

# Harry Sweet, KCRA Photographer, 93

## *Silver Circle Inductee Was Sacramento's First TV Cameraperson*



**Harry Sweet** was the Sacramento Valley's first television news photographer. He was known for his many years at KCRA, but was also renowned as the man who had great foresight to keep his news footage, donating more than 25 years of Sacramento history on film to local archives.

The pioneering TV news cameraman died in mid-August from pneumonia, according to his family. Sweet was 93 years old.

In 1986, Sweet was inducted into the first class of the *Silver Circle* of the San Francisco/Northern California Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. In 1999, the Chapter honored Sweet with the Governors' Citation for his contributions to northern California television.

Sweet was a historic figure in broadcast journalism as the first television news photographer in the Sacramento Valley. He started at KCCC (now known as KTXL FOX 40) in 1953 and filmed the capital's first TV broadcast, which included a special greeting from Gov. **Goodwin Knight**. In 1957, he joined KCRA and went on to witness decades of history through the camera lens.

He filmed leaders and celebrities, including Presidents **John F. Kennedy**, **Lyndon B. Johnson**, **Richard M. Nixon** and **Gerald R. Ford**; five California governors; entertainment legends **Bob Hope** and **Bing Crosby**; and major sports stars. He filmed infamous figures, including death-row inmates **Caryl Chessman** and **Aaron Mitchell**, mass murderer **Juan Corona**, and **Patty Hearst** and her captors.

Sweet traveled more than two million miles on assignments in more than 30 countries - and survived five plane crashes. Besides innovating techniques in time-lapse photography and pioneering camera shots that are used today, he filmed a moving story with music about the Sierra Nevada ghost town of Bodie that won national recognition, says **Mel Boyd**, a former KCRA news photographer. .



"He was one of the nicest people you'd ever meet, and I think it was because he was a creative person," Boyd said. "He wasn't always trying to be first at things; he was trying to be good at what he did and to be innovative."

Sweet took home film cans from work "to keep a record of how I was progressing professionally," he told the *Sacramento Bee* in 1985.

Over time, he amassed hundreds of thousands of feet of news film that overflowed his closets, garage and backyard storage shed. When space limitations forced him to move his collection back to KCRA, he persuaded station officials to donate the footage to the city of Sacramento.

Before retiring in 1988, he spent four years editing and indexing the material for KCRA and for the Center for Sacramento History, the city's

archive. Today, the center's KCRA Film Collection contains more than 9 million feet of 16mm news film from 1957 to 1982, including images of historic regional and national events that have been licensed in major film documentaries.

"We thought he was a little crazy," former KCRA anchorman Stan Atkinson said. "Back in the '50s, we just thought you shoot the film, use it and throw it out. Harry had that sixth sense about history, and he knew it would be valuable in time."

In 1990, Sacramento station KQVR planned to dump more than 1,100 miles of news film in preparation for moving to its new studio in West Sacramento. Instead, Sweet rented a U-Haul van, retrieved the footage and drove it to California State University, Sacramento.

Today, the Harry Sweet Film Collection at the campus Library Media Center preserves footage of major events from 1967 to 1981 - including **Ronald Reagan's** 1967 gubernatorial inauguration, **Robert F.**

**Kennedy's** 1968 presidential campaign and the Hearst kidnapping - as a learning and research tool.

Born with a twin sister in 1920 to Armenian immigrants in Fresno, Sweet was 5 when his family moved to Sacramento. He graduated from Sacramento High School and worked as a watchmaker and in a civilian job at McClellan Air Force Base before going into broadcasting.

He married **Mauvis Allen** in 1942 and had four children. Although he traveled often for work, he was a devoted husband and father who "always had great stories when he got home and brought great souvenirs," his daughter Sue Norton said. A lifelong bowler with a 195 average in his 70s, he played the sport with his wife and children every Sunday for many years at Country Club Lanes.

"That was our family time," his daughter says. "Our motto was, 'The family that bowls together never splits up.'"

Sweet's wife of 61 years died in 2003. In addition to Norton, he is survived by three sons, **Michael, Mark** and **Tim Sweet**; 15 grandchildren; and 19 great-grandchildren.

A memorial service was held Aug. 31 in Sacramento.

*(The Sacramento Bee contributed to this article.)*



## KQED Newsroom Reunion Sept. 13 In S.F.

The second annual KQED Newsroom Reunion is happening in San Francisco on Sept. 13 at the Delancey Street Foundation, in the city's South of Market neighborhood, not far from the station's old Fourth and Bryant location and two blocks from AT&T Park.

Organizers say the reunion, between noon and 5 p.m., will feature a picnic lunch with water and soft drinks. There will also be a cash bar. The venue also features a 150-seat, state-of-the-art theater, where a KQED clip reel will be shown.

Cost is \$35 per person.