



Ms Silver Circle: Terry Lowry



Class of 1996

Silver Circle Profile
By: Kevin Wing



It was a Saturday evening in April, 1971; **Terry Lowry's** debut on Bay Area television.

"I was so scared my mouth went dry," Lowry recalls, thinking back to 41 years ago when her television career as a weekend weathercaster on San Francisco's KRON Channel 4 was launched.

"Back then my predecessors and I were called "weather girls," and we periodically wore the latest fashion trend, "mini skirts." I was much shorter than **Karna Small**, KRON's weekday weathercaster, so they had me stand on a nice little riser. Management had me write backwards on plexiglass so I would always face the viewing audience," Lowry says.

Unlike the high-tech weather computers, whiz-bang gizmos and computer-generated weather maps and graphics that are typical of a television news-cast today, this was how the weather was presented to viewers in 1971. Writing on a large plate of plexi-glass with ugly, messy grease pencils – and doing it backwards – was a part of the genre of the era.

This was the auspicious beginning for Lowry's Bay Area career. Lowry, who was inducted into the *Silver Circle* of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences San Francisco/Northern California Chapter in 1996, was also honored with the Chapter's Governors' Award for her countless contributions to the industry, the Chapter and the community.

Lowry is a Bay Area native. She was born in Oakland. Her father was of Irish and Swedish descent and her mother was from Mexico, of Spanish descent. Lowry spoke only Spanish until she started Edwin Markham Elementary School. Her family, including her younger brother and sister, moved to San Francisco in 1958 when she was 11 years old. Lowry attended A.P. Giannini Junior High School and Abraham Lincoln High School in the Sunset/Parkside district before graduating *magna cum laude* from San Francisco State University with a Bachelor's degree in Spanish and a minor in International Relations.

"I had visions and dreams that were not realistic at that time," Lowry remembers. "I wanted to join

the United Nations, and I thought my Spanish-speaking abilities would help me along those lines."

Lowry's first job was at the Sears (Roebuck) at Geary and Masonic in San Francisco where she worked for seven years, mostly in the offices.

She decided to go into teaching, and, after graduating from San Francisco State, earned a Secondary Teaching Credential. Lowry student-taught at Lowell High School in San Francisco, filled in as a substitute teacher in Daly City schools and landed a full-time job at James Lick Junior High School in San Francisco as head of the Bilingual Department.

Shortly thereafter, an acquaintance, a San Francisco City and County Supervisor, who was active in the Latino community and was helping recruit an executive director for the Minority Broadcast Skills Bank, suggested she interview for the job. The Skills Bank had just been established in response to pressure from the FCC on broadcast stations to assist minorities in getting jobs at Bay Area radio and television stations. All the stations were participating. KRON was providing the space and staffing the office.

Aldo "Al" Constant, who was the station's Vice President and General Manager at the time, interviewed Lowry.

Lowry did not get the Broadcast Skills Bank job. Instead, Constant offered her a position on KRON-FM, doing Spanish simulcast translations of the KRON evening news. She accepted. It wasn't long before she moved on to co-anchor *Alma de Bronce*, a Spanish bilingual public affairs program with **Marcos Gutierrez** which gave the Bay Area Latino community a voice.

During this time, Lowry was still teaching at James Lick, working at Sears and simulcasting the news at KRON-FM.

In April of 1971, shortly after her 23rd birthday, she was offered the position of weekend weathercaster.

"It was very exciting to work in a newsroom," she says. "I was also very involved in the community, served on the boards of various non-profits

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and made countless personal appearances."

During her ten years at KRON, Lowry advanced from writing backwards on plexi-glass to hosting two weekly public affairs programs, presenting the weather on weekend evening newscasts, reporting, co-anchoring the noon news with **Paul Ryan** and **Ray Taliaferro**, co-anchoring the weekend newscasts with **Bob Jimenez**, **Alan Frio**, **Kevin McCullough** and **Fred LaCosse** (SC '88).

The mid-1970s were an exciting, tumultuous, unsettling time to be working in television news in the Bay Area.

Newspaper heiress **Patty Hearst** was kidnapped in February of 1974. **President Gerald Ford** was shot at by **Sara Jane Moore** during an assassination attempt in San Francisco's Union Square in 1975. In 1978, **Jim Jones** and his religious cult from the People's Temple gained prominence in the Bay Area; that was followed by the Jonestown massacre in Guyana. **San Francisco Mayor George Moscone** and **Supervisor Harvey Milk** were assassinated inside City Hall by former **Supervisor Dan White**.

"Just ten days after People's Temple, I remember driving into work at KRON that morning thinking — finally things were starting to calm down," Lowry recalls. "I had just arrived at work when then-assignment editor, **Vic Lee**, (SC '99) heard a call on the police radios and announced to the newsroom that there had been a shooting at City Hall. Reporter **Jeannine Yeomans** then took the tragic call in the newsroom from the reporter on the scene, **Rick Laubscher**, that Moscone and Milk had been killed by White.

It was at KRON that Lowry met her eventual husband-to-be, Fred LaCosse.

LaCosse (who will be featured in a *Silver Circle* profile in the March issue of *Off Camera*) had been working in Bay Area television since the early 1960s and in Chicago and Columbus before that.

He joined KRON in 1973, three years after Lowry. They worked together in the newsroom and became friends.

Lowry and LaCosse periodically got together for lunch or coffee, but it wasn't until the summer of 1978 that LaCosse invited Lowry out on a "real" date, a Saturday picnic luncheon at a club with a

couple hundred other people in attendance.

After that "first date" their relationship grew more serious, and their "dates" more discreet.

Eventually, LaCosse popped the question and Lowry said yes. The next step was to make the big announcement. "We knew we'd have to tell KRON management at some point," Lowry says. "Since there were virtually no married couples working on the air in those days, we feared one or both of us would get fired."

"So, Fred went to our boss, Vice President and General Manager, **Paul Wischmeyer**, to ask for my hand in marriage," she adds. "Paul was thrilled and we were relieved."

The two were married Sept. 29, 1979, at the First Unitarian Church — behind KRON. The newlyweds took off on a Hawaiian honeymoon and a visit to Fred's family in Indiana.

Not long after their return, AFTRA went on strike. All on-air anchors, reporters, announcers and directors stayed off the air. KRON management and off-air staffers filled in on the station's newscasts. The strike lasted for nine weeks.

Lowry and LaCosse eventually left KRON in December of 1980. LaCosse launched his production company, LaCosse Productions, Inc., and Lowry went on to work across town at KGO-TV Channel 7 to report and anchor weekend newscasts.

In 1982, the station decided it was time to revamp its *AM San Francisco* program. For seven years, *AM San Francisco* was anchored by another husband-and-wife duo, **Jim Lange** (SC '93) and former Miss America, **Nancy Fleming**. After Lange left the show (but not his marriage to Fleming), KGO-TV's **Jack Hanson** (SC '00, GS '08) co-hosted with Fleming.

Lowry was recruited to host the new incarnation of *AM* and her husband joined her soon after.

For five years, Bay Area viewers loved to watch "Fred and Terry." The show was a huge hit in the ratings.

"I'd get up at four in the morning, rack Terry out of bed with a special morning milk shake. We would then go off to our separate corners of the house to prepare for the show," LaCosse says.

"People often asked us how working together every day affected our marriage. Our answer:

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separate offices, separate cars, separate bathrooms and, most of all, separate interviews."

"During the entire five years of the show, we did our interview segments separately. We never interviewed anyone on the set together, with a few exceptions such as **Steve Allen** and **Jayne Meadows**."

Lowry says being on the show and meeting some fascinating people was a lot of fun. "We interviewed **Tony Bennett, Andy Williams, Jack Jones, Sammy Davis, Jr., James Brolin, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Red Skelton, Paul Newman, Charlton Heston, John Denver, Mark Harmon, Jane Fonda, Shirley MacLain, Julia Child, Wolfgang Puck, Leslie Nielsen...** and the list goes on and on."

In 1987, two years after Capital Cities had purchased ABC Television, Lowry and LaCrosse's contracts expired. LaCrosse returned to his successful production company, and Lowry was hired across the Bay at Oakland's KTVU, where she co-anchored the station's *Two at Noon* broadcast with **Eric Greene**. During this time, she also hosted the *Home Show* on KGO Radio.

In 1991, Lowry's role at the station's Jack London Square studios grew, but it also meant that she would need to get up a lot earlier in the morning. "Tough, when you are a night person," says Lowry.

KTVU was about to launch *Mornings On 2*, its early-morning answer to ABC's *Good Morning America*, NBC's *Today* show and CBS' morning newscast. *Mornings On 2* was the Bay Area's very first two-hour morning show.

Mornings On 2 debuted in January of 1991, with Lowry anchoring the news segments of the program

and Bay Area newcomer **Steve McPartlin** doing the hosting chores.

Less than a year later, Lowry left KTVU to work full-time with husband LaCrosse with their production company.

Her next move was to KICU-TV in San Jose where she hosted *Silicon Valley Careers* and *Silicon Valley Profiles*, from 1995 to 2002.

Lowry devotes a lot of her time (this is an understatement) to volunteerism. Here are a few examples: Member of Friends of Laguna Honda Hospital Volunteer Board of Directors; Chair of The Salvation Army annual Celebrity Bell-ringing in Union Square; Member of The Salvation Army Harbor Light Center Advisory Council; Member of the San Francisco/Northern California Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences since 1972; Longtime active member of the NATAS Board of Governors and currently the Chapter's treasurer; Chair of the NATAS *Gold and Silver Circle* Committee; Former board member of Broadcast Legends and current participant in the group's periodic radio recreation shows; Chair of her Abraham Lincoln High School Reunion Committee and co-founder of her alma mater's Alumni Association.

When she is not volunteering, she and LaCrosse love to travel. They have been to Europe, China and Mexico, and are hoping to add an African Safari, Egypt, Australia and New Zealand to their travel itinerary.

