

## OBITUARIES

# Richard S. Salant Dies; Former Head of CBS News

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Richard S. Salant, 78, a former president of CBS News and a major influence on the course of modern broadcast journalism, died of an apparent heart attack Feb. 16 at Park City Hospital in Bridgeport, Conn.

He was stricken while addressing a senior citizens group at the Country Club of Fairfield in Southport, Conn.

Mr. Salant spent 27 years with CBS, and was president of CBS News twice. The first time was from 1961 to 1964. He then spent two years as a special assistant to Frank Stanton, the president of the company, and returned to the news division, which he headed until 1979, when he retired.

A lawyer rather than a journalist, Mr. Salant was as tough as any newsman brought up in any city room in the world. "Our job," he used to say, "is to give people not what they want, but what we decide they ought to have."

In carrying out that policy, he was credited with innovations that are now taken for granted in broadcast news. Among them was expanding the nightly news from 15 to 30 minutes. As "The CBS Evening News With Walter Cronkite," it became a kind of national institution. Other successful programs Mr. Salant introduced are "60 Minutes," "CBS Morning News" and "Sunday Morning."

He was responsible for CBS's coverage of such events as the assassinations of President Kennedy and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.; the Vietnam War; and the Apollo 11 moon landing. As a way of getting deeper into stories, he pressed correspondents to tell viewers not only what was happening, but to analyze what it meant.

This was particularly evident in CBS election coverage. Starting in the early 1960s, the network began reporting not only raw vote counts as they came in, but predicting who the winners would be before all the votes were counted. The key was analyzing past elections to identify bellwether precincts and tracking their results on election night.

Mr. Salant also was a passionate supporter of documentaries. In the 1960s and 1970s, before the days of cable and videocassettes, network entertainment departments were so profitable that news operations could run at a loss. Documentaries were among the most prestigious and most expensive productions of the news department, but Mr. Salant reveled in his reputation as the man "in charge of losing money."

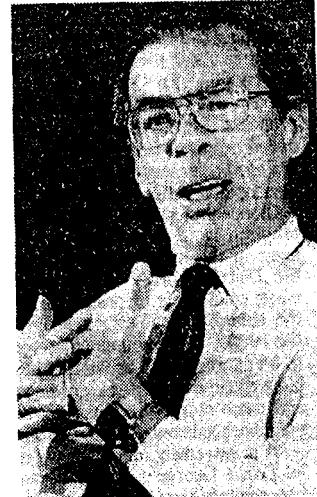
One of his best-known productions was "The Selling of the Pentagon," a scathing attack on Defense Department policies in 1971.

In 1979, having spent years as one of the most respected executives and directors at CBS, Mr. Salant was forced to retire because of a company rule that executives must leave at age 65. He resented that policy—it was noted at the time that William S. Paley, the founder of CBS, did not apply it to himself—and so Mr. Salant went to work for NBC. He stayed there about three years.

More recently, Mr. Salant had served on the board of National Public Radio. In 1990, he resigned over NPR's policy of accepting corporate contributions earmarked to cover specific aspects of the news. Prickly as ever about the prerogatives of newsmen to run their own operations, Mr. Salant felt that this was giving corporations unwarranted power to direct coverage.

A resident of New Canaan, Conn., Mr. Salant was born in New York City on April 14, 1914. His father, Louis Salant, was a successful lawyer. Richard Salant was educated at Phillips Exeter Academy and Harvard, where he majored in English and graduated *magna cum laude* in 1935 with a Phi Beta Kappa key. He then went to Harvard Law School, where he was elected to the Law Review.

In 1938, he moved to Washington to work for the National Labor Relations Board. After several government jobs, he served in the Navy in World War II. In 1946, he joined the New York law firm of Rosenman, Goldmark, Colin & Kaye. One of its major clients was CBS, and Mr. Salant spent his time on CBS problems.



1977 PHOTO  
RICHARD S. SALANT

In 1952, he joined the company full time as a vice president and general executive. In 1960, he was appointed chairman of a news executive committee. A year later he was named president of the news division.

Mr. Salant's marriage to the former Rosalind Robb ended in divorce.

Survivors include his wife, the former Frances Trainer of New Canaan, and their daughter, Sarah Gleason of Darien, Conn.; four children from his first marriage, Linda Breck and Robb Salant, both of Tucson, Susan Burdick of Singapore and Priscilla Salant of Moscow, Idaho; a sister, Helen S. Isaacs of White Plains, N.Y.; and nine grandchildren.

Mike Wallace, the CBS correspondent and co-editor of "60 Minutes," said yesterday: "Dick was doing what he loved best [when he died]. He was talking about covering the news and the difficulties of getting to the heart of a story. Dick Salant was granite honest."