



THE QUINN AWARD

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JUDY Woodruff

BY EZRA PALMER

JUDY WOODRUFF has been in the vanguard of American journalism for nearly four decades, helping to change the face of the broadcast newsroom along the way. Known for her passion for politics, her commitment to good journalism, and a unique combination of tenacity and courtesy, she broke new ground for women. She continues to do so today in a career that has made her one of the most respected journalists of our time.

A graduate of Duke University, Woodruff began her television career in Atlanta. Taking the only path available to her at the time, she became a newsroom secretary. "We already have a woman reporter," the station manager told her.

Her first on-air assignment was as a fill-in

weathercaster on Sunday evenings. Though it was a far cry from her ambition of political reporting, she took the job to gain on-camera experience. That position paved the way for her becoming a general assignment reporter in Atlanta, where she later served as one of the country's first female anchors. Her coverage of Jimmy Carter brought her widespread attention and helped open a path to Washington, where she was the White House correspondent for NBC News from 1977 to 1982. Woodruff has covered every U.S. presidential election since 1976.

From 1983 to 1993, she was the DC Chief Washington correspondent for the MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour. For much of that decade, Woodruff also anchored PBS's award-winning weekly documentary series, "Frontline with Judy Woodruff." During her "Frontline" tenure, she also moderated the infamous Bentsen/Quayle vice presidential debate in 1988.

In 1993, Woodruff became a senior correspondent for CNN, appearing on "Inside Politics" and "The World Today." While at CNN, she won a CableACE Award for best newscaster and an Emmy for coverage of the Centennial Olympic Park bombing.

In 2005, Woodruff returned to PBS to embark on an ambitious new project, "Generation Next," a multimedia attempt to portray—and understand—the 42-million 16-to-25 year-olds in America. Woodruff and her production team crisscrossed the country, profiling dozens of young Americans. Using technology in unique ways, they installed a re-

a Life IN THE news

cording kiosk in an RV, and, as they traveled, encouraged young Americans to sit down in front of a computer and answer questions about their lives and their views.

What emerged was a new and surprising take on young America. In fact, the experience left Woodruff concerned about the news media and its ability to retain its relevancy to a younger audience. "We're not doing the job we should be doing," she says.

Political coverage in particular, she says, often overlooks younger voters. "We take our cues from the campaigns," Woodruff says, noting that campaigns tend to focus on older people, who are more likely to vote. "We in the media have a special responsibility to make sure our coverage doesn't overlook young people."

When she looks back over her career, Woodruff is heartened by the gains women have made. It is remarkable to think that, only in 1971, a network news head said, "I have the strong feeling that audiences are less prepared to accept news from a woman's voice than from a man's." But Woodruff cautions that women have not made similar strides in management roles, and she worries that societal pressures on women—the continued expectation that women will serve as principal homemakers whether or not they work—have capped the gains of the '70s and '80s.

Juggling career and family is a challenge she is intimately familiar with. On September 15, 1981, she did a live report for NBC from the lawn of the White House; eight hours later



she delivered her first son, Jeffrey, at Georgetown Hospital.

Woodruff is the founding co-chairwoman of the International Women's Media Foundation, an organization dedicated to promoting and encouraging women in the communication industries worldwide. (In addition, she serves on the boards of the Freedom Forum, Global Rights: Partners for Justice and the National Museum of American History. She is also a member of the Knight Foundation Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics.)

For herself, Woodruff says she would have liked to have a chance to report overseas. "I've loved covering politics—I am so blessed and lucky to have been able work in Washington—but I would have loved to have an assignment abroad."

That will have to wait for at least another year, as she continues her work for PBS and gears up for the 2008 election. ☺



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