

# Waiter, there's a fly on my head

Written by BRIAN LOCKHART

And that's the way it is.

If you're old enough to remember that catchphrase, you're old enough to remember when Walter Cronkite delivered the nightly news on the CBS network.

Over time, he became known as the 'most trusted man in America.'

Cronkite wasn't hired to deliver the nightly news based on his pretty-boy good looks, straight teeth, beaming smile, and a full head of wavy blonde hair.

He was hired because he was a seasoned journalist having reported from the war theatres in Europe, the Nuremberg trials, and many other historic events.

He is probably best remembered for announcing the death of President John F. Kennedy.

During that emergency broadcast, even when it became apparent that Kennedy was dead based on eyewitness reports of what was happening in the hospital and reports from people who had witnessed the actual and obviously fatal shot, he refused to announce it as fact.

It wasn't until he received an official 'news flash' from a trusted news source that he announced the president was indeed dead.

It was also the only time he really showed emotion on air. He had a catch in his voice, and he had to pause and compose himself before continuing, as he realized the full power of the overwhelming message he had just delivered.

Cronkite gained the reputation as the 'most trusted man' based on what he did and how he delivered the news.

He gave the facts. He didn't editorialize, didn't take sides, and didn't turn a mountain into a molehill.

You would think major news outlets would have learned from Cronkite's insistence on facts.

During the attempted assassination of President Ronald Reagan, in 1981, White House press secretary James Brady took the first bullet right in the forehead. Yes, it was an obviously serious wound.

Within minutes, most major networks were reporting the shooting and also reporting the Brady had been killed by the gunfire. They were embarrassed later to find out he had not been killed and was very much alive - although in very serious condition.

The recent American political debate between current U.S. vice president Mike Pence and challenger Kamala Harris, proved to be a rather interesting debate. It was civil compared to the earlier presidential debate and refrained from name calling and the other shenanigans we have seen.

Both candidates did a decent job of promoting their ideas and platform.

So what was the top reported issue after the debate?

You might think it had something to do with law and order, the economy, or an issue about national affairs.

Nope. It was the fact that a fly landed on Pence's head during the debate.

I will admit it was kind of funny. The fly stood out like a tree in a desert against Pence's white hair.

It took about two minutes before photos of that fly started popping up on Facebook and Youtube.

That can be expected.

However the next morning, the fly on the head story was reported by major news outlets as a 'story.'

On one news outlet, their major on-line story had a close-up photo of the offending insect perched on Pence's noggin.

While a fly on a guy's head during such a serious moment might be something that is amusing, does it really constitute hard news about a major event?

If they needed to make light of it, a humorous jab at the end of the story would have sufficed ? it did not require a headline.

American news outlets have certainly tilted to left field over the past few years. It seems news directors have forgotten what is hard news, and what is glitz or glamour, and 'cowboy spots UFO' stories.

The shift started happening in the mid 90's.

During the 1996 Super Bowl between the Dallas Cowboys and the Pittsburgh Steelers, Diana Ross performed during the halftime show.

The next morning, most of the stories about the game were focused on the fact that Ross changed her outfit four times during her 12 minute performance.

Wait a minute ? wasn't there a football game wrapped around that show? Apparently a costume change and a field of dancers relegated that actual game to second place.

I don't mind news sources doing fun and unusual stories. In fact some journalists have made a career out of it. The late broadcasters Andy Rooney and Paul Harvey come to mind.

However, when it comes to serious news, some stories should be delivered without the nonsense.

I think our Canadian broadcasters do a much better job of reporting the serious news and keeping the fluff for an appropriate slot in the program.

There's no word on if they caught the fly.