



JOSEPH M. QUINN AWARD

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14 | HOW DAVE
BRYAN
BECAME
LOS ANGELES'
BEST
TELEVISION
POLITICAL
REPORTER

BY JON
REGARDIE

IT MAY BE inevitable that Dave Bryan, the political reporter for KCAL9 and CBS2 and the 2010 recipient of the Los Angeles Press Club's Joseph M. Quinn Award for Lifetime Achievement, wound up with a career that blends politics and media. After all, the two subjects were infused in him from an early age.

Growing up, Bryan's father, Howard, read the hometown *Baltimore Sun* cover to cover every day, and sometimes more than once. With his mother Renee, a stock broker, the family watched "The CBS Evening News With Walter Cronkite" each evening. "We always, always, always watched the news. That was mandatory," Bryan said.

So was discussing current events and the actions of government. Bryan's father, who spent much of his career in the going-out-of-business business—he'd travel the country helping furniture stores liquidate—was a political activist, and was even appointed by the mayor to serve on a city commission. "He was really part of, I'd say, the kitchen cabinet for some of the city officials," Bryan said.

In short, politics was a focal point for the family. Bryan notes that decades later, things haven't changed.

"To this day, we have some fiery debates at our Thanksgiving family reunions that go late into

the night," Bryan said with a smile. "And as much as I enjoy politics and love talking about it, often I can't take any more."

Not that his background made his entree into the media effortless. Bryan happily recounts his first broadcasting job, which soon led to his first broadcasting screw-up.

It was at a radio station in Worcester, Massachusetts, and on his first night, the part-timer was responsible for physically patching a Boston Celtics game to the listeners. But Bryan didn't realize he would be alone that evening, and hadn't paid close attention to which wires went where (in those days it was similar to being a telephone operator). The result was that after the game started, fans couldn't get the broadcast until Bryan managed to reach the station's general manager, who came in.

"I was actually instrumental in people missing a good part of one of the Celtics games," Bryan admits. "All of New England was calling."

It's safe to say, Bryan went up from there.

Mastering Social Dynamics

Dave Bryan was born Dec. 1, 1949, the oldest of three brothers. He attended Clark University in Massachusetts, though he acknowledges he was in a wandering stage. He later transferred to





For the L.A. Roundtable that he hosted at L.A.Cityview 35 in 2007, Dave interviewed Gov. Schwarzenegger just after he hurt his leg in a ski accident.

Dave has interviewed many politicians, including Al Gore during the 2000 Presidential campaign (left) and former L.A. Mayor Richard Riordan.

the University of Maryland, where he studied sociology, satisfying his interest in social dynamics.

After graduating in 1970, Bryan bounced around. He worked as a waiter at the Old Ebbitt Grill in Washington, D.C., and sent resume tapes “to every radio station in Washington and Baltimore.” He snagged a job doing evening news, complete with wacky sound effects, at WEAM, a top local rock station. He was fired off the air a month later, undone by nerves and an inability to effect a smooth radio delivery. “I sounded like a kid who hadn’t quite gotten to puberty yet,” he said with a hearty laugh.

Ironically, that ignited his career. Having WEAM on his resume led to a gig at WLMD, a small radio station in Laurel, Maryland, where he was the news director—as well as the sole news employee.

After a couple years paying his dues, he moved to a top radio station in Baltimore, WCBM, working drive time.

Bryan jumped to TV in 1978, joining Baltimore station WJZ as an investigative reporter. His first big scoop was on a heating oil rip-off, where drivers would run their meters without delivering the oil, burning both the impoverished customers and the city. The report made him part of a team that captured a prestigious Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award.

That time was a crucial learning period for Bryan, one where he picked up the nuts and bolts of doing television.

“On top of that, because I was investigative, I got to use a lot of those investigative techniques

“Being a reporter is as much a diagnosis as a job description.”

— Anna Quindlen,
author/journalist

Congratulations to Dave Bryan for joining a long list of distinguished honorees. Your contributions are appreciated and the respect of your peers is admired.

With love and affection,
Howard, Marilyn,
Louis and Wendy
Levine

QUINN AWARD **DAVE BRYAN**

about how to legitimize a story, how to document things, how to turn rumor and gossip and innuendo into a story if in fact there was a real foundation for it. I think in terms of learning skills that was the most important period of my life,” he said.

He stayed for five years, then went cross country, joining KPIX in San Francisco. He worked as a general assignment reporter, including covering a lot of politics. There he established relationships with figures whose power would endure for decades—in addition to reporting on Willie Brown, Bryan covered Dianne Feinstein when she was mayor of San Francisco and Barbara Boxer when she was a Marin County supervisor.

“Those relationships have served me well working here,” he said. “I know all these people. I just interviewed Willie Brown a couple of weeks ago and did a story on his views on running a city going bankrupt and how to get a dysfunctional legislature to work again.”

On to L.A.

These days, Bryan is Los Angeles’ best known television political reporter. He has been covering the city since 1990, starting with a job at Fox 11. In 1994, he joined KCAL9.

In his decades in Los Angeles, Bryan has covered literally every major story of local political importance, as well as most of those in the state and many national ones, too. In addition to covering four mayors and four governors, he was in Simi Valley in 1992, part of KCAL 9’s continuous coverage of the Rodney King trial.

“We literally went from covering the trial to covering the riots,” he said.

Bryan’s on-screen manner is informative, authoritative



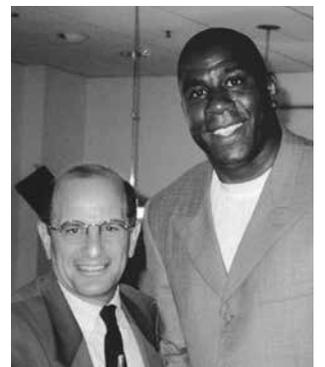
Dave Bryan with Stone Age cell phone.

and confident. Off air, he is kind, gracious and thoughtful, soliciting opinions and asking questions and then listening to the answers. It is quickly apparent that he cares deeply about the city and about journalism. He understands that what viewers of the evening news want is *content*.

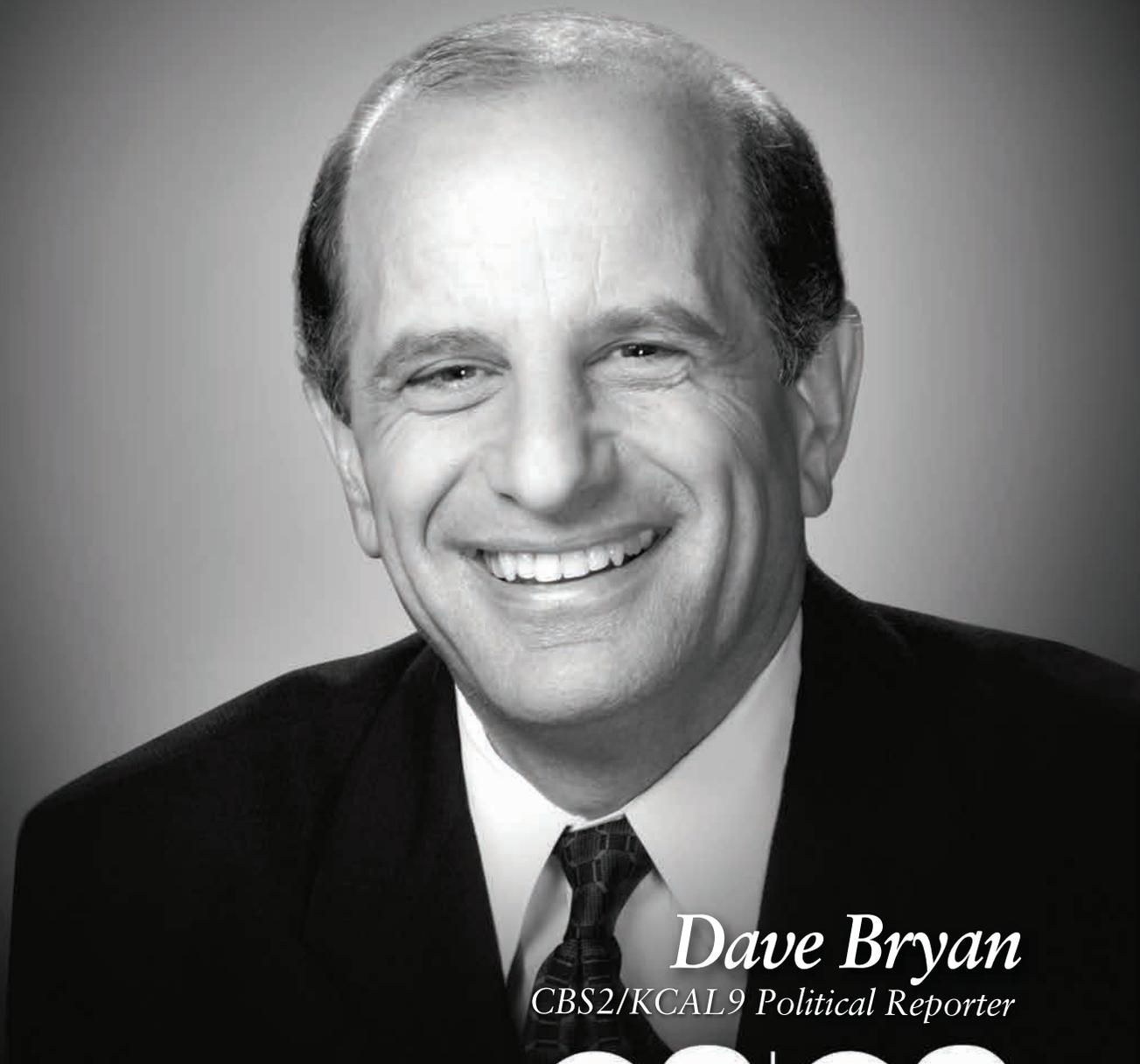
He has gone well beyond



Dave Bryan with legendary UCLA basketball coach, John Wooden, in 2006 and former Los Angeles Lakers star, Magic Johnson.



Recipient of the
***Joseph M. Quinn Award for
lifetime achievement***



Dave Bryan
CBS2/KCAL9 Political Reporter

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Winners Of This Year's
LA Press Club Award For
Television Journalist Of The Year



QUINN AWARD **DAVE BRYAN**



Dave Bryan
in Iraq and
Somalia.



Los Angeles to deliver that content. In addition to his local political work, Bryan has spent ample time sniffing out stories in Sacramento. He has also gone national, covering presidential elections and heading to Washington, D.C. to report on the Clinton impeachment proceedings.

Not that the country has contained him. Bryan reported from China in 1989, during the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square crackdown, and in 2003 was embedded with U.S. Marines during the Iraq War. One of his most memorable assignments was being stationed in Somalia in 1992, where a sort of cowboy aesthetic held sway.

"Not to be trite, but there are no rules, no procedures, no suits telling you what to do," he said. "Just dive bomb in, hit your satellite time and send the story back."

In Los Angeles, it hasn't been quite as rough and tumble, though then again, it has not been simple either. Like generations of those entranced by the city, Bryan has learned that things in the local political schema are often obfuscated. Asked about the key to covering Los Angeles, he utters the most memorable line from the 1974 film *Chinatown*.

"It's Chinatown, Jake," Bryan said. "It really is Chinatown in the movie sense. I think that's what makes covering Los Angeles so fascinating on the one hand and frustrating on the other, because it's not what it appears to be. That's what I like about politics in general. Politics is never what it appears to be. And I think that being able to sort of penetrate the outer perception layer and find out what's really behind things, what's really going on, what's really the driving force, is really the key to understanding Los Angeles."

If that sense of curiosity has served him well, it is not the only key to his success. Although Bryan's hours are 3-11:30 p.m. to meet the evening news schedule, it's rare when he isn't working. Even when not on the clock, Bryan is making calls, working the angles and looking for stories. Or he might be hosting a debate or moderating a Q&A.

"If I take the assignment, I'll go full bore," he said about the extracurricular activities. "It's an honor to be asked."

In a sense, Bryan's passion comes down to something simple. And any viewer can recognize that what he does today at 60 in Los Angeles can be traced to what he learned from his family so many decades ago in Baltimore.

As he put it, "You have to love what you do." 🐾