



## JOSEPH M. QUINN AWARD

for Journalistic Excellence  
and Distinction

# Challenging the STATUS QUO

BY CHRIS PALMERI

FOR DECADES ANDREA MITCHELL, RECIPIENT OF THE PRESS CLUB'S QUINN AWARD FOR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT, HAS BEEN SHARING IMPORTANT STORIES WITH THE WORLD

**I**t was just supposed to be a photo op. Andrea Mitchell had been warned not to ask Syrian President Bashar al-Assad any questions during a brief appearance with President Bill Clinton in 1994. But as the sole reporter at the event in Damascus, Mitchell knew she had to press Assad about his support for terrorists. He answered, on camera, as she was dragged from the room by his security guards.

That's no surprise to anyone who has followed Mitchell over the decades. From her early days as a "copyboy" at a Philadelphia radio station in the 1960s to her current role as NBC News' chief foreign affairs correspondent and host of "Andrea Mitchell Reports" on MSNBC, Mitchell has continued to challenge the status quo, asking tough questions of people in power and sharing what's she's learned with millions of viewers.

That record of achievement has earned Mitchell this year's Joseph M. Quinn Award for Lifetime Achievement from the Los Angeles Press Club.

Mitchell has an extensive list of highlights: She broke the news that George H. W. Bush had chosen Dan Quayle as his running mate in 1988. She scored the first interview with Fidel Castro during the Elian Gonzalez affair. Most recently, Mitchell supervised NBC's coverage of Hillary Clinton's historic but ultimately failed presidential campaign.

Along the way, Mitchell, 70, has never shied away from a tough assignment. Her exploits include hopping on a plane to Guyana after two of her NBC colleagues were killed by cult leader Jim Jones, and wearing a dosimeter to measure radiation exposure as she reported on the Three Mile Island nuclear reactor leak.

Doing whatever it took to be where news was



happening, Mitchell pushed past Chinese authorities to get into a women's conference near Beijing that Western officials and journalists had been banned from attending. Covering a diplomatic mission to North Korea in 2000, Mitchell dodged her minders at a hotel so she could get out in the streets and shoot footage of how the people lived. After she was arrested by local police, Mitchell switched tapes and hid the real video in her dress so NBC could get its exclusive.

"The best word to describe her is 'indefatigable,'" says her longtime friend, *Washington Post* columnist Ruth Marcus. "I don't know anyone in journalism who works harder, knows more, or has better news judgment."

Perhaps that's why her journalism colleagues



teasingly call her the "designated shouter" for her willingness to put tough questions to reluctant politicians. It also helps explain why she titled her 2005 memoir *Talking Back...to Presidents, Dictators, and Assorted Scoundrels*.

Mitchell grew up in the New York City suburb of New Rochelle, where her journalism instincts were visible early. She reported on her school for the local newspaper at age 11 and made the morning announcements over the public address system. An English literature major at the University of Pennsylvania, Mitchell dove into the storytelling of Chaucer, Nabokov and Dostoyevsky. She also worked at the campus radio station.

When she was accepted to a management training program at radio station owner Westinghouse,



she talked her way instead into a job in the newsroom of a Philadelphia station. That began a long ride covering politics that would accelerate along with the electoral fortunes of characters such as Mayor Frank Rizzo and then-District Attorney Arlen Specter.

Although she has spent the bulk of her career at NBC, Mitchell hasn't always gotten the plumb assignments. She was at times denied prestigious jobs. Exiled to foreign coverage, Mitchell nonetheless made it her own, constantly fighting for air time on the evening news for stories such as the genocide in Bosnia and the humanitarian crisis in Haiti.

After dating economist Alan Greenspan for 13 years, Mitchell married the Federal Reserve Board Chairman in a 1997 service performed by Supreme



Above: Mitchell with U.S. troops in the Balkans.

From left: Mitchell meets with Nancy Reagan, chats with Al and Tipper Gore, and speaks with Fidel Castro.

## JOSEPH M. QUINN AWARD ANDREA MITCHELL

Right: Mitchell hosts "Meet the Press."

Below: Mitchell interviews Nancy Pelosi and Hillary Clinton.



Right: Mitchell talks with former Soviet Union leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

Husband Alan Greenspan, economist and former Federal Reserve Chairman, appears with Mitchell on "Meet the Press."

Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg. Mitchell said that Greenspan had actually asked for her hand three times before she understood what he was saying.

"If you think you don't get his testimony, his marriage proposals aren't any less transparent," she joked with interviewer Charlie Rose in 2005.

After years of cultivating sources at the highest levels in Washington, Mitchell finally had one available night and day, but as she told Rose, Greenspan's rule was that he never shared classified information. Mitchell recalled the night in 2003 that she saw her husband and Vice President Dick Cheney chatting seriously at a party. Awakened at 5 a.m. with a rumor from one of her network colleagues that Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein had been captured, Mitchell had to work the phones to confirm the information, even though she had a sense that's what Greenspan and Cheney had been talking about.

Mitchell got the story anyway, and as always, she shared it with the world. 🌍



Congratulations, Andrea, for a lifetime of ruffling some of the world's most powerful feathers.

For more than forty years you've shown tenacity, fearlessness and no signs of ever slowing down. You are a once-in-a-lifetime journalist.

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