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'That's the way it is'

Cronkite to resign in March

United Press International
NEW YORK — One score and ten years ago, television brought forth on this nation a new contentment, Walter Leland Cronkite Jr.

It was altogether fitting and proper that they should do this: the man had begun preparing in high school for his life work, the purveying of news. But there is an anomaly here, in view of the steady broadcasting that Cronkite has been doing for 30 years.

What he prepared for, and engaged in superbly before taking permanently to the mike, was print journalism, the printed word.

Today he will tell you: "It's funny that I've now spent more time in broadcasting than in newspapering — but I still think of myself as a newspaperman."

When this newsmen steps away from his anchorman job (having attained such a position of deity

tion makers in the country, has been bellwether of the nightly newscast since April 1962.

His decision to weigh anchor this coming spring has caused comment within the industry that the event may mark the end of the image of anchorman as deity, with influence and respect that make him a symbol of his company.

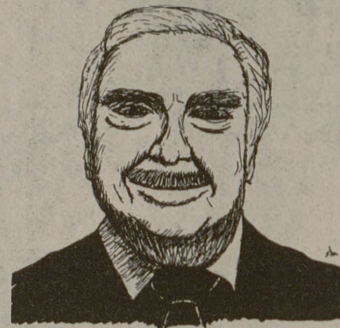
There is another aspect to his leaving the job, put forth by Elmer W. Lower, former president of ABC News, who worked with Cronkite at CBS three decades ago:

"He's one of the last of the old pros out of the hard news business, out of the print news business. You see, at first we hired a lot of people like that. But today they hire them from television stations. There may never be another Cronkite in that respect."

Cronkite was 16 years old when he got his first bylines, in the Houston Post. As a carrier boy, he got up at 3 a.m. to plunk onto front porches newspapers carrying stories that he had written the day before as a non-paid summertime novice newsmen.

It was 1937, springtime, when he got hired by the United Press in Kansas City, a relationship that lasted 11 years. They sent him back to Austin and other Texas towns and then returned him to Kansas City. His several stints at UP were interrupted by excursions into radio. Once, he had earned a reputation at KCMO by doing reconstructed football games from Western Union reports (even as Ronald Reagan had done), and station WKY in Oklahoma City hired him to do games live. Again, he didn't want to go, but he was thinking of getting married, and they tripled his UP salary.

That lasted a year, which started in disaster. He had never done live football, so he whipped up an electric play-by-play board. Two spotters would push buttons



Walter Cronkite

lighting up on the board the names of players in various plays — he wouldn't have to look at the game.

"But the board sort of pooped out, and the two spotters weren't any good. At the first game, the station owner stood behind me saying 'Oh my god, oh my god, oh my god' for the entire game. It didn't help my morale any."

But he wasn't fired. He buckled down and learned his job and called the games as he saw them.

During WWII, he was stationed as a correspondent on the battleship Texas. There followed a series of adventures during which he was catapulted off the Texas deck in a biplane bound for Norfolk; it ran out of gas and sputtered down in Hampton Roads. He got ashore, found the phones secured against all use. He then hooked a ride to New York and walked into the UP bureau, fresh from the battlefield — and the phone operator who saw him first nearly fainted.

He had been missing in battle for three weeks: the British had held up all his dispatches on North Africa at Gibraltar. He redeemed himself with a graphic uncensored story written in New York.

In the middle of the war, Edward R. Murrow, the big gun of CBS war reporting, offered Cronkite a job. He accepted. Then the United Press gave him a \$25 raise: "Well, that was a tremendous vote of confidence, and it really tore at me."

"So I went trotting back to Murrow and said I can't leave the UP. And he always thought I used him for a bargaining point, and I guess in a sense I did. It wasn't intentional. Didn't start that way."

After the war was over, Cronkite went to Brussels, then to cover the Nuremberg war crimes trials, and then to a two-year stint, 1946-48, as UP Moscow bureau manager.

Radio beckoned again — tripling his salary. So he left the news agency and went to Washington for a group of eight Middle Western stations. Then, in 1950, Ed Murrow in New York called down to Washington and said: "Do you want to try again?" He did — on July 1. He made a big hit on televi-

sion on the CBS-broadcast station WTOP in Washington. Sig Mickelson, the CBS news boss, picked Cronkite to anchor the 1952 political conventions. He became an instant national star. And the rest is broadcasting history.

Walter married Mary Elizabeth Maxwell of Kansas City — "Betsy" — on March 30, 1940, in Kansas City, naturally. "I thought everybody'd want to be married in the Paris of the Midwest," Betsy says.

Betsy confirms that the man you see sitting before the mike is 6 feet tall ("if he doesn't slump," tries to stay at 185 pounds ("this morning, he had only skim milk," his favorite color is blue ("matches his eyes"), and he always has milk and cookies before bedtime ("graham crackers when he's cutting down").

What about people calling him uncle?

"Yeah. Now they're even calling him the grandfatherly Mr. Cronkite. Oh boy, that really hurts. Seems like forever they've called him uncle."

There was such a slew of letters of protest when Cronkite announced a year ago that he was

"He's one of the last of the old pros out of the print news business. You see, at first we hired a lot of people like that. But today they hire them from television stations. There may never be another Cronkite in that respect."

leaving "sometime early in 1981" that the evening news people saved some of them. Such as: "We were so devastated by your announcement tonight, tears started to flow and I felt as if we were on the verge of losing something which can never be replaced."

"You are an intangible benefit of being an American."

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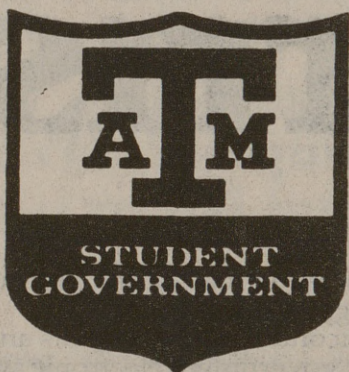
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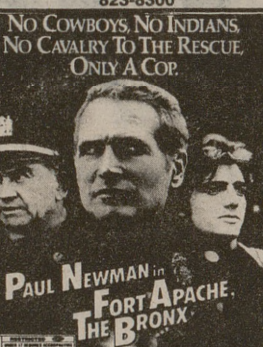


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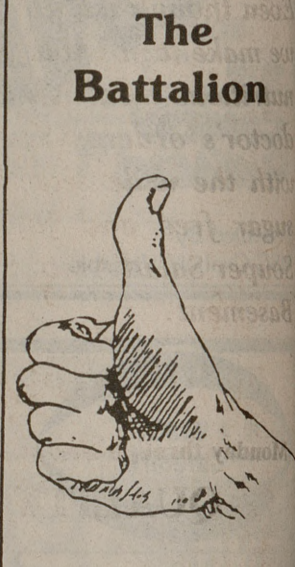
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BY

DR. ROBERT WALKER

Vice-President for Development, TAMU

Thursday Feb. 12, 1981

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