

Fresno's Nancy Osborne



Silver Circle Profile
By: **Kevin Wing**



Nancy Osborne is a name synonymous with Fresno.

Behind that name is a popular, three-time Emmy® award-winning television anchor and reporter who is known as much for her longevity in the Fresno television market — and at one station — as she is for her independent-minded, can-do spirit and dedication to her craft.

This is Osborne's 32nd year in television news and with KFSN, making her one of an elite few across the country who has remained at a single station for such a long career.

She is a member of the NATAS Silver Circle Class of 2005 and serves as a regional vice president of our NATAS Board of Governors, representing Fresno.

As an Army brat, Osborne moved all over the country, wherever her father was stationed. The family eventually settled in New Mexico, where Osborne attended New Mexico State University and then moved to Fresno in 1973.

In the early-to-mid seventies Osborne became a fixture on Fresno television as the "Sun Stereo girl" — the on-camera spokeswoman in a series of commercials for a now-defunct chain of stereo stores. The production crew from KFSN shot the commercials for the stores. In 1976, KFSN General Manager, **Walter Liss**, spotted Osborne and saw in her a talent for communicating.

He took Osborne to lunch, proposing "this wonderful job to do weather three times a day." Osborne turned down the offer, citing the fact that it wouldn't fit her schedule as a single parent with a young daughter. To survive, Osborne was already working as a waitress, a spokesperson for the Sun Stereo commercials and a graduate teaching assistant at Fresno State University's theatre arts department.

Undaunted, Liss, who now runs all of ABC's owned-and-operated television stations (including KFSN ABC 30), came calling again in June of 1977.

This time he offered Osborne a reporter's job. Osborne accepted, but only with the understanding that she or the station could walk away from the arrangement after six months if either felt it wasn't working out.

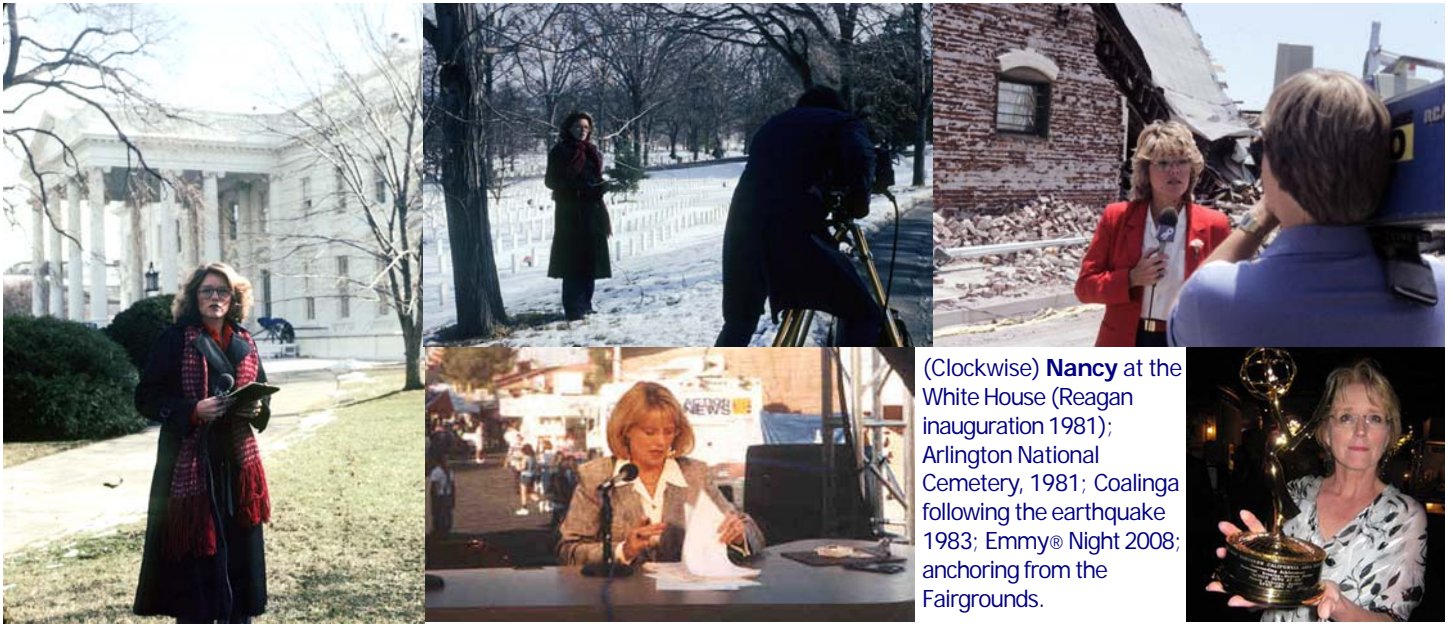
"I passed the writing test and everything," Osborne recalls. "But, I had no idea what I was getting into." Nevertheless, everything worked out during those first six months. "I quickly became addicted to the idea of bringing people the news, in whatever format that was," Osborne says. "But, I've never been fond of entertainment news, 'gotcha news' or salacious news."

Six months to the day of her hiring, Osborne found herself in the anchor chair. An anchor at that time quit the station, and management approached Osborne and told her, "You're anchoring on Monday." As it turned out, Osborne went on to anchor the station's 6:30 and 11 p.m. newscasts on weeknights with **John Wallace**. The team lasted seven years.

"We shot everything on film, and there were no prompters for the anchors back then," Osborne remembers. "But, with my background shooting those commercials, I was able to memorize my scripts as best as I could so that it looked natural when I was sitting at the anchor desk."

In 1980, Osborne accepted a wonderful opportunity at KFSN to host and produce *360*, the Fresno market's first magazine-style program. *360* aired on Sunday evenings, serving as the lead-in to CBS's *60 Minutes*. "It was truly a magazine show. It was about what was going on in the community... hard stories, soft stories, sunny stories. We did four or five segments or stories per half-hour show. We also did a point-counterpoint segment." To accommodate her schedule, Osborne stopped anchoring the 11 p.m. news, but still remained a familiar face on the 6 p.m. newscast.

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(Clockwise) **Nancy** at the White House (Reagan inauguration 1981); Arlington National Cemetery, 1981; Coalinga following the earthquake 1983; Emmy® Night 2008; anchoring from the Fairgrounds.

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"Doing that show was really fun," Osborne says. "It got me on a roll. We went on-location to so many different areas. I convinced the station to let me cover the landing of the first Space Shuttle flight. I reported its landing from the Mojave Desert. We did the 90th anniversary of Yosemite National Park. We drove all over California doing stories and specials."

360 lasted five years. "I still think **Anderson Cooper** got the title for his CNN program from my old show," Osborne jokes. Throughout the entire life of the show, Osborne continued to do double duty anchoring *Action News*.

Osborne's mantra of "no limitations" in her career and life destiny took on a defining moment in January, 1981, when the station sent her to Washington to cover the inauguration of **President Reagan**.

"It was a defining moment in my "no limitations" attitude," she says. "Limitations are defined by other people, but not by me. Covering the inauguration was so much fun. That was my first opportunity to see network news in operation. It was a learning curve for me, to meet deadlines outside the (California) time zone. And the transition from film to videotape brought with it the freedom to cover news from anywhere, so, no limits."

Since 360 ended in 1985, Osborne has continued to craft her unique style of reporting, and she has anchored every newscast at KFSN, with the exception of the morning news. She admits she is not a morning person.

"I would be like the anti-morning anchor," she jokes.

In the mid-1990s, in addition to her anchoring and reporting, she was named executive producer of special projects. For the next decade, Osborne's stamp was on practically everything that was churning out of the newsroom.

"I was the shepherd of all things that don't run today," she says. "I got to do everything, including

election coverage. It was heaven. I was able to help people in the newsroom learn. But, I was still anchoring throughout this entire time, and at some point, I realized I couldn't do both any longer."

During Osborne's tenure on Fresno television, there have been opportunities to move to larger markets. But, she has chosen to stay. Today, Osborne continues to write and report several stories a week and anchor *Action News at 5 p.m.*, which is, by far, the top-rated newscast in Fresno in that time period.

"There's a benefit to staying in the same community," she says. "A reporter is nothing without multiple, meaningful contacts in the community in which they work and serve. If you're not involved personally in some activity in the community, or connecting with the people who make up that community, then you're not doing your job. Every story, every human being you come into contact with, everybody is a source. I never leave an interview without leaving a card and telling that person that I'm interested in everything. I tell them that if they know of someone who's doing something interesting, I want to know."

After 32 years doing the news in Fresno — all of that time at the market's No. 1 news station — Osborne is still in disbelief.

"I still can't believe my good fortune," Osborne says. "Every day is an adventure. I love this job."

The Silver Circle
25 years



The Gold Circle
50 years

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