



We are all in this together.



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## Marilyn's Page



I hope all of you are staying healthy, busy and ready to vote!

I have been trying to keep apprised of what is going on around us and what it means to those of us who worked in broadcasting.

These times have given me ample opportunity to tap some of our talented members for articles, interviews and history. We are so lucky to have every walk of broadcast life represented in our membership and I am taking full advantage of it.

In this issue, wonderfully edited (as always) by the imaginative and tireless Joel Spector, we cover the effects of the pandemic on SNL, one of our premier comedy shows, as well as the impact on the audio world of live sporting events. We have insight on areas from news reporting to sports reporting and the move of our Washington, DC news bureau from 4001 Nebraska Avenue to its new home at 400 N. Capitol.

Our membership is composed of so many who worked during a truly Golden Age of television. It is why I urge all of you to keep abreast of our changing world and comment on it. It needs our perspective. If you want to contribute an idea for an article or a comment, please do. As it turns out, we all have a lot to say about the world around us, where we have been and where we think we are going. Many are looking at their grandchildren and hoping for a bright future. Please keep your ideas coming. They are interesting and worthwhile.

And now for the good stuff, the rest of the magazine...

For those of you who have not paid your 2020 dues, please do so ASAP.  
We survive solely on your dues contributions.  
There is no other support. Thank you! Stay healthy and wash those hands!

## Ron Steinman's Medical Request

Dear Friends,

As some of you know...and many may not, I have serious kidney disease.

Working with a remarkable non-profit, Renewal, we are launching a campaign to find a live kidney transplant donor with Type O or B blood, and we need your help to spread the word. Renewal advises we use an email appeal in hopes that casting as wide a net as possible will bring back word of a donor. **We are asking those who wish to help get the message out please obtain a mini-poster bio from** [ronaldsteinman@earthlink.net](mailto:ronaldsteinman@earthlink.net)

so you can share this request with family and friends. And then ask them to please pass it on.

**Any potential donor should then be in touch directly with Renewal at email R23876@renewal.org, or phone 718 431 9832 X209.**

If you can join us in this outreach, that would be great. And thank you in advance!

Ron.

[Ron began his career at age 23 at NBC News and spent 35 years at the network, followed by a long free-lance producing and writing life.]

*Peacock Profiles***Bob Costas  
Thoughts on What's Now**

**Some of the racial unrest that our country is experiencing  
has caught the attention of the sporting world.**

**In light of this, I asked former Today and NBC Sports producer Antoinette Machiaverna  
to catch up with Bob Costas and ask him to weigh in on some recent events.**

*Bob, sports was always a reflection of American society, but even more so since the 1960's. Before Colin Kaepernick, there was Jim Brown. Before LeBron, there were Bill Russell and Kareem Abdul Jabbar. John Carlos and Tommie Smith raised black-gloved fists in Mexico City in 1968. Mohammad Ali gave up his title to stand up for his right to be a conscientious objector to the Vietnam war. They were called "un-American" for their protests. Do you think things have changed in light of the reactions to Kaepernick's taking a knee and LeBron being told to "shut up and dribble" not long ago?*



Despite ongoing racism and injustices, things have clearly changed dramatically and for the better since the days of the icons you mentioned. While still far from perfect, America is a more just and inclusive society than it once was. And that is true despite the resurgence of racist attitudes in the age of Trump. There will always be pushback to protests and challenges to the existing order. Otherwise, the protests themselves would not be very meaningful if they didn't upset some portion of the public.

As for "shut up and dribble," that's a function of Fox News, right-wing talk radio and certain precincts of the internet. And what it really means is "shut up unless you are saying something I agree with and want to hear." Witness the fact that Fox News welcomes with open arms many athletes and entertainers as long as their views align with those of Fox News. That of course is their right, but the idea that it is connected to any sort of consistent principle is laughable. In the meantime, the latest polling indicates a substantial shift in public opinion where now a solid majority among Americans overall, and an even larger majority among young Americans, believe it is appropriate for athletes to use their platforms to address important issues.

Having said that, I would like to make this distinction: just because I may be in basic sympathy with a cause and those who champion it, does not mean I am obligated to agree with everyone or everything that is said under the banner of that cause. Colin Kaepernick for example, took a knee, which is not only peaceful, but in almost every other context, is a sign of grace. People kneel in prayer, they kneel in humility, they kneel in grief. I was good with Kaepernick's protest when it first happened and more than three years ago I was the first and only network broadcaster to flatly say that he had been unjustly black-balled by the NFL.

But, Colin Kaepernick has also said, “I don’t vote because the oppressor will never allow you to vote your way out of your oppression.” When he first said that, Barack Obama was president. Now Donald Trump is president, elected by the narrowest of margins in an election that could have been different with larger African American turnout. John Lewis, a genuine American civil rights hero, was willing to risk his life to secure among other rights, the right to vote for all Americans. Does Colin not appreciate both of those things? He has also expressed many other viewpoints that reasonable people who are concerned with social justice could still reasonably disagree with. So, Colin Kaepernick called attention to a very legitimate issue. In that respect, he has been vindicated. But do I put him in the same category as a Muhammad Ali? Jackie Robinson? Curt Flood? Billie Jean King? Arthur Ashe? No, I do not.

***Is social activism by athletes and teams alienating to fans and costing the leagues money?***

It’s inevitable that some fans will be alienated. That doesn’t mean it’s the wrong thing to do. But it is a business and there can be consequences. My sense is that in this unique moment in time, all of these expressions are to be respected and seriously considered. But eventually, even the most forward-thinking of commissioners and leagues, like Adam Silver and the NBA, will have to find a balance between supporting their players and their concerns, and presenting their game as primarily an entertainment product.

***The NBA is allowing its arenas to be used as polling places and the NFL is airing PSA’s encouraging people to vote. Can you recall any other time when leagues have stepped up in such a public way to encourage voting?***

Initiatives like encouraging voter registration and making arenas and stadiums available as polling places are concrete, positive steps. Using the power and influence, not only of players, but of league officials and owners who share their concerns to push for legislation directed toward police and criminal justice reform and other legitimate interests beyond that, are positive and constructive steps. If people in sports use their influence responsibly to achieve those worthy and tangible objectives, it will be very impressive.

***WNBA players were the first to take a knee in solidarity with Colin Kaepernick back in 2016. Their protest seems to take a lot of courage because the women have a lot more to lose. They don’t make big money like the men. This season it formed a Social Justice Council, focusing on voting and women killed by police. How risky is this for the women of the WNBA?***

The audience, and therefore perhaps the influence of the WNBA, is smaller. But still, your point is well taken. Not only have these young women expressed themselves in a passionate way, but as you said, they are not as financially secure as most of their NBA counterparts. In that sense, they may be putting even more on the line. But it is also relevant that it appears the powers that be in professional basketball aren’t just responding to public and corporate pressure; they seem to be honestly sympathetic to the issues that concern so many of their players.

***Arthur Ashe, Althea Gibson, Billie Jean King, and the Williams sisters broke so many barriers in tennis, fighting racial and gender inequality to do it. And now, 22-year-old Naomi Osaka is the highest paid female athlete in the world. She wore a different mask to each of her seven matches on her way to her US Open Championship, memorializing the name and face of a different Black victim of racial injustice and police brutality. How much of an impact do you think her actions had as compared to the Milwaukee Bucks?***

Tennis is interesting because it is an individual sport. Except in doubles, competitors play for themselves and represent only themselves. Those you mention have played significant roles in tennis and beyond. What Naomi Osaka is doing shows heart and empathy. Because she is publicly sympathizing with those affected by a kind of injustice, this is unlikely to affect her directly. It’s a good example of the principle of doing something for no other reason beyond that you feel it is the right thing to do. She did not opt out of any matches, but made her point more effectively by playing and wearing a different mask each time, bearing the names of victims of police misconduct.





I wouldn't compare that exactly to the Milwaukee Bucks. In their case, in the immediate aftermath of the Jacob Blake incident, there was a clear connection since it happened in Kenosha. The Milwaukee Bucks would be that town and that state's NBA team. Appropriate symbolism, which sparked a chain reaction, mostly in the NBA, but also a ripple effect throughout sports. Point made. Some games postponed. But all of them made up.

However, here's a thought I haven't heard expressed – this worked well with **no** fans in the stands. If, when things return to 'normal' (whenever that is), it might be self-defeating to refuse to play when ticket-holding fans are already there or planning to be there. That could alienate even those in sympathy with the point being made.

### *What is the role of broadcasters in all of this?*

Generally speaking, in coverage of the games themselves, broadcasters, producers and directors should be concerned with documenting what has occurred in and around the game that is pertinent concerning protests. They should be well informed so they can properly and objectively frame whatever is taking place in front of them. But generally speaking, that's not the place to do a deep dive into the issues themselves.

But pre-game, halftime, post-game, interview programs, documentaries – those are the places to treat these things more comprehensively. And it should not be only a matter of personal opinions and gut reactions. Informed and sometimes skeptical questions should be asked not only of those in power but in some cases, of those challenging power. That's journalism as opposed to commentary. They both have their place and sometimes they overlap, but they are not exactly the same thing.

*What's Now!*

## How The News Has Changed By Robert Hager

“Good night, Chet.”

“Good night, David, and good night for NBC News.”

When I started at our network, it was Huntley-Brinkley in the evening, with Hugh Downs and Barbara Walters anchoring *Today*. A half-century later, I’ve lived through huge changes in the news—some good, some bad, some just dramatically different.

### Writing

My first network copy editor back in 1969, the legendary Gil Millstein, insisted on spare, powerful sentences. He terrorized reporters. One time I wrote about “low income” Americans. Millstein went nuts. “You mean POOR?” he said. “If someone is *poor*, for God’s sake, say *poor*!”

By the 1990s, however, my editors urged a more dramatic style. Jeff Gralnick who was executive producer of the Nightly News would bark into the phone, “Bob! You gotta *punch up* the lede! Gimme some adjectives.” But once we reworked the first paragraph, he would lose interest. “The rest of it’s fine,” he would say dismissively.

The tone for the future was being set. With new channels all over the cable, TV was much more competitive. Ratings were important. Use the present tense, give it immediacy, use colorful language. Find a character to draw viewers into the story.

### Technical

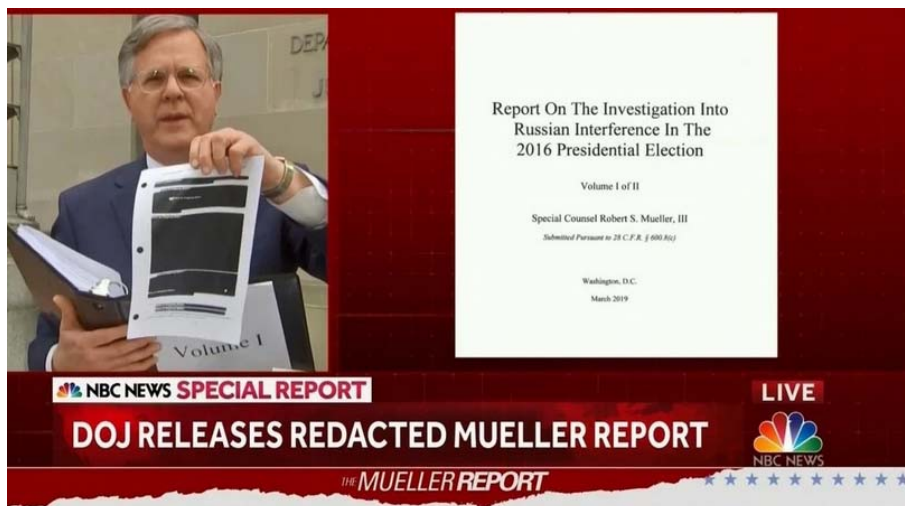
Back in the days of film and very little satellite transmission, our deadlines were way before airtime. In Vietnam, I had to design my war reports for playback days later, to allow time for shipping undeveloped film to the U.S.

Stateside, reporting on a coal strike in West Virginia, I would have to leave the scene by two o’clock in the afternoon to drive to an affiliate, develop and edit the film, and feed it to New York, all before the affiliate’s local news took over the station’s control room. Transmission also depended on AT&T installing special “loops” to provide outgoing video and audio links.

Once in the town of Media, Pennsylvania, I had to leave the murder trial of former Mine Workers Union President Tony Boyle so early that I filmed three alternate standups—one reporting guilty, one reporting innocent, and one saying, “The jury is still out.” Hours later, feeding to the network from our then-affiliate KYW in Philadelphia, we spliced in the “guilty” version when word came down minutes before air.



Later, videotape changed everything by making the pictures immediately viewable and microwave and satellite transmission meant pieces could be sent to New York instantly. We could even do news “gathering” on air. I’ll never forget the image of our colleague Pete Williams, live, flipping through the pages of the Supreme Court decision to find the verdict in *Bush v. Gore*, or more recently, Pete and others dealing with the Mueller Report in real time. Nowadays, the evolution continues with miniature cameras that store images on small cards rather than bulky cassettes, backpacks capable of transmissions that used to require satellite trucks, and email to send stories via the Internet. All this makes the collection and dissemination of news so much better than before.



Other changes are more problematic.

### Editorial

When I began as a reporter, we were expected to be as neutral as possible. A piece need not devote precisely “equal time” to both sides of an issue, but at least it had to acknowledge that an opposing claim or point of view existed and ought to be explained, if only briefly. When I did a story about smoking, never mind the preponderance of evidence, I needed to include at least a line saying that the tobacco industry still denied that cigarettes caused cancer. For years, every piece about climate change had to say that a few scientists were still not convinced. These extremes may sound ridiculous today, but they illustrate the broader point that most of us felt an obligation to be as straightforward as possible.

That balance is eroding today, especially on the 24/7 cable outlets.

### Opinion

Here is my own take on how this situation developed.

It began when Rupert Murdoch started Fox News and hired Roger Ailes to manage it. The new cable was unapologetically conservative. Ratings soared. When MSNBC went on the air, it failed to dent Fox’s lead. Today many forget that MSNBC’s first response was to sprinkle in some conservative hosts. Remember that MSNBC hired Oliver North, Pat Buchanan and Michael Savage? It didn’t work. Fox held its audience.

I think that what happened next was an accident. MSNBC had Keith Olbermann, who was determined to say whatever he pleased. Turned out, “what he pleased” was liberal. Suddenly, his numbers looked good. Rachel Maddow followed. Presto! MSNBC was on the map—the liberal niche worked.

Meanwhile, at the level of the *parent network*, NBC stuck to a more moderate, objective approach on *Nightly* and *Today*. So did CBS and ABC on their news. But the lesson for cable was that in prime time a key to good ratings was opinionated coverage. Include a lonely few dissident panelists to get a good shouting match going, and you’re *off to the races!*

Next add to the mix the presidency of Donald Trump. I sense his ascendancy has caused nearly every newsroom (print, web, radio, and TV) to reexamine fundamental principles of journalism. Rightly or wrongly, there is a feeling of professional guilt that his election happened “on our watch,” aided by too many tweets indiscriminately publicized, too many campaign events given live coverage, and too many falsehoods permitted to go unchallenged.

I notice that today, even the publication we used to call the “Gray Lady,” the New York Times, is much more forward than it used to be about permitting highly critical wording in straight news stories about politics and blurring the lines between straight news, analysis, and opinion. Again, I think this change is a result of what occurred in the election of 2016, and the Trump presidency that has followed. To the extent that this may represent a creep of one-sidedness into our business in general, I worry about the effect on young reporters in journalism school or those just starting work at local stations. I sense they may feel that some edge to their reporting—a hint of slant—makes them sound bold and decisive, and is good for their careers.

### Soft News

Yet another kind of change has come in the substance of news. In the Huntley-Brinkley era, with only three networks, we regarded ourselves as “broadcasts of record.” The whole half hour was mostly “hard news.” We were never made conscious of ratings.

Today, owing to so many additional news outlets, there’s an obvious effort to broaden the appeal to viewers, especially in what’s known as “the back of the book.” Paul Friedman (in a perceptive NBC alumni email) recently referred to some of this as “You Tube news.”

### Bottom Line

There’s hope. I feel that the *major network* newscasts of NBC, ABC, and CBS have stayed clear of “opinion creep” and that the long, first segments of their evening broadcasts are still crackling hard. I’m particularly proud of NBC’s coverage of the demanding coronavirus story—informative and exhaustive—first rate!



That’s good, because my own taste is “old school.” I believe our primary job is to give people all the facts we can and let viewers decide for themselves (hoping that they’ll come to the right conclusions). Aren’t we a little like teachers? Isn’t our first duty to inform? That’s what made me proud to be a journalist and that’s why I think, as a profession, we perform a service for society and can hold our heads high.

We can’t go back to “Good night, Chet” and “Good night, David.” But let’s hope it’s not “goodnight” to the brand of journalism so many of us were taught to honor.





*We Get Pictures***Headline News in Pre-Broadcast Days**

Reports of “Titanic” sinking arrive in New York on April 16<sup>th</sup>, 1912. As latest news bulletins of disaster arrived, crowds formed in Times Square to read the updating newspaper bulletin boards. Operated by the White Star Line, RMS “Titanic” struck an iceberg in thick fog off Newfoundland on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1912. She was the largest ocean liner of her time, and was said to be unsinkable.

Message on the board says:

Justice Davidson of Montreal Received Private Message, “All Montreal People Safe. Prominent Persons Rescued are Mrs. J. J. Astor, Countess of Rothea, Cosmo Duff Gordon...”



## SNL, Still Going Strong - NYC STRONG!

I always know when summer is over; that's when SNL begins its new season. With COVID 19 still looming, we at PN were wondering how Lorne Michaels and company would tackle those difficult circumstances. I caught up with Steve Cimino, Technical Director of SNL for the past 30 years, to fill in the details of how the show coped. - Marilyn Altman.

### **Can you describe the overall picture of arriving at 30 Rock and maneuvering to studio 8H?**

Let me start off by saying that it felt like a very special show. The top show in my memory was coming out of 9/11. The second most important show to me was Sandy Hook. This show was a moment similar to that. As far as the employees are concerned you can only enter the building from 49th Street. There is security waiting for you before you go through the turnstiles [where] there's an ultraviolet thermometer so they know immediately if you have an elevated temperature. If you have a normal temperature, you can proceed. You can only go to the floor you are assigned to. Four to an elevator, spots are marked. That's the experience going in.

### **How was the audience handled?**

Originally they talked about the audience being only NBC employees, possibly on the 9th floor and another studio. But on this particular show the audience was all first responders, probably from the NYC area. There was special seating arranged for proper distancing located on the 8th and 9th floors.

### **What about the control room and studio? Were they configured differently?**

Prior to COVID the control room had 12-15 people. This show had a total of 9 people: 3 people in the front deck, masked and with plastic separators between them, three on the second deck and another three where clients used to sit. If a writer came in to discuss something, one person would leave the CR to make room.

I had a full crew but there was six feet of separation and it was monitored by COVID enforcement people. As a matter of fact we ordered three-foot extensions for the boom arms so they could keep a larger distance from the cameras.

### **The show is an intensive production complete with scene changes, hair, make-up and wardrobe changes, and a house band. How was that dealt with?**

The scenery was less complicated. We did fewer live sketches, more and longer digital shorts to accommodate the set changes. Every prop and piece of furniture was cleansed and sanitized.

Hair and make-up were scattered throughout the building. Where you would normally see a dozen quick-change booths on the 8th floor, I noticed two areas. It was the same for hair and make-up. Anybody in close contact such as hair and make-up, audio assists, prop people, etc. were required to wear masks and face shields. Besides the weekly COVID test required of everyone, anybody who worked on the floor was required to take a rapid test every day, and you could not leave that spot until the results came back (15 minutes waiting time).

The house band was divided in two: half in Studio 8H with Plexiglas partitions, and the other half in Studio 6B with a camerawoman for live cutaways and bumpers.

### **Anything you would like to add?**

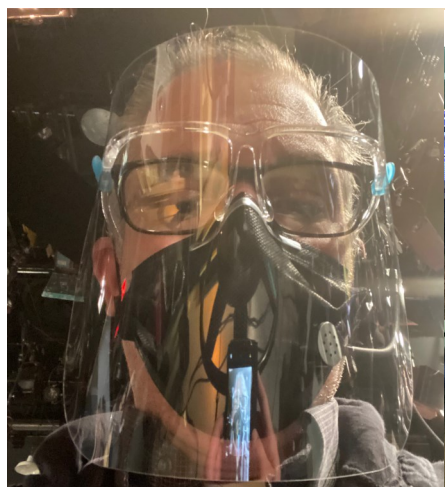
It was nice to get back to work. A lot of people were happy to be working and we all felt safe. One thing that I enjoyed the most was that nobody was hanging out waiting for food. They did a wonderful job of catering. There is an app that was used so that you could order your food, get an email when it was ready, go to "9C" [the "new" commissary] to pick it up and be assigned an area where to eat. It's handmade for you! Brilliant!

Also, last year we experimented with digital scripts to save on paper. I used a digital script on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. It eliminated the problem of production assistants hovering over my shoulder to hand me new script pages -- this was not permitted. No contact. On Saturday I switched to paper because the Director and AD went to paper and they were making changes throughout the day. But no more PA's over my shoulder.

### **Did you like the digital script?**

Yes I did, but it needs tweaking. But as the late, great Davey Wilson used to say, "First you crawl, then you walk, then you run". More to come.

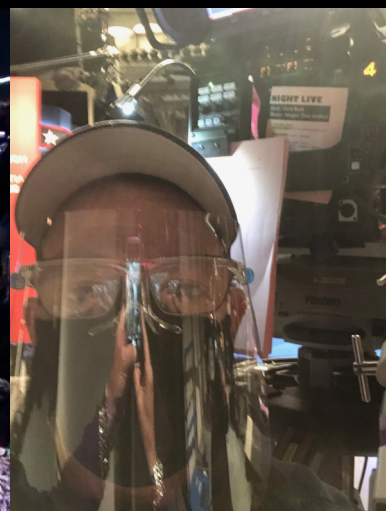




Above Left: Camera Op Paul Cangialosi.  
Right: 8H Control Room shows Supervising Producer Ken Aymong at middle desk;  
TD Steve Cimino, Director Don Roy King and AD Janine DeVito at front desk.



Above Left: Chris Rock and part of audience for monologue.  
Right: Commissary 9C's socially-distant, assigned-seat dining.  
Below Left: Resetting the cast, crew and gear during commercial break.



Camera Op Dave Driscoll



### *What's Now!*

## Pete Williams Recalls NBC at 4001 Nebraska Avenue NW



This is the final day for NBC's Washington news bureau to conduct daily operations from 4001 Nebraska Avenue, our northwest Washington, DC home for the past 62 years, alongside our colleagues at WRC. Beginning Monday, the bureau moves to smaller quarters in an office building a few blocks from the U. S. Capitol, joining the NBC News Channel's Washington staff. A moment, then, to bid farewell to our workplace for more than six decades, a place we can't leave without saying goodbye.

President Eisenhower joined NBC President Robert Sarnoff for the formal dedication of the network's Washington base of operations on May 22, 1958. A year before, Vice-President Richard Nixon placed a small bronze plaque near the front entrance. It's still there, coated with the patina of six decades. From the building's main studio came the second of the Nixon-Kennedy debates, moderated by Frank McGee. David Brinkley anchored his portion of The Huntley-Brinkley Report here. And Ned Brooks invited a young Fidel Castro to the studio for *Meet the Press*.



Susan LaSalla began her NBC News career on the Washington desk and ended it four decades later as the Washington senior producer for *Today*. She recalls walking into what was then an enormous NBC-WRC joint newsroom, filled with cigarette smoke. "I was overwhelmed by the noise, huge wire machines rumbling, dozens of typewriters clicking, two-way radio communications, and lots of yelling." She also says "there were very few women in the newsroom, and most were considered 'secretarial.' When *Nightly News* went to air, a box came out from under the senior producer's desk, and thus began cocktail hour."

My earliest memories of this building, after I was allowed through the door by bureau chief Tim Russert, were of the legendary correspondents: John Palmer, John Dancy, Robert Hager, Bob Kur, and Fred Francis. Also Irving R. Levine, who read the newspaper every morning wearing white cotton gloves. After he retired, I had a new hallway neighbor -- a former New York Times reporter named Gwen Ifill.

Andrea Mitchell first walked into 4001 in 1978. "I was overwhelmed. I was joining a team of all stars," including Tom Pettit, Steve Delaney, George Lewis, Judy Woodruff, Carl Stern, Richard Valeriani, and Chris Wallace. Andrea's first officemate was Jessica Savitch. "Katie Couric got her start on the Pentagon beat, until her big breakthrough anchoring for the network from the 4001 newsroom when an earthquake hit San Francisco, just before game three of the 1989 World Series in Candlestick Park." More women were hired, Andrea recalls, Lisa Myers, Kelly O'Donnell, and Jamie Gangel. "The brilliant Gwen Ifill graced our halls, teaming up with legendary producer John Holland. Political coverage was informed and transformed with the arrival of Chuck Todd." "For all the history we witnessed and covered," Andrea says, "the worst personal loss for many of us was on Friday, June 13, 2008 when Tim Russert, the big guy with a huge heart, was struck down in the prime of his life while recording the cold open for *Meet the Press*. With Brian on assignment in Afghanistan, I was told to sit at the Bull Cam until a heartbroken Tom Brokaw arrived, while Steve Capus and Jeff Zucker persuaded all the networks to hold their silence until NBC could reach Tim's family, traveling in Italy.

"Through all those years, the building, shabby as it was, became part of the fabric of our lives, with its own personality -- from the plaque near the front door dedicated to the great producer Sid Yates, killed in action in the '67 war, to the Meet the Press Hall of Fame along the corridor, the dogwoods blooming outside our windows every spring, and the deer grazing in the front circle at dusk in the fall. 4001 was the stage set for my life for 42 years." Granted, parts of the bureau, with its green tile walls and rows of lockers, looked like a junior high school. Mice, taking refuge from the adjacent urban national park, nibbled on the wires in correspondents' row offices. And struggles to control the newsroom thermostat were constant.

What we remember most, though, is the people who made it run, well over 1,000 producers, editors, technicians, photographers, and others who brought the news to television and computer screens -- and to radios for half the time the bureau was here -- for the past 22,750 days.

Now onto a new chapter, to witness more history, under the leadership of Bureau Chief Ken Strickland.

But for now, farewell, 4001.



*What's Now!***NBC Washington Relocates to 400 North Capitol Street NW**

NBC News president Noah Oppenheim and MSNBC president Phil Griffin sent a memo to network staffers announcing the quasi-“opening” of its new Washington, D.C. bureau on Monday, September 21, 2020.

As NewscastStudio sources told us Friday, September 18, 2020, the bureau shut down operations from 4001 Nebraska Avenue NW, also home of the network’s NBC and Telemundo owned affiliates that day.

The full text of the memo, obtained by NewscastStudio, also included the photo [seen above] of the network’s new newsroom, which features federal style finishes and architecture including columns “engraved” with words such as “Truth” along with modern spins of the motif.

There’s also a barrel vaulted ceiling possibly inspired by both the city’s subway system and the coffered ceilings seen in classic architecture.

*Dear Colleagues,*

*After more than 60 years at our historic studio at 4001 Nebraska Avenue, today marks the official “opening” of our new bureau in Washington, D.C, just steps away from Capitol Hill. Though the majority of our employees continue to work remotely, we look forward to soon debuting our new state-of-the-art studios and workspaces.*

*But before we look forward, it’s important to look back and remember the historical significance that 4001 Nebraska Avenue holds for so many of us here at NBC News and for millions of viewers over the last six decades.*

*The move to 400 N. Capitol represents a new chapter for us at NBC News and MSNBC as we continue to cover a nonstop Washington news cycle. We’ll be sharing more about our new D.C. home base in the months to come.*

NBC will move into studios in the new facility later. Construction on the workspaces and studios the network announced last year was delayed due to coronavirus and other factors.

By Michael P. Hill © NewscastStudio September 21, 2020

## What's Now!

### The Brave New World of Sports Sound Effects

NFL broadcasts this season will use “enhanced” crowd sound. The league’s technology kit for this includes the Wwise platform, Audiokinetic’s authoring software for interactive media and videogames. This will let so-called audio-sweetener mixers access and mix sounds collected from each NFL stadium (except the two newest, in Los Angeles and Las Vegas) and team over the past four years; the sounds were harvested by NFL Films, the league’s media arm, which had serendipitously been collecting team and venue audio for postproduction and other applications.

The NFL crowd-noise system comprises sounds captured from the league’s venues. The system offers five levels of intensity that mixers can choose from as they follow the action on the field. In addition, mixers can lay three levels of positive and negative reaction crowd sounds atop the ambience tracks. These sound files are fired by a single touch on the screen and will play and then fade, always resolving to the ambience tracks as the base sound. “Even if you stayed on one loop for a long time, it will never get monotonous or predictable, because it will be randomly selecting from hundreds of different clips and smoothly transitioning between them,” explains Vince Caputo, VP, supervising sound mixer, NFL Films, who is supervising the project for the league. There are also separate sound files for specific reactions, such as generic applause, cheers, and boos. A bank of sound files called “extras” will be available with specific chants and cheers for the teams playing each game.

#### System Design

The system used by the NFL was built by Robert Brock, director of education, Conservatory of Recording Arts & Sciences, who is serving as a freelance consultant for the crowd-sound system. He was recommended to Caputo by Fred Aldous, lead mixer/audio consultant, Fox Sports, who has also consulted for CRAS. “The system automatically smoothly crossfades as you’re moving between levels,” Brock says. “An operator could just completely crank up to the ‘raucous’ level, for example, all the way to the top, but the system’s not going to make an abrupt change. There’s a pretty complex series of [programmed] rules for those crossfades happening simultaneously in the background as the operators change sounds and levels.”

According to Caputo, the kit is packaged with laptops, USB interfaces with four analog outputs each, and accessories in a roadworthy case. Each kit will be specific to a team, loaded with each team’s chants and songs and with ambient sound taken from its venue during and between games.



#### The NFL Way

The NFL had been monitoring what other leagues had been doing regarding crowd sounds, Caputo says, but wanted to make sure that the games had a distinctly NFL sound and feel. Furthermore, since the NFL crowd-sound initiative is for broadcast use only — the venues are being provided with basic, non-dynamic, though venue/team-specific, ambient crowd-sound files that will play continuously through PA systems at around 70 dB and can be turned off when attendance exceeds 10,000 — the league wanted to shape it specifically across all partner broadcast networks.

The NFL is supplying each team with a kit for enhancing crowd noise in a nearly empty stadium. The sound files underwent extensive editing and scrubbing to delete such artifacts as profanity and game-specific calls and whistles. They were then broken into broad categories — positive and negative reactions, for example — and then into more-specific ones.

“Working with Brock,” Caputo says, “we built a separate library for each team, and the league has hired an operator that is specifically assigned to each team. And we made it completely turnkey: 32 team kits in road cases with dual systems in them for redundancy and backup.”

The road cases, however, are for initial transport. The crowd sound is operated only by the home team for each game. Although the league has made efforts as part of its operator training to avoid using crowd sounds as part of a team’s defensive strategy — boosting volume levels to obscure quarterback calls, for instance — the crowd sounds in each stadium will be op-



erated from the home team's perspective. "A Chiefs game will sound like the perspective of a Chiefs fan, which makes sense since you're hearing actual Chiefs fans that were previously recorded," says Caputo.

### Team Players

Crowd-sound system operators — there are 64: one main mix person and one backup per team — are chosen from a pool of freelance professionals who have worked for the league or NFL Films and are local to the city the team is in. "It was less about finding someone that was an audio techie than it was about finding someone that was really tuned into the team and who knows what it's like being part of the fan base there, is familiar with the venue, the team, and what it sounds like in that stadium," Caputo explains.

"We feel like we have a really, really powerful system," he says, "but we are still in kind of initial stages of ours, and there's going to be a bit of learning curve and of development. NFL games are extremely dynamic, probably much more than any other game. We've got a lot of that built into the system, and it's an incredible balance of being able to cover that dynamic range of a reaction but also being still extremely user-friendly without overwhelming [the operators]. It'll be interesting for sure."

Condensed from an article by Dan Daley, Audio Editor - ©Sportsvideo.org - September 11, 2020.

## "The Sounds We Hear" - Thoughts from Mike Noseworthy

The balance between game sounds and crowd sounds has always been a challenging and subjective ingredient in a live sports broadcast. Each sport has its own nuances and rhythms, whether on the court, ice, or playing field. Pre-Covid, much of the challenge was the ability to acquire the game effects without the crowd and house PA sound overpowering them. In the words of my friend and mentor Mahlon Fox, "Make it sound like it looks". Some venues have assisted production audio mixers in their efforts by allowing microphones to be put on game officials, coaches, and at times, even players.

Fast forward to today: the *broadcast audio* has become the most complicated aspect of a sports broadcast. There is a whole new craft being developed behind the scenes. Take the NBA, for example, beginning with the "Front of House" or "PA" mix. Simply put there is a mix being created and played to the arena over a PA system specifically designed for that task. There are many different elements, including, but not limited to, crowd reaction, team-specific music, classic "home team" announcer clips and so on. The House mixer not only has to be extremely proficient in his or her craft but also have a complete knowledge of the game, team nuances, and the rhythm and flow of play. The House sound is important not only to the broadcast but probably more so to the players and the game itself. I'm certain that the NHL, NFL, and MLB broadcasts are dealing with challenges that are much the same.

The actual television production mix is crafted via a blend of many elements: game effects, announcers, bumper music, video playback sound, back-timed music clips, replay "whoosh" effects, and the ambient house sound that is created by the front of house mixer(s).

The innovation and effort are very commendable. The end product, in my opinion, is outstanding. Having stepped away from the console and into retirement in 2016 after 36 years, I am happy to say that the craft is in great hands. "Well Done, Ladies and Gentlemen."

Mike Noseworthy  
The Ghost of Audio Past



Mike and Sue Noseworthy

**Editor's Note:** Mike's article was written prior to the broadcast of yet another explanation of this process from *CBS Saturday Morning*, October 3, 2020, which can be viewed at <https://www.cbsnews.com/live/video/20201003131809-how-the-nba-is-creating-a-game-soundscape/#x>

*What's Now!***A Zoom Brunch**

Earlier this summer Kathy Powers invited several NBC News friends to a Zoom “Brunch”.

Sharing one of many solid laughs are (clockwise from top left)  
Kathy, Joel Spector, Joyce Hurley, Marilyn Altman, Mary Muzina and Judy Farinet.

**On the Links - In Person**

**Golfing at West Point on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020 are  
Lighting Directors Howie Strawbridge and Geoff Amarol,  
flanking Today Show Head Electrician Jerry Ullrich.**



*Peacock History***The Radio Engineers' Lounge  
by Bill Klages**

I remember one particular incident that perfectly illustrates the transition in commercial broadcasting from Radio to Television.

I was hired as an engineer by NBC in November 1948. For six months the group that I was in was categorized as “students” and would be compensated at \$200 per month. Of course, during this period, because of the increasing demand due to the rapid increase in programming, the “students” rapidly assumed responsibilities of the fully vetted and “experienced” employees (hired a few months before). When the six months were over, everyone was elevated to “Group 2” status, the union classification for the majority of engineers. To put this period in perspective, television broadcasting was in its infancy. The actual physical NBC TV Network stopped in Chicago. Coast-to-coast live transmission was not to be realized until 1956. The Texaco Star Theater with Milton Berle started in the spring of 1948.



The engineers who mixed the numerous networked radio broadcasts were also in the Group 2 classification, the same as the rapidly enlarging group of engineers assigned to television. However, at the time, because of the preeminent status of network radio shows, the radio engineers assumed an elite status. As I recall, this status was also reflected in their appearance. They were always dressed in suits, white shirts and ties. The TV engineers meanwhile were heavily saddled with the task of making television studios out of the radio studios, mostly on a temporary basis. The task involved miles of cables that had to be constantly installed and subsequently uninstalled. To accomplish this monumental (and dirty) task, dress was, as a necessity, quite informal. It was apparent that all Group 2's were not equal.

As further indication of this gap, there was the “Radio Engineers' Lounge” on the 8th floor of NBC's Radio City, just adjacent the NBC Symphony's large home radio studio, 8H. In fact, I recall a lot of “student” afternoons spent in the client's booth of 8H listening to rehearsals conducted by Arturo Toscanini.

The Lounge was, by some unwritten understanding, open only to the Radio Engineers. The furnishings seemed luxurious, consisting of spacious leather chairs and sofas in an intimate environment created by lighting only from table lamps. It was an extremely quiet and serene atmosphere. To the lowly, overworked, Group 2 Television Engineer, the “Radio Engineer's Lounge” was seen as an indication of the dominance of radio over television at this time.

The growth of television was very dramatic. It was obvious, practically at the outset, that NBC would require a large television studio space. The obvious choice was to convert studio 8H to a television studio. The NBC Symphony was moved to Carnegie Hall. Demolition and construction for the new television studio 8H was put on a fast track and the studio was operational in 1950.

You guessed it. The Radio Engineers' Lounge was demolished to make space for support areas for the new 8H TV Studio. In the new configuration, there was no space allocated for a Radio Engineers' Lounge. It was obvious. Television now ruled the air waves; Radio was dead.

*Peacock History*

**November 11th, 1933: Opening Night for NBC at 30 Rock**



© Samuel H. Gottscho 1933

With the letters “RCA” tapped out in Morse code by David Sarnoff in London, the new Radio City headquarters of the National Broadcasting Company were formally opened on Saturday, November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1933. The trans-Atlantic electrical impulse operated relays which turned on a battery of floodlights around the 70-story RCA Building to signalize the exact moment of official opening. The president of RCA was in London, but the managing director of the British Broadcasting Corporation, Sir John Reith, sat on the platform in the Auditorium Studio [8H] in Radio City. With him were General James G. Harbord, chairman of the RCA, and Owen D. Young, chairman of General Electric Co. Three rows back, on the center aisle, sat William S. Paley, president of the Columbia Broadcasting System, who was greeted as “Bill” by Merlin H. Aylesworth, president of NBC.

At the back of the stage were the 200 members of the Schola Cantorum, led by Hugh Ross. At the front was the 90-piece symphony orchestra under Frank Black, Walter Damrosch and Nathaniel Shilkret. An audience of 1200 filled Studio 8H, and included many dignitaries including Col. Louis Howe, secretary to President Franklin Roosevelt, and S. L. (“Roxy”) Rothafel. At 8 p.m. a fanfare of trumpets from the top of the building opened the program. After the “Star-Spangled Banner” had been played Mr. Aylesworth spoke to the radio audience, comprising the listeners to both the Red and Blue networks, the Canadian affiliated stations, and those tuned in to the short-wave transmitters.

Mr. Aylesworth carried his appeal direct to the people – to the listeners who patronize the sponsors of radio programs. “To the extent that the public has mani-

festated again and again its patronage of those companies which advertise on the air,” he said, “you have given a striking indication of the responsiveness of radio broadcasting. I convey, therefore, on behalf of the clients of the National Broadcasting Company, the various businesses that you are helping to make successful, a deep appreciation of your patronage. I hope you will always feel that the sponsors who use the air are partners in the great enterprise of broadcasting – partners without whose recognition of the value of radio broadcasting we could not have built up this great art in the last seven years.” Mr. Aylesworth also read a letter of congratulations from President Roosevelt.

After the program, the guests inspected the 28 new studios and the various mechanical wonders associated with them, such as the air-cooling and conditioning plant and the master control room.

**Adapted and condensed from the words of Gilbert Cant, © Broadcasting Magazine, November 15, 1933.**

#### Letter from President Roosevelt:

My dear Mr. Aylesworth:

It is with no little pleasure that I extend to you sincere greetings and felicitations upon the formal opening of the new National Broadcasting Company’s red and blue networks from Radio City to the nation.

Radio is an invaluable instrumentality for public service. Its values to the country are manifold – educational, recreational, entertaining, and serving also the common needs of the people and Government.

Despite the splendid advancement made in recent years in the science of radio, I do not concede that it has yet been developed to the point where it approaches a full utilization of opportunities that it has in store for service to mankind.

It is my judgement that nothing since the creation of the newspaper has had so profound an effect on our civilization as radio.

To those of you who are associated in this development, I extend congratulations and hope that your initiative and enterprise will be as successful in future applications as they have been in the past.

My best wishes.

Very sincerely yours, FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT.

*We Get Letters and Pictures*

## Rock Plaza Today by Chris Lindner



I've been retired from my NBC career in production management and finance since 2014. I took this photo on September 24th, having gotten back into the City after six months of Covid isolation in Long Beach, NY. I noticed that the plaza restaurants are gone and that these tables and benches have been provided for visitors to enjoy some conversation and a meal brought from elsewhere.

The Rock is always a fun pass-through on my way back to Penn for the train home. Always brings back fond memories of people and things that I was lucky enough to encounter and experience. I always appreciated how nice the NABET, IATSE, DGA, Design, Makeup/Hair/Wardrobe, and Production people were to me. You all taught me the business and what a great business it was and is still.

I remember when I started in 1974 the old timers lamented at how the business had changed. TV has continued to evolve over the years since then, as all things do. Everything old is new again. It's fair that we step aside for the new guard.

But I bet the kids coming in today are just as excited as we were when we started.



*What's Now!*

## Macy's Virtual Parade for 2020



Further adjusting to the realities of the coronavirus pandemic, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio announced on September 14<sup>th</sup> that this year's Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, a traditional holiday season kickoff for more than 90 years, will march forward without crowds. "It will not be the same parade we're used to," de Blasio said. "[Macy's is] reinventing the event for this moment in history. And you will be able to feel the spirit and the joy of that day." The parade will include both live and recorded elements, with the reimagined format still available to be watched on TV, the mayor said. Macy's said in a statement Monday the parade will keep its signature touchstones: giant helium balloons, floats, performers and, of course, Santa Claus.

Handlers, traditionally deployed to carry the giant character balloons along the parade route, will be replaced by "an innovative, specially rigged anchor vehicle framework of five specialty vehicles tested and approved by the NYCDOT and NYPD," the statement read. Instead of following the typical 2.5-mile route, the parade elements will be taped around the store's flagship Herald Square location, Macy's said.

"Under the unique challenges of these unparalleled times, we felt it was important to continue this cherished holiday tradition that has been the opening act to the holiday season for generations of families," Susan Tercero, executive producer of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, said in a statement. "While it will certainly look different in execution, this year's Macy's Parade celebration will once again serve its historical purpose — to bring joy into the hearts of millions across the nation." The popular balloon inflation event held the night before Thanksgiving will also be canceled this year. "Following the success of this summer's reimagined Macy's 4th of July Fireworks show, the Macy's team meticulously reviewed every area of the Thanksgiving Day playbook to put in place enhanced health and safety practices that align with CDC guidelines, as well as local and state government protocols," Macy's statement continued.

The company said this year's television-only spectacle will be recorded over two days with a reduction in participants by nearly 75 percent. The performers involved will stay socially distant and must wear appropriate masks or face coverings. Reductions also hit the high school and college marching bands. Macy's said this year's participants in the parade events must be at least 18 years of age, so those schools' performers will be replaced with professional acts. The schools' invitations to perform will be deferred to 2021. "There are some things we still can't do," de Blasio said, pointing to the parade. "We're looking forward to a lot of them coming back in 2021."

The 94th Annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade will air on NBC, Thursday, November 26 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. This year's lineup of balloon characters and human performers will be announced at a later date, Macy's said.



*We Get Pictures*

**Tom Tomizawa  
at “Stars and Stripes”**

STARS  STRIPES®



Glad to see that *Stars and Stripes*, an independent newspaper for the American military, will continue to get funding. My father, Thomas Tomizawa, was a reporter for *Stars and Stripes*, living in Washington Heights and working at Hardy Barracks in Tokyo from 1957 to 1958, before he joined NBC News in the early 1960s.

**Posted September 5th, 2020 by Roy Tomizawa  
on Facebook Group “ABC/NBC/CBS Seniors remembering back when...”**

*Peacock Profiles***Ken Fouts' NBC Odyssey**

How many of us Peacock North readers can say that working for NBC changed our lives? Probably a very high percentage of you join me in stating that yes, it in fact made the most positive change in me and my family's lives. The trail that led me to 30 Rockefeller Plaza was long and certainly not one that was predicted, but it was something I believed in from a young age.

Going back to 1951 when I was ten years old, each morning my father awoke me at 5:30am to go help hand-milk the nine cows that were the mainstay of our farm. Yes, we milked those nine cows by hand, Dad doing six of them while I was milking the other three. He had such strong hands and could milk with such force that foam would form on the top of the milk in his bucket. At that age, one goal in life that I wished for was to be strong enough to get foam on the top of my milk bucket. Funny how our goals change as the years go by, isn't it? Well the sad news is we left the farm two years later and moved to town before I ever achieved that early goal of mine. I was

born and raised in Iowa a part of a long line of hard working farmers when my father decided to try his hand at something else besides farming. Eventually we ended up in a suburb of Omaha, Nebraska in the town of Bellevue next to Offutt Air Force Base. I mention that base because my eventual wife was the daughter of an officer stationed there and we married as young 19-year-olds and in 2020 celebrated 60 years of that partnership.

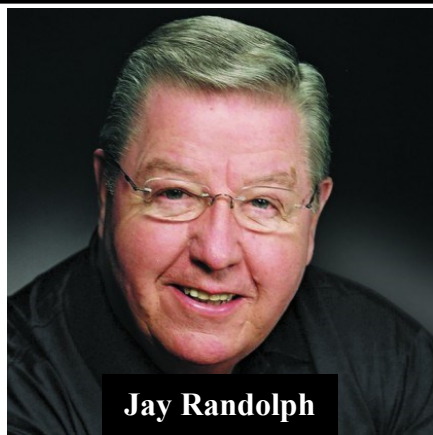
In 1957, after the Soviets had put up an orbiting satellite called Sputnik, the high school students of that time (which included me) were urged to go for higher education as the country seemed to be falling behind in the space race. I wasn't interested in the space race or any other technical field. I just wanted to be a disc jockey but after high school graduation I followed the advice of the time and headed to the University of Nebraska. Needing to work to be able to afford going to college, I actually landed that disc jockey job and became friends with a sports announcer. That announcer convinced me that radio was not a good future, but that television was where I needed to focus and because of my love of sports, try my hand at sports production. I tried announcing but observed what a director was doing at that time and quickly decided that was what I wanted to do.

I think by now you see the twists and turns that my life took early on, but the best was yet to come. One of my fellow broadcast students asked me as we were nearing the end of college what I planned to do and I boasted that someday I would be directing sports coverage for a network in New York. His reply was a hardy laugh and something like "oh ya, from the corn fields of the Midwest to New York". I have to admit even I didn't believe it at the time but I was willing to give it a try.

Upon graduation from U of N in 1964 the job path took me to Ames, Iowa, Detroit, Michigan and then to Cincinnati, Ohio and at each stop I was a director at a local station but focusing more and more on sports. As luck might have it, I was hired in Cincinnati in 1967 to direct coverage of the Cincinnati Reds games. I was very inexperienced at covering baseball but the camera crew in Cincinnati had been doing baseball for a very long time and all I had to do was listen and learn from a great broadcast crew. It was there I learned that a director was really in the hands of his camera crew when doing sports coverage and I carried that knowledge with me the rest of my career.

In 1968 the AFL was formed and the Cincinnati Bengals under Paul Brown became a part of the league that was to be televised by none other than NBC Sports. In that first year I received a call from the secretary to an NBC Sports executive named Scotty Connal to see if I was available to direct a Bengals vs. Kansas City Chiefs game in Cincinnati. I was so shocked I was almost not able to spit out the words "Of course"! It was done in black and white, not



**Jay Randolph**

even color, and the mobile unit was a rental truck with all temporary equipment. The producer was Barry Stoddard who immediately did not like me because he didn't want to produce, he wanted to direct! Jay Randolph was play by play and I had worked some St. Louis Cardinals baseball with him so I knew him and he at least liked me. I am sure the coverage was horrible but somehow I got through it and the fee was \$400. Doesn't sound like much but to me it was unbelievable to even be involved and I still have a copy of that first check.

The next year, 1969, I did even more football games for NBC and had even been asked to do some rain-delay back-up baseball games that summer. That was the beginning of the Big Red Machine of the Cincinnati Reds. That trail of mine just continued on and on. To shorten the story somewhat, by the fall of 1974 I was

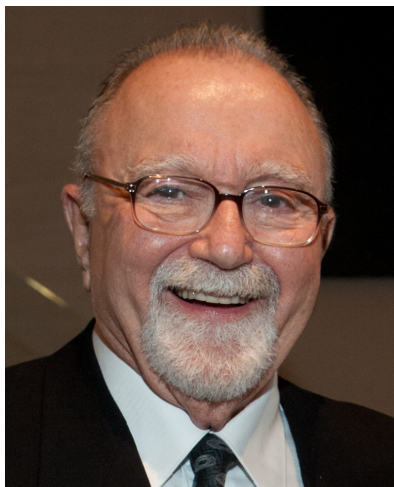
under contract to NBC Sports and my first office was in the same room with Ted Nathanson and Harry Coyle on the fifth floor of 30 Rock overlooking the skating rink. I was actually in New York directing sports coverage for a network as I had predicted back in 1964...unbelievable to me now.

The trail continued on and I completed 42 years of directing before retiring and even though I wish it all had been at NBC, it was not. It included stints at ABC, TBS, ESPN and Fox. I estimate I traveled over 4 million air miles and counted 17 different countries around the world that I directed shows in during my career. I got to work an Olympics, a Super Bowl, World Series and over 3,000 events including baseball, football (both NFL, USFL and college) golf, tennis, track and field, ski jumping, speed skating, wrestling, horse racing and many others.

So yes, I am extremely grateful to NBC and Scotty, Chet, Carl, Teddy, Harry, Roy, Dick, Don and all the others that were on that 5th floor in 1974. By the way, that Christmas the Sports department had an unofficial Christmas party in those offices. It was the beginning of a great relationship with so many, many people. And I even hung out occasionally at Hurley's and most of you have heard of that!

**Scotty Connal**

But I still never achieved the ability to milk a cow and get foam on the top of the milk like my Dad.

**Harry Coyle, Chet Simmons, Ted Nathanson**

*The Kicker*

**Before Electronic Graphics!**



**Who needs Telops, 2x2 Slides, “6030” and all that jazz?**

**Here’s how a commercial billboard graphic was quickly integrated into a live football telecast in the early 1950s.**



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