

press release

DO YOU SPEAK AMERICAN?

Biographies

ROBERT MACNEIL

Series Reporter, Writer and Host

Robert MacNeil's journalism career spans 40 years and began with a five-year tenure at Reuters News Agency in London. In 1960, he entered the world of television as an NBC News London-based correspondent, covering such events as the fighting in the Belgian Congo, the Civil War in Algeria, the construction of the Berlin Wall, and the Cuban Missile Crisis. In 1963 he was transferred to NBC's Washington bureau, where he reported on the unfolding civil rights story and helped cover the White House. Mr. MacNeil was the NBC News correspondent covering President Kennedy on the day he was assassinated in Dallas.

After a stint as a reporter for the BBC, Mr. MacNeil joined PBS in 1971, where he first teamed with Jim Lehrer to co-anchor public television's Emmy-winning coverage of the Senate Watergate hearings. Their collaboration led to *The MacNeil/Lehrer Report*, which launched in October 1975 and devoted its nightly half-hour time slot to a single issue. Eight years later, *The Report* became *The NewsHour*, the nation's first full hour of evening news, and went on to garner numerous awards, including two 1992 Emmy Awards. In 1999, with Mr. Lehrer, Mr. MacNeil was inducted into the Television Academy's Hall of Fame. Together, they founded MacNeil/Lehrer Productions and under its auspices have produced *The NewsHour*, *The Story of English*, *Learning in America*, and *C. Everett Koop, M.D.*, among many other programs, airing on PBS and other network and cable television outlets. Mr. MacNeil retired from daily journalism in 1995.

Mr. MacNeil himself has won numerous awards, including Peabody Awards, a duPont-Columbia Award and the Fred Friendly First Amendment Award. He is the author of several books, including *Breaking News*, *The Voyage*, *Burden of Desire*, his critically acclaimed first novel, *The People Machine*, and *The Way We Were: 1963, The Year Kennedy Was Shot*. His memoir, *Looking for My Country: Finding Myself in America*, is pending publication.

Born in Montreal and raised in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Mr. MacNeil graduated from Carleton University in Ottawa. He has four children, and lives with his wife in Manhattan and Nova Scotia.

WILLIAM CRAN

Series Producer and Writer

Creative Director, Paladin/InVision Productions Ltd.

William Cran began his career 30 years ago at the BBC, where he spent eight years, including two as a producer for the flagship documentary program *Panorama*. In 1979, after leaving the BBC to



Biographies

work as a freelance documentarian in Canada and the United States, Mr. Cran embarked on a long professional relationship with WGBH in Boston. Since then he has made some 50 full-length documentaries and won more than two dozen awards, including Emmy, duPont-Columbia and New York Film Festival Awards . Among his many notable projects are *Chachaji My Poor Relation*, *88 Seconds in Greensboro*, *The Search for Missing Marcos Millions*, *The Secret File on J. Edgar Hoover*, *The Mysterious Career of Lee Harvey Oswald*, *Pablo Escobar the Godfather of Cocaine*, and *Ambush in Mogadishui*, all for WGBH, and *Nelson's Trafalgar*, for Channel 4 (U.K.). Mr. Cran has also produced major series including *The Story of English* (BBC Television), *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power* (WGBH), *From Jesus to Christ* (WGBH), *Red Files* (PBS/DDE), and *Commanding Heights* (WGBH). He developed the storyline and worked as executive producer of the HBO movie *Hostile Waters*, which starred Rutger Hauer, Martin Sheen and Max von Sydow. Most recently, he has been the series producer of *1421: The Year China Discovered America?* (PBS/Pearson), and *Extreme Oil* (Thirteen/WNET New York). Mr. Cran was born in Australia, educated at Westminster School and Oxford University, and was one of six graduates (out of 3,000) to be chosen as General Trainee by the BBC. He co-authored the international best-seller *The Story of English* and has just completed the companion book to this series, *Do You Speak American?*, as co-author.

JODY SHEFF

Series Executive Producer

Executive Producer, History and Features Programming, Thirteen/WNET New York

Jody Sheff is executive producer of History and Features programming at Thirteen/ WNET New York. She is the executive producer of the PBS series, *Regency House Party*, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* and *Crown and Country*. She has also served as executive producer for Thirteen's highly popular "Walking Tours" series. Ms. Sheff produced the critically acclaimed PBS special *A Conversation With Bill Moyers and Ursula K. LeGuin*, created to coincide with the re-release of the science-fiction classic *The Lathe of Heaven*. She won an Emmy as series producer for award-winning science series *Innovation*. Sheff produced, directed and wrote for such national PBS series as *Nature*, *Great Railway Journeys II*, *Legendary Trails*, *Sesame Street*, and *American Masters*. In addition to serving as executive producer of the upcoming PBS series, *Do You Speak American?* with Robert MacNeil, Sheff is currently in production on *Texas Ranch House* and a new series about the Supreme Court.

SUSAN MILLS

Series Executive Producer

Director of Program Development for MacNeil/Lehrer Productions

As the Director of Program Development for MacNeil/Lehrer Productions, Susan Mills oversees the creation and production of programming for television, home video, publishing, and interactive markets. She has worked in broadcast journalism for 36 years, first at CBS NEWS and then The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour. Her awards include 4 National Emmys, ten Emmy nominations, the George Foster Peabody Award, Columbia University's duPont Award, Ohio State's Journalism Award and the Gavel Award from the American Bar Association.

.....

Press Contacts:

Debra Falk

Thirteen/WNET New York
212.560.3013
Falk@thirteen.org

Caroline Oman

Thirteen/WNET New York
212.560.3057
Oman@thirteen.org

Rob Flynn

MacNeilLehrer Productions
703-998-2174
rflynn@newshour.org