



The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences  
San Francisco/Northern California Chapter

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September  
2010

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## Dave McElhatton News Anchor, Dies at 81



**Dave McElhatton**, the longtime Bay Area broadcaster who went on to become the longest-tenured anchorman in the history of KPIX, died Aug. 23 at his home in Rancho Mirage, in Southern California. He was surrounded by family when he died from a stroke-related illness. He was 81.

Without question, McElhatton was a Bay Area broadcasting institution. A man who spent a half-century in the business, he worked the first 25 years of his career on the air at San Francisco's KCBS radio. Then, in his mid-40s, he switched gears and moved to television news, joining KPIX in 1975 as its main male anchor, remaining there until his retirement in 2000.

McElhatton was one of the most recognizable faces on Bay Area television. He was also known for his easygoing manner, professionalism and sense of humor.

An Oakland native, McElhatton graduated from Fremont High School in Oakland, and attended what

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## Kessler/Kohara to MC Gold & Silver 10/23



**John Kessler Sydnie Kohara**

The annual NATAS *Gold & Silver Circle* Induction Luncheon will feature a "two for one special" this year as the KPIX early morning "dynamic duo" of **Kessler and Kohara** take on the event's emceeing duties. **John and Sydnie** will follow in the footsteps of past Masters of Ceremonies including

**Ross McGowan, Dennis Richmond, Barbara Rodgers, Pete Wilson and Wendy Tokuda.**

The news anchor team will introduce the presenters for eight distinguished broadcasters who will be inducted into the NATAS San Francisco/Northern California Chapter *Gold & Silver Circle* on Saturday, **October 23, 2010.**

**Dick Block**, President, Block Communications Group, Inc. (*Silver Circle* 1999) will be inducted into the *Gold Circle*. *Silver Circle* inductees are: **Lynn R Friedman** - News Editor, KGO ABC 7; **Marty Gonzalez** - Weekend News Anchor, KRON 4; **Sidney Milburn** - Senior Producer/Director, KITV 4, Honolulu; **Joyce Mitchell** - Producer, 4 U Productions,

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## "What is your favorite news story that you worked on?"

Readers last month were asked to send in their favorite news story where they played a role. They could have been the reporter, engineer, producer, webmaster, or in some other way helped to get the story out to the public.



"The biggest and most memorable story of my career was, of course, the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. I was an editor at KGO news at the time, and



we won a Peabody for our coverage. It was a huge collaborative effort. Many foreign journalists were working out of our newsroom, and cutting in other languages and meeting worldwide satellite deadlines was quite a challenge. As a coda to that story, working as vacation relief talent that December I reported on folks hiking to the earthquake's epicenter. Doing my

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# Broadcasting Legend Dave McElhatton



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was then called San Francisco State College (now San Francisco State University). Weeks after graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree, McElhatton's career took off, landing his first job at KCBS radio.

At KCBS, he was a disc jockey and talk show host. In the early years at the station, McElhatton hosted an all-night radio show, *Music 'Til Dawn*. Later, in the early 1960s, he hosted *McElhatton In The Morning*, a blend of news and comedy. He also hosted *Viewpoint*, Bay Area radio's first telephone call-in talk show.

McElhatton also helped create the all-news format for KCBS, a format that remains successful for the station to this day.

In 1975, after 25 years as a recognizable voice on Bay Area radio, McElhatton took on a new role – TV anchorman – joining KPIX. His move from radio to television seemed ill-fitting at first, but KPIX stuck by him and he eventually adjusted to his new role in front of the camera. And, with that, viewers kept watching.

In 1980, KPIX found a winning formula with McElhatton when they paired him with **Wendy Tokuda** on the *Eyewitness News* anchor desk. Eventually, their newscasts became No. 1 with Bay Area viewers, performing what seemed before then to be the unattainable task of knocking perennial favorite KGO-TV to second place. The KPIX dominance lasted throughout much of the 1980s.

The McElhatton-Tokuda pairing would last until 1991, when Tokuda left the station to join KNBC in Los Angeles, eventually returning to Bay Area television in 1994. After Tokuda's departure, McElhatton co-anchored with **Kate Kelly** until his retirement in 2000.

During his 25 years at KPIX, McElhatton was on-air for many high-profile events, including the 1978 assassinations of San Francisco Mayor **George Moscone** and Supervisor **Harvey Milk**, the Jonestown massacre and the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake.

"Dave McElhatton resonated with his viewers and he had the unwavering admiration of his colleagues," says friend and longtime KPIX colleague, **Dave Mills**.

"He was as down to earth as you can get," Tokuda told the *San Francisco Chronicle* shortly after McElhatton's death. "When he was telling you news stories, they were about his neighborhood, his town, his world. He was in his place, and he was the Bay Area's anchorman."

"He was a very special man," said Kelly, who also spoke with the *Chronicle* shortly after McElhatton's death.

McElhatton was the recipient of numerous honors throughout his career, including an Excellence in Journalism Award in 1988 from the Northern California Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists for distinguished career achievement. He also received a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2003 from the Associated Press Television-Radio Association.

In 1988, he was inducted into the *Silver Circle* of the San Francisco/Northern California Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. He received the chapter's Governors' Award in 1999. McElhatton was also inducted into the Bay Area Radio Hall of Fame, as well as the Alumni Hall of Fame at San Francisco State University.

During his final newscast in November 2000, McElhatton said, "It's been a wonderful 50 years doing what I always wanted to do – work in broadcasting. And the frosting on the cake was to find out it was even better than I dared hope."

McElhatton spent his retirement years in the Riverside County community of Rancho Mirage, near Palm Springs.

McElhatton is survived by his third wife of 18 years, **Karen**, as well as two children and eight grandchildren. He was also married to **Bonnie Chastain**, a Bay Area radio personality who worked for many years at San Francisco's KOIT radio. She died in 1988. McElhatton's son, **Terry**, who was once news director at KNTV, died in 2008.

A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m., Wednesday, Sept. 8, at Calvary Presbyterian Church, 2515 Fillmore St., in San Francisco's Pacific Heights neighborhood.

In lieu of flowers, the family has asked that donations be made to the Dave McElhatton Scholarship in Broadcast Journalism at SF State University.