



Ysabel Duron, KRON 4



Class of '97

Silver Circle Profile
By: *Kevin Wing*

The fact that KRON anchor **Ysabel Duron** has been in television news for what will be 39 years this summer has to tell you something about her tenacity as a survivor in the business.

Back in the 1960s, there weren't a lot of women sitting in college classrooms across the country studying broadcast journalism. Duron, the longtime co-anchor of *KRON 4 Weekend*, who, along with partner **Marty Gonzalez**, has sat atop the Bay Area ratings on Saturday and Sunday mornings, says it wasn't easy when she first got started in the business.

"It wasn't easy for women," Duron says. "We had to earn the trust of the viewers. And we did. Now, women represent 70 percent of students enrolled in college broadcast journalism classes. My longevity has proven a lot of people wrong. It'll be my decision to leave the business one day, not theirs."

With nearly four decades under Duron's belt as an Emmy® Award-winning television news reporter and anchor, it's no wonder that the National Association of Hispanic Journalists recently nominated her to be among its elite Hall of Fame. Duron was inducted into the Silver Circle of NATAS' San Francisco/Northern California Chapter in 1997. She also received the chapter's Governors' Citation in 2000.

Duron's years in the business have certainly been interesting and well-traveled. She began in the fall of 1970, working as a news writer at Los Angeles' CBS owned-and-operated station, KNXT (now KCBS-TV). The following year, she launched her Bay Area broadcasting career when she joined KRON as a part-time news writer.

"**Dave Valentine** was the anchor back then, **Terry Lowry** did weather, writing backwards on the plexiglass weather board. That was my first tenure at KRON, and the experience was eye-opening given the few women and journalists of color," Duron says.

Six months later, she went across town to work for KPIX, working as a minority trainee as a reporter intern.

"It was during that time that I really got myself launched," Duron recalls. "I followed my colleagues

for six months, then I was on my own for the next six months." Her big break in her early career came in 1972, when she happened to be in the right place at the right time while covering the aftermath of the Soledad Brothers-**George Jackson** case, when his brother tried to break him out of San Quentin in one of the bloodiest shootouts in Bay Area history.

"I was covering the **Angela Davis** change of venue trial, who had been implicated in the case," she says. "I was there day in and day out. One day, I was the only reporter there, along with my photographer. At 3 that afternoon, the judge made his decision. I was more excited than anything, but I was absolutely freaked. That was my first big scoop."

Throughout most of the 1970s, Duron became known for her reporting and anchoring at Oakland's KTVU, which she joined in late 1972. Two years later, she would cover the **Patty Hearst** kidnapping for KTVU, "babysitting the Hearst mansion in Hillsborough every single day," she says. Eventually, the station would give her an opportunity to anchor, sharing the weekend desk with **George Watson** in the mid-1970s, and then with **Claud Mann**.

Her tenure at KTVU was a period of tremendous growth for her as a reporter. Weeks after the Jamestown massacre in Guyana in the fall of 1978, Duron was, once again, positioned to cover what was about to become one of the worst tragedies the Bay Area had ever seen up to that time: the assassinations of San Francisco Mayor **George Moscone** and Supervisor **Harvey Milk**.

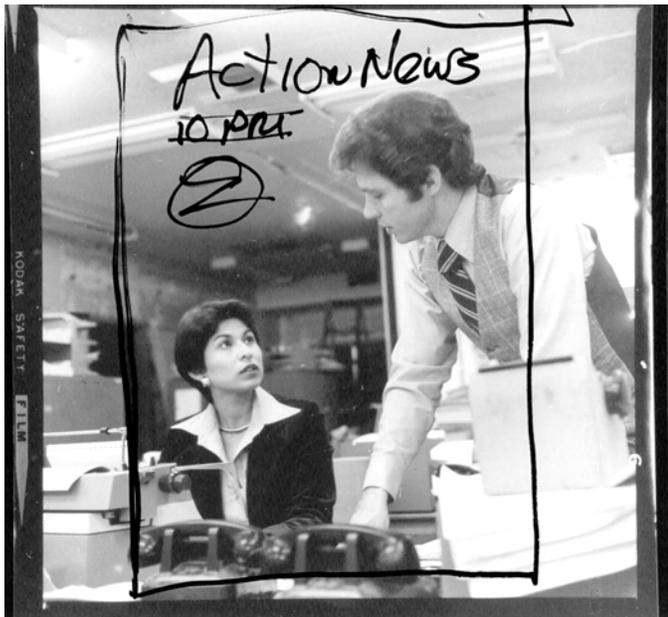
"That November day when Moscone and Milk were shot, I was in the Supreme Court covering a hearing on **Wendy Yoshimura** after she was captured along with kidnapped newspaper heiress Patty Hearst (the two were members of the Symbionese Liberation Army, which had orchestrated armed bank robberies in the Bay Area)," Duron recalls. "Wendy was in court on various matters related to her case. Then, the judge took a break. (KTVU cameraman) **Bill Moore** and I went to a coffee shop on Polk Street to wait until court would resume."

Duron and Moore were listening to the police scanner when they heard reports of a shooting at San Francisco City Hall. Racing down Polk Street at that point, the pair saw a flurry of police cars and flashing red lights in front of City Hall. It didn't look good.

Outside Moscone's office inside City Hall was his spokesman, **Mel Wax**, who was surrounded by reporters. Duron positioned herself to find out what had happened. It was only moments later that Moore alerted her that she was now live on the air.

"I took the mic and said, 'Mel, we're live on Channel 2, please tell us what's happening.'" And then suddenly, along comes (then Board of Supervi-

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Ysabel Duron &
George Watson, KTVU *continued from page 8*

sors President) **Dianne Feinstein** with the police chief taking Mel with me. I then turned to the camera, recapped everything I'd just learned, recapped what I knew of the relationship between Moscone and (former Supervisor) **Dan White**, and talking about how White quit, then went back to the mayor to get his job back. White was convicted of killing both men.

Through all the hustle and the immediacy of the moment, Duron remembers hyperventilating and barely making it through the report. "The next thing I know," she says, "I'm out in front of City Hall reporting live again for Channel 2. It was at that time that Bill got a shot of one of the two bodies bringing transported out of the basement. And then **Dennis (Richmond)** came over to join me. It was so wild and weird and crazy that day."

"It definitely was a crazy day," recalls Moore, now retired after more than 35 years as a cameraman for KTVU. "But, working with Ysabel was wonderful. She was smart and she was beautiful. I always loved it when I could work with her on a story. But, the station management at the time didn't appreciate what they had in her."

Duron would continue anchoring the news on weekends, but wanted a weeknight anchoring assignment.

"I tried to get weekdays on the anchor desk, but I couldn't," Duron says. After six years at KTVU, Duron left the Bay Area in 1979 to work for WBZ-TV in Boston, that city's NBC station at the time. She worked for the nation's first black news director, who "taught me about the politics of a newsroom." She anchored the station's new weekend morning show. She then moved to the weekend evening news.

The experience in Boston was short-lived, but Duron says it was an eye-opening experience. "My

news director was very supportive of me," she recalls. "That seemed very unusual for a news director to really care about what happened to me."

Finding herself out of a job in 1980, Duron returned to California and found herself spending several months on the beach. She was at a point in her career she calls "the intersection of her life."

But, it wasn't the Bay Area calling Duron back, just yet, at least. It was San Diego. The NBC affiliate there, KCST (now KNSD), hired her as a reporter. As it turned out, her time in San Diego would also be short-lived.

"I was at Channel 39 for nine months," Duron recalls. "Though I had some great assignments, San Diego wasn't very exciting."

Leaving San Diego in 1981, she returned to the Bay Area to team up with **Jan Hutchins** as co-anchors of a new newscast at KGSC-TV (now KICU-TV) in San Jose. "Jan and I started the newscast back in 1981," she says. "First, we were on the air at 7:30 p.m., but later, we moved our newscast to 10 o'clock."

Between the two co-anchors, Duron was the one who also hit the streets as a reporter for the station. "I did all the reporting," she says. "I covered the Coalinga quake (in 1983), the Democratic convention (in San Francisco in 1984) and then to Mexico City (in 1985) to cover the aftermath of the earthquake there. KICU and (news director) **Doug McKnight** certainly gave me the opportunity to do some good work. Good journalism is consistent growth, but also the ability to do the biggest stories and to move forward doing those bigger stories. Doug was willing to invest in good journalism.

Duron remained at KICU for more than five years, leaving in 1986 for a position as a reporter and anchor at WMAQ in Chicago, the nation's second-largest market at that time, where she launched the NBC O&O's first morning newscast.

"I have real fond memories of my time in Chicago," Duron says. "My very first story there was being sent to Mexico, about what was happening there and its economic impact on the U.S. I always wanted to be a foreign correspondent, so this was truly a dream for me. I got interviews with the Mexican government, the State Department." Back in Chicago, Duron would later do a series called *Closing Down America*, She reported and produced that series, and did all the research.

"That was a fascinating time, my time in Chicago," Duron says. "All along the way, there has always been an opportunity for me to do something that I've been proud to do... doing something that's worthy to get the public's attention. It's always been important to me to keep the level of journalism high."

Duron would remain in Chicago four years, returning to the Bay Area in 1990 to rejoin KRON, twenty years after she first set foot inside the

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station's Van Ness Avenue studios in San Francisco. This time, she was joining them as an anchor and reporter. The station's news director, **Al Goldstein**, wanted to place Duron in the South Bay Bureau to take advantage of Duron's strong community ties to San Jose. Then, the station became one of the first in the country to start a

weekend morning newscast. The newscast had already been on the air a year when Duron joined co-anchor **Mark Mullen** on the anchor desk, replacing **Renee Kemp**. Duron was then teamed with **John Kessler**, and eventually, her current co-anchor, Marty Gonzalez.

"We have always had an opportunity to fly with this morning show," Duron says. "We were there for the Oakland hills fire in 1991. We turned our cameras around to face the East Bay and we went live with our coverage. I cannot tell you how important it has been to have this morning show around on weekends. I've always felt proud of this show, and pleased. Marty and I click for a number of reasons, but the bottom line is we have mutual respect for one another.. as journalists and as human beings."

Other stations, like KPIX, KGO-TV and KNTV, eventually followed KRON's lead by launching their own weekend morning newscasts. But, it has been Duron and Gonzalez who have been the mainstay on Bay Area airwaves weekend mornings.

"Over the years, I could always count on Ysabel to make the newscast smarter, tighter and more relevant to a wide audience of viewers," says **Christina Ricci**, the former longtime KRON executive producer who worked with Duron on weekends. "Though Ysabel was an accomplished reporter and anchor with years in the business, she continued to work diligently at her craft, never taking it for granted. In an era of entertainment news, Ysabel would never stand for dumbing down a newscast. She held viewers in high regard."

"Ysabel is passionate about good journalism," says Gonzalez, her KRON co-anchor since 1996. "She is meticulous in her reporting and writing. Ysabel is always searching for the proper word or phrase that will better tell a story. As I look across an almost vacant newsroom at 5:30 on a Saturday or Sunday morning, I see Ysabel hunched over a computer terminal copy-editing or searching for new information on a story that will give viewers a fresh



lead."

Outside of her nearly four decades in television news, Duron has been extensively involved in the community, in particular the Latino community. And, she has devoted herself to educating the public about cancer.

"Since her battle with Hodgkins disease, Ysabel has become a tireless advocate for providing cancer information, education and resources to underserved members of the community," Gonzalez says. Duron founded Latinas Contra Cancer, which has played a vital role in improving the health of its clients.

As a woman who got started in TV news in 1970 when it was mostly a profession dominated by males, Duron has overcome many obstacles. "It was extremely tough in those early days. But, I have survived."

"Ysabel rose through the ranks when there were few women in the newsroom, and even fewer journalists of color," Gonzalez says. "Ysabel had to deal with racism and sexism in and out of the newsroom, and over 35 years later, she is still standing."



*(Bay Area television journalist **Kevin Wing** pens Off Camera's profiles on Silver and Gold Circle members. He is a casual news writer for "NBC Bay Area News" at KNTV/NBC 11 in San Jose.)*

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