

Rollin Post, longtime TV journalist, diesJohn Wildermuth, Chronicle Staff Writer
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Rollin Post 1930-2011

Courtesy the Post family

(10-07) 15:41 PDT SAN**FRANCISCO** -- Rollin Post lived and breathed politics for his more than 30 years on Bay Area television, but his work was very different from the hot talk "gotcha" journalism that dominates the airwaves today.

"Unlike the heated, often mean-spirited political reporting and commentary on TV today, Rollin managed to be insightful and expose politicians' hypocrisy without resorting to snarkiness and sarcasm," said Randy Shandobil, former political editor for KTVU television. "He was simultaneously a hard-hitting journalist and a gentleman."

Mr. Post, who died at his Corte Madera home this week at age 81 from complications of Alzheimer's disease, was a familiar figure on local television, working as a reporter, commentator and interviewer on three stations from 1961 until his retirement in 1997.

Don Solem, a veteran political consultant, was a close friend of Mr. Post's since the late 1960s, when they were drawn together by a mutual love of politics and baseball, which meant plenty of trips to ballgames and spring training in Arizona.

"He was never someone who wanted to push himself to the front of a story," Solem said. "What he had was persistence, which meant he'd keep at a story until he was satisfied he had something his viewers would understand."

Mr. Post was born in New York City on May 27, 1930. His father was a New York state assemblyman, and his mother a fashion model and civic volunteer. He was named for his grandfather, Rollin Kirby, who won the first Pulitzer Prize for editorial cartooning.

He later moved with his mother to Southern California and attended high school in Claremont, where he was captain of the baseball team. After a year at San Francisco State College and a year in the Army, he attended UC Berkeley, graduating in 1952 with a degree in political science.

Mr. Post began his career in journalism as a copy boy at CBS Radio in Los Angeles, where he met Diane Opley, who became his wife in 1954. In 1957, he moved to KTTV, the Los Angeles CBS affiliate, where he was head writer and producer for "The Paul Coates Report," a syndicated interview show.

In 1961, Mr. Post moved back to the Bay Area as a morning producer and assignment editor for KPIX. A year later, he became a news reporter.

Mr. Post later worked for KQED, where he was a commentator on the evening roundtable show "Newsroom" and later co-host with Belva Davis of "A Closer Look."

Davis worked with Mr. Post for more than 30 years on a variety of TV news programs, including 18 years as co-hosts of KRON's "California This Week" interview show.

"Whatever I learned about politics started with Rollie," said Davis, who currently hosts "This Week in Northern California" on KQED. "He was so nice and normal and always willing to be of service. I'm just so fortunate that he chose to mentor me."

Mr. Post's high-pitched voice wasn't the standard deep-toned instrument common to TV and radio reporters, but it became an instantly recognizable trademark. For decades, there wasn't a person in statewide politics who wasn't grilled by Mr. Post at one time or another.

He reported on nine presidential elections, attended 18 national political conventions and was a familiar sight on live election night coverage, both local and national. Mr. Post even appeared as himself in Robert Redford's 1972 political film "The Candidate."

After his retirement, Mr. Post stayed involved in civic activities in Marin County, where he lived for 47 years. He tutored young students, raised money for the San Francisco Bay Area Television Archive, and served as a volunteer board member for Common Cause, the World Affairs Council, the UC Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies and the Marin County Historical Society.

"For 40 years, my dad loved his work and everything he did," said his daughter, Lauren. "Not everyone can say that."

Mr. Post is survived by his wife, Diane, of Corte Madera; sisters, Wendy Moreton and Linda Post; daughters, Lauren of San Francisco and Cynthia of South San Francisco; son, Kenneth of Singapore; and five grandchildren.

No services are scheduled.

E-mail John Wildermuth at jwildermuth@sfchronicle.com.

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