

# American MASTERS

20  
years

thirteen  
WNET NEW YORK

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press information

THIRTEEN/WNET NEW YORK'S *AMERICAN MASTERS* OFFERS SPECIAL ENCORE PRESENTATION OF DEFINITIVE, TWO-PART EDWARD R. MURROW PORTRAIT, *THIS REPORTER*, THIS AUGUST ON PBS

Winner of 1990 Emmy Award And Cine Golden Eagle

Features Interviews With David Brinkley, Tom Brokaw, Walter Cronkite, Fred W. Friendly, David Halberstam, Don Hewitt, Peter Jennings, Charles Kuralt, Supreme Court Justice Lewis F. Powell, Dan Rather, Diane Sawyer, Eric Sevareid, Howard K. Smith, Barbara Walters, And Murrow's Widow And Son

Features Excerpts From Classic *Person To Person* Interviews, Including Marilyn Monroe, Fidel Castro, John F. Kennedy, And Lauren Bacall.

"This... is London." With those trademark words, crackling over the airwaves from a city in the midst of the blitzkrieg, Edward R. Murrow began a journalistic career that has had no equal. From the opening days of World War II through his death in 1965, the CBS executive turned star reporter had an unparalleled influence on the development of broadcast journalism. His voice was universally recognized, and a generation of radio and television newsmen emulated his style. His pioneering television documentaries have more than once been credited with changing the course of history, and to this day his name is synonymous with courage and perseverance in the search for the truth.

The life and legacy of America's most important journalistic trailblazer are the focus of *Edward R. Murrow: This Reporter*, a two-part exploration of his often controversial career. The award-winning film enjoys an encore presentation Wednesday, August 2 at 9:30 p.m. (ET) on PBS (check local listings). The film, produced and directed by Susan Steinberg, features extensive interviews as well as archival footage, photos and clips from Murrow's landmark radio and television broadcasts. *This Reporter* is part of the 20th anniversary celebration of *AMERICAN MASTERS*.

A Production of  
Thirteen/WNET  
New York for PBS



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“With the dramatic reshuffling of the anchor chairs on all three major networks, and in an era where the very definition of truth in news is undergoing a shift, it’s the perfect time to bring back this grounding portrait of the man who virtually invented electronic journalism,” 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.

The first one-hour program traces Murrow’s early years growing up in Washington state and examines the beginnings of his long career with CBS. In 1937, Murrow was sent by CBS to England to set up a network of correspondents to report on the gathering storm in Europe. He assembled a group of young reporters whose names soon became household words in wartime America, among them William Shirer, Eric Sevareid, Charles Collingwood, Bill Shadel, Howard K. Smith, Richard Hottelet and Larry LeSueur. The group, who came to be known as “Murrow’s Boys,” reported the whole of World War II from the front lines with a courage and loyalty inspired by Murrow’s own fearlessness.

“I did hero-worship this man,” says Eric Sevareid in *This Reporter*. “I really did, as juvenile as it may sound. There’s no such thing in life as a hundred percent hero, but if you’re half a hero, that’s a lot of heroism, and he was more than that, physically, morally, in every way.”

*Edward R. Murrow: This Reporter* features the wartime recollections of several “Murrow’s Boys,” supplemented by excerpts from the extraordinary radio reports Murrow filed from London during the Blitz, from heavy bombers over Berlin (he flew 24 bombing missions), and from Nazi Germany, where he and Bill Shadel were the first Allied correspondents to report the horror of the death camps after liberation. These stirring audio recordings are accompanied by archival footage of the events Murrow witnessed.

Returning to America after the war, Murrow was surprised to find that his overseas reports had made him a star at home. But it was the wish of CBS chief William S. Paley that Murrow be made Vice President in charge of news. Murrow could not refuse his mentor and close friend and he spent two unhappy years as an executive before returning to the microphone.

With the advent of television, Murrow and Fred Friendly were approached by the Aluminum Company of America (Alcoa), which wanted to sponsor a weekly half-hour program with Murrow. Friendly and Murrow had been producing an extremely popular radio program called *Hear It Now*; the television show was to be called *See It Now*.

Television was in its infancy. Despite ever-present technical and logistical difficulties (Fred Friendly refers to their cumbersome 35-millimeter camera as “the thousand-pound pencil”), Murrow took four correspondents to Korea in 1952, the first time television cameras had covered a war. Murrow’s love of the common American led him to seek out stories of ordinary people, but he presented the stories in such a way that they often became powerful commentaries on political or social issues.

*See It Now* consistently broke new ground, despite budget problems at CBS and a growing rift between Murrow and Paley. In 1953, Murrow made the decision to investigate the case of Milo Radulovich, who had been discharged from the Air Force on the grounds that his father and sister were Communist sympathizers. The story Murrow and Joe Wershba produced changed the face of journalism and the tide of American politics.

Under pressure from Congress and the White House following the program’s broadcast, the Air Force reinstated Milo Radulovich. “It was the first time, I think, that Ed and all of us understood the power of television,” says Fred Friendly in the film.

The second part of *Edward R. Murrow: This Reporter* documents Murrow’s confrontation with Senator Joseph McCarthy and the events leading to his departure from CBS. Broadcast on March 9, 1954, the McCarthy program, composed almost entirely of his own words and pictures, was a damning portrait of a fanatic. The program’s timing and persuasive power broke the Senator’s hold over the nation.

The controversy surrounding the McCarthy exposé exacerbated the differences between Murrow and CBS management, and his scathing speech to the 1958 Radio and Television News Directors Association National Convention further weakened his support at the network. An unsuccessful attempt to pair him with Walter Cronkite at the 1960 Democratic convention and the network’s decision to pull *See It Now* from its weekly primetime slot signaled the end of his 22-year association with CBS. He officially left the network in 1961, when John F. Kennedy appointed him head of the United States Information Agency. Murrow appeared in one last documentary, *Harvest of Shame*, about the plight of migrant farm workers, before he succumbed to lung cancer in 1965.

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.

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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](http://www.thirteen.org).

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