

American MASTERS

20
years

thirteen
WNET NEW YORK

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press information

TRUSTED ANCHORMAN. BROADCASTING LEGEND. AMERICAN MASTER. THIRTEEN/WNET NEW YORK CHRONICLES THE RISE OF TELEVISION NEWS WITH CHIEF EYEWITNESS TO HISTORY, *WALTER CRONKITE: WITNESS TO HISTORY*, PREMIERING IN JULY ON PBS

Highlight Of 20th Anniversary Season Of *AMERICAN MASTERS*

Walter Cronkite Participates Fully In Film; Rare Clips From Anchorman And You Are There

Features Interviews With Ben Bradlee, Tom Brokaw, David Frost, David Halberstam, Molly Ivins, Sidney Lumet, Robert MacNeil, Sen. John McCain, Bill Moyers, Andy Rooney, Morley Safer, Daniel Schorr, Leslie Stahl, Helen Thomas, Mike Wallace, And Barbara Walters

He hit the sands at Normandy and covered the trials at Nuremburg. He shed tears over JFK's assassination, took us to the moon, deemed Vietnam a stalemate and – steadfastly adhering to his credo of fast, accurate and unbiased news reporting – became the most trusted figure in American public life. In this *AMERICAN MASTERS* production, the still unfolding story of Walter Cronkite emerges against the backdrop of world history and television news. *AMERICAN MASTERS Walter Cronkite: Witness to History* premieres Wednesday, July 26 at 9 p.m. (ET) on PBS. The film is written and directed by the Emmy Award-winning Catherine Tatge. Tatge and Leslie Clark are producers. And that's the way it is.

“Everyone knows Walter Cronkite from the CBS Evening News, which he anchored for 19 years. Invited nightly into our living rooms, he guided us through some of the most incredible, and the most horrific, news events of our time,” said Susan Lacy, creator and executive producer of *AMERICAN MASTERS*, a five-time winner of the Emmy for Outstanding Primetime Non-Fiction Series and a recent recipient of its seventh Peabody Award. “This film, like Mr. Cronkite's rich and

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varied life, goes well beyond the anchor years to offer a complete picture of a genuine Renaissance man – author, sailor, producer, patron.”

Witness to the most significant turning points of the 20th century, Cronkite speaks at length in the film about his life and career, the past and the future. An avid sailor, he is filmed sailing in the Tortolas on his 60-foot yacht, *Wyntje*. Cronkite recorded his sailing experiences in his books *South by Southeast, North by Northeast, Westwind and Around America*, which was published in 2001.

The film goes well beyond biography, telling the story of television news, from its infancy through the explosion of cable TV. “Walter Cronkite was the man from print who ushered the nation into the age of television,” says director Tatge. “When television arrived in your home – so did Cronkite. He brought us the most important news of our lives. During troubled times, he gave it to us straight. Yet he also shaped it. Throughout, he was both responsible and courageous.”

During nearly 70 years in journalism, Walter Cronkite covered virtually every conceivable news event. He became a special correspondent for CBS News when he stepped down as anchorman and managing editor on March 6, 1981. Affectionately nicknamed “Old Iron Pants” for his unflappability under pressure, Cronkite’s accomplishments – both on-air and off – have won him acclaim and trust from journalism colleagues and the American public alike.

Born in St. Joseph, Missouri on November 4, 1916, Cronkite began his career in journalism as a campus correspondent at *The Houston Post* during high school and his freshman year at college. He also worked as a sports announcer for a local radio station in Oklahoma City and joined the United Press in 1937, where he remained for 11 years.

Cronkite covered World War II as a UP correspondent. Later, he reported on the Nuremberg Trials and then Moscow, where from 1946-48 he served as UP bureau chief. His solid foundation in print journalism prepared him to assume a central role in the nascent medium of television news.

In July 1950, Cronkite joined CBS News in Washington as a correspondent and was anchorman for their political convention and election coverage from 1952 to 1980. He covered

such history-making events as the U.S. Space Program; the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Senator Robert Kennedy; the Watergate scandal; the hostage crisis in Iran; the Vietnam War; and John Glenn's return to space.

After leaving the CBS Evening News, Cronkite hosted several acclaimed CBS documentary programs.

His numerous honors and awards include a special George Foster Peabody Award for his contributions to broadcast journalism, and induction into the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences Hall of Fame. In January 1981, President Jimmy Carter awarded him the Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian award.

In a nationwide viewer opinion survey conducted as recently as 1995, more than a decade after he left the CBS anchor desk, Cronkite again was voted "Most Trusted Man in Television News."

He co-founded The Cronkite Ward Company in 1993, which has produced more than 100 award-winning documentary hours for The Discovery Channel, PBS and other networks. Also in 1996, he completed his autobiography, *A Reporter's Life*.

In addition to his ongoing assignments as a special correspondent for CBS, Cronkite maintains an international lecture and public appearance schedule and also hosts many public affairs and cultural programs.

AMERICAN MASTERS Walter Cronkite: Witness to History is written and directed by Catherine Tatge. Tatge and Leslie Clark are producers. Susan Lacy is executive producer of ***AMERICAN MASTERS***. Barry Schulman is director of cultural and arts programs for Thirteen/WNET New York.

To take ***AMERICAN MASTERS*** beyond the television broadcast and further explore the themes, stories, and personalities of masters past and present, the companion Web site (<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters>), created by Thirteen/WNET New York, offers interviews, essays, photographs, outtakes and other resources.

AMERICAN MASTERS is produced for PBS by Thirteen/WNET New York. This acclaimed series, now celebrating its 20th season, has become a cultural legacy in its own right.

The *AMERICAN MASTERS* film library is one of the most highly honored in television history with profiles of more than 140 artistic giants. In addition to seven Peabodys, an Oscar and two Grammys, *AMERICAN MASTERS* has won 16 Emmys, including Outstanding Primetime Non-Fiction Series for 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, and 2004.

Corporate funding provided by Visa Signature. *AMERICAN MASTERS* is also made possible by the support of the National Endowment for the Arts and by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Additional funding for *AMERICAN MASTERS* is provided by Rosalind P. Walter, The Blanche & Irving Laurie Foundation, Jack Rudin, The Marilyn M. Simpson Charitable Lead Trusts, The André and Elizabeth Kertész Foundation, and public television viewers. More information about *AMERICAN MASTERS* can be found at: www.thirteen.org.

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Thirteen/WNET New York is one of the key program providers for public television, bringing such acclaimed series as *Nature*, *Great Performances*, *AMERICAN MASTERS*, *Charlie Rose*, *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*, *Wide Angle*, *Secrets of the Dead*, and *Cyberchase* - as well as the work of Bill Moyers - to audiences nationwide. As the flagship public broadcaster in the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut metro area, Thirteen reaches millions of viewers each week, airing the best of American public television along with its own local productions such as *The Ethnic Heritage Specials*, *The Thirteen Walking Tours*, *New York Voices*, and *Reel New York*. With educational and community outreach projects that extend the impact of its television productions, Thirteen takes television "out of the box." And as broadcast and digital media converge, Thirteen is blazing trails in the creation of Web sites, enhanced television, CD-ROMs, DVD-ROMs, educational software, and other cutting-edge media products. More information about Thirteen can be found at: www.thirteen.org.

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