



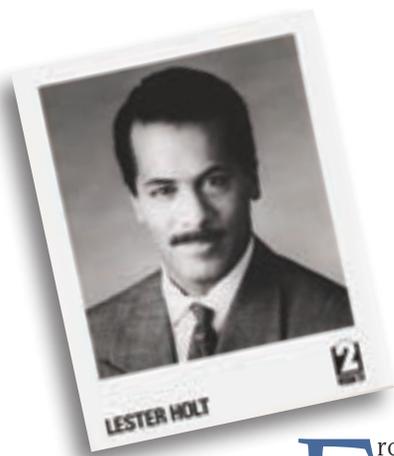
JOSEPH M. QUINN AWARD

*for Journalistic Excellence
and Distinction*

A Calming, Confident PRESENCE

NBC NIGHTLY NEWS ANCHOR LESTER HOLT RECEIVES
THE QUINN AWARD FOR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

BY CHRIS PALMERI



From moderating the first Trump-Clinton debate in 2016, to helping us cope with the horror of the Parkland High School shooting, to ushering in the wonder of the PyeongChang Winter Olympics, Lester Holt has been a calming presence in our lives, delivering the news and sharing stories with viewers in his trademark steady, authoritative manner. He says his style has been called “laid back” and “without drama.” Whatever it is, his newscasts inspire confidence in an increasingly erratic and dangerous world.

This solid persona extends to pursuing stories in the field, even in the most dangerous circumstances. During Egypt’s 2011 uprising, Holt braved angry mobs and street violence to bring us the Arab Spring story. The year before in Haiti, he slept under the stars each night, rising with the first light and moving into the earthquake’s devastation to report on the death and destruction. Intestinal fortitude is part of the man’s DNA.

He still has a hunger to go where the stories are.

“The bar I’m trying to maintain is that we go if it’s big and if it’s something that I think I can add value to by being there,” Holt explains. “Sometimes, as the main anchor, I may be in a position to get an interview that we might not otherwise get... As much as I can control it, I don’t want to just stand there with a background of a twisted-up city or whatever the story might be.”

Whether he’s with the Parkland students, politicians or heads of state, Holt’s talent for getting to the truth is a constant. His straightforward question to President Trump about the reason for firing FBI Director James Comey may prove to be of great national significance. But for Holt, he was just doing his job. Watching him in action is an inspiration to



journalists all over the world.

As the first African American to permanently host a nightly newscast on one the Big Three networks, Holt has been a trailblazer as well. It all helps explain why the Los Angeles Press Club tonight is



presenting the “NBC Nightly News” anchor with the Joseph M. Quinn Award for Lifetime Achievement.

Lester Don Holt Jr. was born in San Francisco to June DeRozario and Lester Holt Sr., an Air Force technician. He went to high school in the Sacramento suburb of Rancho Cordova, where he demonstrated his presentation skills early; delivering announcements over the school public address system. He attended nearby California State University, Sacramento, though he never graduated. Holt found time, however, to pursue his twin passions of broadcasting and music, landing a job as a disc jockey at a country and western radio station.

In 1981 Holt was hired as a reporter for WCBS, the flagship TV station in New York, in what would become a 19-year journey with the network. He was one of only a few journalists who would work as a reporter and anchor in all three of the country’s largest markets: New York, Los Angeles and Chicago.

“Not too many people have done that,” says Josh Mankiewicz, his colleague at “Dateline NBC,” where Holt also serves as host. “It shows you that he’s very good and has been on a fast track for a long time.”

Holt leapt to NBC in 2000 where he distinguished himself covering that year’s chaotic presidential election, which George W. Bush ultimately won. More anchor positions followed, including a regular report on the Iraq War, as well as weekend hosting duties for “Nightly News” and the “Today Show.” He also hosted “Lester Holt Live” on the MSNBC cable network.

Holt covered breaking news such as Hurricane Katrina, which flooded New Orleans, and the devastating earthquake in Haiti. He earned the nickname Iron Pants for his ability to stay in the anchor chair for hours on end, keeping news-hungry viewers informed.

His biggest break came in February 2015, when his colleague Brian Williams got in trouble for exag-

Above: 2017, Holt with firefighters in his hometown while reporting on the wildfires.

Opposite page: Holt’s headshot from WBBM TV in Chicago.

Clockwise from far left: Holt interviews Hillary Clinton, chats with President Obama and President George H.W. Bush (1992) and interviews President Trump.

JOSEPH M. QUINN AWARD LESTER HOLT

Holt on set with Chuck Todd, moderator of “Meet the Press” and NBC News politics director, and TODAY co-anchor Savannah Guthrie.



Clockwise from above: Talking to former Secretary of Defense Ash Carter; reporting on Hurricane Harvey in 2017; with troops in Afganistan; talking to a teenager while in Cuba during President Obama's historic visit.

generating his own experiences covering the conflict in the Middle East. Williams was suspended for six months without pay.

“Brian is a member of our family, but so are you, the viewers,” Holt told audiences that night after taking his seat at the “Nightly News” desk. “And we will work every night to be worthy of your trust.”

Williams was later moved to MSNBC and Holt got the spot anchoring the “Nightly News” on a permanent basis four months later.

Since then Holt has continued to distinguish himself as an anchor and interviewer. “Nightly News” has maintained its top spot in the ratings among the 18- to 49-year-old viewers most coveted by advertisers. And Holt has continued to nurture the next generation of journalism talent, both in his office and at home.

Holt and his wife of 36 years, Carol Hagen, have two sons, Cameron and Stefan, the latter of whom is a reporter for WNBC in New York.

Lester Holt keeps a condo in Santa Monica and often anchors from NBC’s studio in Universal City so he can spend the weekend in California. When he’s not working, Holt plays bass guitar in a rock n’ roll cover band, even sitting in with the house band The Roots on “The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon.” Much like his day job, Holt keeps a slow and steady groove that makes those around him shine. 🎸

