledon and the British Open too. And when he saw the war coming – as anyone in Europe could see, but Americans weren't paying a lot of attention – he hired William L. Shirer to help him out, because Shirer had some journalism background. He had been a veteran newspaper reporter and wire service correspondent. But then the war just kind of forced both of them on the air. Shirer wasn't supposed to go on the air either. He was another arranger of broadcasts. But the war, when Hitler annexed Austria in 1938, just kind of forced the two of them on the air, and William Paley, the founding chairman of CBS, loved the program they put together. They called it a roundup. It was a very complicated thing: multiple points broadcasts originating in Europe, from Paris, Rome, Berlin, London, and Vienna. This was really kind of the beginning of the nightly news. Because Paley liked it so much, he said do it again tomorrow. And

with war of course expanding, the team of reporters expanded, and what a fabulous group they were.

*Kuser:* Murrow seemed to have pretty much a free hand through much of his career. How did the networks feel about this?

*Edwards:* Well he did and he didn't. He was constantly battling New York, and kind of taking license. He had the advantage of being there, and being in place, and doing a terrific job, and having a brilliant staff working with him so that I guess he could press his luck. For example, they wanted pretty voices in New York. New York wanted him to hire people who sounded good on the radio. He wanted smart people. He wanted smart people who knew their way around and had great contacts and could do a reporting job. He didn't care about their voices. I can't imagine New York not liking Eric Sevareid's voice, but they didn't. He wasn't a great orator, but he sounded fine. Winston Burdett: I don't know how you can improve on that voice. The solemnity he gave to reports from Rome kind of matched the Vatican itself, with its splendor. And they were making it up. It was still new. And the reporting's a bit different: it was first-person reporting. You don't hear a lot of that now: I saw, I heard.

*Kuser:* Is that what made a Murrow broadcast so unique?

*Edwards:* No, it was a lot more than that. Murrow had a great mind, for one thing. He was a good reporter. He sort of instinctively knew journalism. He had no background in it at all. But the little cautions, the qualifiers that journalists learned to use: they were all there from the beginning. He knew that, for some reason. He also had been a speech major in college. He knew when to speak, when to shut up, when to have the little pause. He was very effective at using the pause. He had been a debater. Put this all together and you've got the makings of an instant radio reporter, which he was. But without the background. He just fell into it. He was a natural.

*Kuser:* We have an example of that, of what Ed Murrow did best. It's a clip of his report after flying with the Royal Air Force on a bombing mission over Berlin.

## AN EVENING WITH BOB EDWARDS

75

*Edwards:* And they are caught in the searchlights. They're a sitting duck if they don't take evasive action. And you'll hear them: tumbling around like that, he not only reports on what he's seeing but also what he's feeling. [plays tape of a Murrow wartime broadcast]

When I mentioned his gifts, I omitted maybe his most important one, which is his writing. The word pictures you're hearing there are just fabulous. Incendiaries going off ``like a fistful of white rice thrown on a piece of black velvet." You get an image there. He knew always that he was writing for the ear and people had to see these things that he was seeing, and he was helping them along.

*Kuser:* You mention in the book that he writes radio in color.

*Edwards:* We think of World War II as being in black and white, because we see it on the History Channel every night. But his reports on radio were in color, as far as I'm concerned.

*Kuser:* You also wrote that he didn't have any problems making his audience feel somewhat guilty. What did you mean by that?

*Edwards:* On a number of occasions he did that. One of the very last things he did for CBS – he did not produce this program, David Loeb did – was called *Harvest of Shame*. It was part of *CBS Reports*, and it was about migrant labor. Murrow and the producer, Fred Friendly, and David Loeb and others thought that maybe people should know where their food comes from and how it gets to the plate. They ran this on the evening of Thanksgiving. That was the kind of thing that Murrow would do.

You hear it very plainly in his report on Buchenwald. Near the end of the war, when it was clear that Hitler was done, Murrow wanted to go out in the field again and get just a little more action before it was all over. So he joined his colleague, Charles Collingwood, who was with Patton's Third Army. And one day they liberated Buchenwald. Murrow was just sickened by what he saw, and grew very bitter toward the German people through this experience. He was very upset that the Germans living in the villages around Buchenwald looked like they hadn't been through a war at all. They were eating well and fully clothed, and just over the fence you had this horrible, horrible thing

going on. His report spoke of seeing bodies stacked up like cord wood, of an appalling scene of two men crawling to the latrine. He watched two men die right before him, just fall down and die, and he was very upset and angry, and even though he didn't write this piece until three days later, when he was back in London, he's still angry, and you hear it. [plays tape of this broadcast]

He segues from what he sees at Buchenwald to a sort of eulogy for Roosevelt, and the remarkable thing is that this story was probably not on the front page, because it was the day Roosevelt died. So the liberation of Buchenwald would have been inside probably.

*Kuser:* You mention in the book as well that nothing really scared him: bombs during the war, dictators. Was there anything that scared Ed Murrow, at least professionally?

*Edwards:* I can't imagine, because he had that other kind of fearlessness, too, that he could take on Senator Joseph McCarthy at the height of the anti-Communist hysteria of the '50s. Took on his bosses, took on William Paley, and very publicly. So I can't imagine . . . Oh, microphones. Believe it or not, I was told by several people that he had mike fright. Maybe it was just an excuse to have a shot of whiskey, I don't know, But I heard he would take one before he went on the air. So what Hitler couldn't do to him, a microphone could.

*Kuser:* Joe McCarthy couldn't do it either, apparently. Could you talk a little bit more about that broadcast? The Joe McCarthy broadcast?

*Edwards:* Murrow gets a bad rap, I think. He's accused of being late on McCarthy, because other famous newspaper columnists had taken him on. Murrow was taking him on on the radio. He had done several preliminary broadcasts about McCarthy. McCarthy of course was using our fear of the Soviet Union to advance his political career, which is not exactly a bulletin in Washington. What upset Murrow was McCarthy's methods: the lack of due process, the badgering of witnesses, the assumption of guilt. Murrow considered it a suspension of the Constitution, and that of course is the essence of who we are as Americans: the law. So editorialists and columnists had been on McCarthy's case – and you can read about that in the paper. But what

*See It Now*, living up to its name, showed you on television was film of McCarthy in action, and most people were seeing that for the first time. And they looked at this and changed their minds about McCarthy. They said, Well, I'm against that. That's very bad. They put themselves into the witness chair. It was very easy for them to do, seeing it on television. And then at the end of this demonstration of McCarthy's tactics, Murrow did an essay, really an editorial, a commentary, the likes of which were not heard before on television, and to my knowledge, since. If you take McCarthy's name out of it, however, I think it stands today as an excellent civics lesson. This just took McCarthy apart at the knees.

*Kuser:* We've got a piece of that program as well. [plays tape of one of Murrow's McCarthy broadcasts]

*Edwards:* McCarthy was done by the end of the year. He started the year with better than 50% ratings in the polls, and by end of the year he couldn't get 50% of the United States Senate, which censured him. But it was also the beginning of the end for Murrow, because these controversial broadcasts were upsetting his bosses at CBS, who didn't like to be in trouble with the FCC, with members of Congress, and certainly not with sponsors. Sponsors don't like controversy. Sponsors like light entertainment. Two years after this broadcast, Murrow lost his sponsor on *See It Now*, two years after that he lost *See It Now*, and two years after that, he was done at CBS. He had been marginalized, and was not used in any leading role with CBS News, so he quit and joined the Kennedy administration in January of 1961.

*Kuser:* If you could speculate for a moment, knowing that big networks will do things that a lot of folks don't like, would Ed Murrow have fit in at NPR?

*Edwards:* I'm not sure that he would, because he would get us in trouble. There's that appropriation thing, you know? Congress allots money to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and members of Congress do not want to hear commentary on public radio or public television. Bill Moyers' commentary, at the end of his program, is upsetting to a lot of people: that he even does it, much less what he



says. So it's very bold of him to do that. And I can just imagine Murrow doing one of these Murrowesque conclusions to his reports. He didn't feel that you brought on a liar to balance the truth, and that might not go over so well today, in public radio or anywhere else.

*Kuser:* Let's back up a few years for a moment to World War II and the original group that Ed Murrow hired, Murrow's Boys. Could you tell us a little bit about the last person to join that group.

*Edwards:* The last of the group known as Murrow's Boys, which included a woman or two, by the way, and he tried to hire more, and New York didn't like that. So he was way ahead of his time on that, by the way. The last he hired of the group we call the Murrow's Boys was Richard C. Hottelet, who was and is, the son of German parents, German-American parents, who went back to Germany to study and ended up with the United Press in Berlin, followed the blitzkrieg across Europe. Nazis were not real fond of his reporting, and the Gestapo locked him up. He was exchanged for a German prisoner here, did broadcasts for the Office of War Information, joined Murrow's staff in time to make plans for D-Day, and in fact covered the airborne assault on France and the dropping of paratroopers, and I think, if I've got my information right, because I put it in the book, he was the only CBS reporter on D-Day whose reports were heard on D-Day, because others were on the beaches and their reports didn't get out for several days. There was a snafu there in the arrangements they made for reporters to get their stories back. But Dick Hottelet went on to do some fabulous reporting on the Battle of the Bulge. I think he was the first to do that. He had to bail out of an airplane over Germany. Reporting is dangerous work. And for many years, he covered the United Nations, in the Cronkite era, and I'm proud to say ended his broadcast career on a program sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations that was distributed by NPR. So I think of NPR as Dick Hottelet's last network.

*Kuser:* Well, fortunately Richard C. Hottelet is here this evening with us, and has agreed to spend a few minutes with us here.

*Edwards:* What I don't go into in great detail in that book, and what

I'm dying to hear about, is just the difficulty, the technical difficulty of being heard. Nowadays you have a satellite telephone. You carry it around, you dial a few numbers, and you've reached Washington, New York, or whatever. It was a little more complicated for you guys back then.

*Richard C. Hottelet:* Our lives were governed by a word you hear no longer in broadcasting: atmospherics. I was attached to the First Army. We had a little studio press wireless set up. It was a little room hung with blankets, and I would be ordered up for a particular time for a particular broadcast. And it often so happened that I'd spend the day out looking for things and come back and write a story, get it censored, and wait for the time to go. And when the time came, more often than not nothing happened. We couldn't hear New York, New York couldn't hear us, there were sunspots, there was heaven knows what. This was the early age of communications.

*Edwards:* Short-wave.

*Hottelet:* All short-wave, and actually I remember we tried our best to get over. We had a little signal corps transmitter called Jig Easy Sugar Queen. I was on it once and we reached London, with a story of the Battle of the Bulge, which came as a great surprise. But it was hit and miss, and mostly miss.

*Edwards:* You had to go to a transmitting station?

*Hottelet:* Oh yes. We had no recorder. There was a recorder, and we tried one on a bombing raid before D-Day, a wire recorder. A wire went through from one reel to another reel through a recording head, and so often it just broke. In those days we all smoked, and you tied a knot in the wire and you sealed it with the end of the cigarette. The quality was acceptable, given the fact that there was no other alternative. But in principle we were not supposed to record. The networks had the feeling – or our network had the feeling – that if you could record, why you could just send the recordings out to the various stations. They wouldn't need a network. And so to preserve the idea of a network, where everything comes through them from their people,

through them to everyone else, recording wasn't used.

*Edwards:* So whenever they heard you, they were hearing you live.

*Hottelet:* That's right. When they heard me, it was live.

*Edwards:* You mentioned censorship. People have asked me, Would Ed Murrow be embedded? And I say, well, they were so embedded, they wore uniforms. War correspondent. Well, what about the censorship? You knew it both ways. You had been censored in Berlin by the Nazis, and then later . . .

*Hottelet:* The funny thing is, there was no censorship when I was in Berlin.

*Edwards:* Was it pre-Nazi?

*Hottelet:* No, no, during the first couple of years of the war, we were of course neutral, so American correspondents were in Berlin: AP, UPI, INS, the *New York Times*. There was no censorship, for one reason: they were winning the war. And what one came to find out: they had all sources of information, all access to information tightly sealed up. You couldn't call somebody on the phone and say, General, what's going on, or Ambassador of this or minister of that. The information you got was official information doled out by the propaganda ministry or by the foreign office, and that was it. And there was – correspondents today feel it today too – the possibility of being tossed out, being thrown out. So self-censorship: it's a cancer in our business, but it's a cancer that some people get. They had no censorship. I remember sitting at a teleprinter – that was before the invasion of the lowlands, the Netherlands and Belgium – when we had the first air raids, Lancasters, and Wellingtons, these things. This broadcast of Murrow's means twice as much to me as it could to anyone else. I was once walking down the street in Berlin during an air raid and the floodlights, these huge searchlights, picked up a plane and the flak got at it and hit it, and it exploded in a shower of fireworks, of flares and pieces of molten metal.

*Edwards:* It nearly happened to you: you had to bail out of one.

*Hottelet:* Well no, that was later on, crossing the Rhine. I was in the command ship watching the C-47s and the C-46s discharge their people, and the Brits with their infantry trailers coming in. We went around a couple of times and the second time around it was as though somebody had hit us with a sledge hammer. We were in a B-17, but it was a command ship. That is to say, it was attached to the troop carrier command. The troops being carried were doing their own thing. We were just watching. And we were quite conspicuous. I remember seeing in some postwar story later on how a man who had jumped and was on the ground, east of the Rhine, spoke of this silvery B-17. Well, that was us. And of course the anti-aircraft got at it too, and we were hit. We were flying very low. We were flying along with the troop carriers, at what must have been eight or nine hundred feet. We heard this sledge hammer blow on the plane and we looked and suddenly we saw the number two engine, that is, on the left hand side, the second engine, beginning to go to flame, and the molten aluminum streaming back. The crew chief of the B-17 came out. I had never been in an action with a B-17. He came out and he rang a gong, and in a B-17, when you heard the gong, it was time to go. I made sure I had my chest parachute on, and I was the second one out of the plane. Let me tell you, if you ever have to jump out of a plane, don't be afraid. You are not jumping into a vacuum. There's no panic at all. You're leaning into a stream of air, which is like a featherbed. So I wasn't even frightened. I was relieved, and went down. This was in Ninth Army territory. I went up to the Ninth Army press headquarters – Eric Sevareid was there – and got on the air and told the story.

*Edwards:* It was so easy, you'd do it again.

*Hottelet:* Well, if I had to, I'd do it without a qualm, yeh.

*Edwards:* Did I get it right about Murrow? I wouldn't know him personally, obviously, and you would. Marvin Kalb told me that when Murrow entered a room, conversation stopped. Even strangers would stop to look at this guy. He was so imposing somehow, he had some kind of charisma about him.

*Hottelet:* No, I never felt that. He was a first-class man, a decent human being, and his work was more than impressive. I had not heard his work, because I had been abroad until 1941, and back home only for a couple of months and then back in London, Italy, and North Africa. So I had never heard Murrow broadcast. When I went to ask him for a job, it was as though I was going to the UP or the AP, saying do you need another man. I knew of the reputation he had. Everybody in London admired him, and it was obvious that if I were looking for a job, I'd go to him. But that he was in any way imposing or overpowering is not the case. He had a wonderful smile, and a wonderful laugh, the most attractive laugh, and he laughed often. He didn't do melodrama. He did facts. The radio work he did on Berlin is just fascinating. It was the way it was. He didn't deal in emotion. Ed Murrow was driven. He was a driven man. He was driven to tell people what was going on. And with this impulse in him, he wasn't going to fake, he wasn't going to add, he wasn't going to decorate. He was going to give people what he saw, and when he told them what he thought, he told them that it was something that he'd thought. He never mixed what he saw and what he told people what was happening with what he thought, without identifying what he was doing.

He was a very matter-of-fact man, and his choice of people was an indication of what moved him. As you pointed out, Bill Shirer had a lousy voice. He sounded like nobody. And the others weren't baritones or singers. There was nothing declamatory about them. He picked mainly UP people, because this agency was excellent. The UP was always number two. It was always fighting the Associated Press, and it had to try harder. It had to try very much harder, and what it did was to try to get people, young people, who would work for a pittance – and I'm telling you it was a pittance – and teach them the trade. And when you had been with the UP for two or three or four years, you knew the business. You knew what you had to do, you knew how you had to get it, and you knew how to present it.

Murrow never told anyone what to write or how to write it. He just sent them out on a story, and the story went out. He didn't fiddle with it. He often didn't hear it before it went out. If it was really good, he'd say it was a pretty good story. If it was not so hot, you wouldn't hear a thing. He won every one's respect, not only for his talents, which were prodigious, but also because there was nothing that he ever asked

anyone else to do, including the beaches on D-Day and the bombing raids and so forth, that he himself had not done or wasn't prepared to do.

So he was a fabulous man, but he was a normal human being. He had his little quirks, but he was a first-class human being, a regular human being, a man who was in no way swallowing the press releases of the publicity department for CBS. He was what he was, and he didn't care if anybody liked it or didn't like it. People praised the Murrow Boys. Well, we were professionals, and we were as good as the next man. Murrow would have been great no matter what. But what made Murrow and Murrow's Boys was that it was a time when the people of the United States wanted more than anything else to hear what was going on with their people in Europe, what was going on in Europe and during the war, what was happening and how it was going. And we told them, and what we told them tended to be accurate. We supplied them — people, mothers, fathers, siblings — with the knowledge that we gathered ourselves. It was all eyewitness stuff or official statements. We got much more credit than we deserved. We were doing a job that a dozen other people would have done in our place. What happened there was that an alternating current was put into existence between the people who wanted to hear what we had to say and us, who could find out what it was that the people wanted to hear. This interaction hardly exists any longer. It maybe comes up once in a blue moon, around some drama, some tragedy, whatever. But the notion of communicating with people who were glad to be spoken to was unique for that period, and it gave Murrow a popularity which he would have deserved in any case, and it gave us a popularity which we didn't really deserve. We were just working stiffs, and no better than the others.

*Edwards:* What about later in the 1950s? Was it inevitable that Murrow's style of journalism would clash with the corporate bosses at CBS?

*Hottelet:* Well, the man was driven. He was driven by an ethos. His ethos was to tell people what it was that was going on, whether it was good, bad, or indifferent. And he found his network, and even some of his good friends in the network, doing what he thought they should

not be doing. He gave a speech – I think you have it in your book – to the Radio News Directors Association in Chicago. It was in 1958. I think he had been vice-president for CBS, was back on the air, but he was asked to speak to the news directors. What he said in effect was that without content, all you have in television and radio is a bunch of lights and wires. And without leadership, it goes nowhere, because it does all things at once to everybody, and that's not what it was meant for. And it's in the hands of corporations, perfectly honest corporations, who have to make their living. Of course, journalism cannot take support from the government. It has to be independent, which means that it has to have advertising, which pays the freight. I've forgotten how he phrased it: he didn't attack Bill Paley, who had been a close friend. But he said that corporations, especially in journalism, particularly in broadcasting, should not have in mind, should not have as their goal, to increase their bottom line from year to year to year. They had to think of their responsibility to inform the people, a responsibility which of course was his trademark. This was not something a corporation wants to hear, and so he was gradually, as you point out in this excellent book, marginalized. At one point I remember being at some corporate reception in New York. Bill Paley and Frank Stanton, both of them civilized people, first-class people, were talking, and when Ed Murrow walked into the room, they turned away, because he wasn't good for business, and they were in business primarily. They wanted to be in a good business. Whenever they went to Washington to testify at the FCC hearings or at committee hearings, they bragged about the news. It was their loss leader, and yet they didn't want to lose too much.

*Edwards:* It's such an honor to be on the same stage with you, and I thank you so much for being part of this evening.