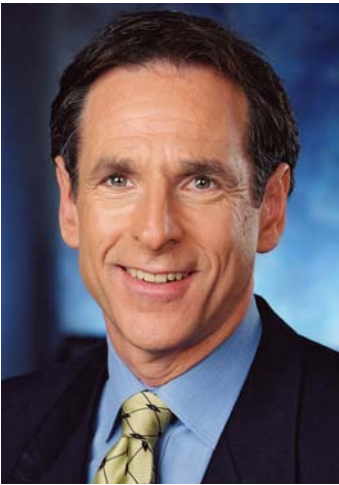


The Politics of Randy Shandobil



Class of 2010

Silver Circle Profile
By: Keith Sanders



Randy Shandobil (*Silver Circle Class of 2010*) retired from KTVU Channel 2 on November 23rd.

He was a producer who became a general assignment reporter. But Shandobil eventually became one of the most respected political reporters in the business.

He's known for asking tough questions no matter whom he interviewed, and used follow up questions like a sculptor uses a chisel, to expose the true image of his subject.

"By doing my homework and anticipating answers to my initial questions," said Shandobil, "I was often able to get to more revealing answers in my follow up questions. It was frequently at that point the candidates' handlers would announce 'time is up!'"

Randy first started at KTVU News in 1978 as *The Ten O'clock News* producer. "When I first started reporting (in the early '80s) I, like most broadcast reporters in the Bay Area, was a general assignment reporter," he said.

KTVU Assignment Editor **Jay Martinez** was to become a long-time associate. "Over the many years Jay and I worked together, we built up a trust," said Randy. "That mutual trust led me as a reporter to try some stories out of my safety zone so to speak, and provided Jay with more diversity in his daily run down. I think we pushed each other in a good way."

"He writes to pictures as well as anyone in the business" said Martinez.

Back in the '80s Randy reported on all types of stories, including a tongue-in-cheek one about a new cologne that was supposed to make women swoon.

But Shandobil was always ready when a serious story came his way. Early on, he built a reputation for asking tough questions.

KTVU photographer and colleague **Tony Hodrick** remembered, "He'd always ask the hardest questions." He'd be at a press conference and no one would ask the big question, but after he did, everyone would use his sound bite."

"Aside from being a great photographer, Tony's gentle demeanor and good humor always puts

people who otherwise might be intimidated by news cameras, at ease, said Shandobil. "He made it easier for me to ask tough questions."

As a general assignment reporter he did his share of serious topics including his work on **Bhagwan Shri Rajneesh's** cult in Oregon, which resulted in threats on his life.

In 1989, Jay Martinez asked Randy to view the devastation of the Loma Prieta Earthquake. Just minutes after it hit, Randy described what he saw from a helicopter above the Cypress Freeway. "This is truly one of the most depressing, frightening sights one could possibly imagine," reported Randy.

"It was one of the best stories he'd ever done," said Jay.

But Randy believed that general assignment reporters were at a competitive disadvantage when covering politics and government. "Full time political reporters know that often the story isn't what a politician says but rather what the politician avoids saying," he explained. "But it is hard to penetrate those political hidden agendas if the day before you were reporting on a murder and the day before that on a fire."

So over time, Randy started volunteering to cover more political stories. "Most other reporters at KTVU didn't mind because many considered political stories boring," he remembered.

Randy Shandobil became KTVU Channel 2's Political Editor during the 1998 California campaign for Governor. "Like **Bob Mackenzie** and **Rita Williams**, he always got both sides of the story," said Hodrick. "He doesn't put his own politics into his stories."

He's interviewed many presidents and presidential hopefuls, mayors and governors. **Jerry Brown** and **John McCain** were two of his favorites.

"Most politicians are extremely cautious in television interviews, afraid to make a mistake," said Shandobil. "Jerry Brown and John McCain are two rare politicians who often threw caution to the wind and actually tried to answer questions candidly. Brown has been like that throughout his career. McCain was like that during his 2000 presidential

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campaign, but much less so in his 2008 campaign.”

In contrast, “President **Bush**, who I interviewed several times, was fascinating because he was always warm, charming and self-deprecatingly folksy as we were setting up for the interviews but then became maddeningly rigid and evasive during the interview.” Randy remembers. “Rather than the light switching on, with President Bush the light seemed to switch off.”

In September 2003, Shandobil moderated the first debate for the California Recall election. In the 2002 Governor’s race, he was a panelist for the only debate between California Governor **Gray Davis** and his Republican challenger, **Bill Simon**.

A national panel of judges unanimously selected Shandobil for the Walter Cronkite Award for Excellence in Television Political Journalism in 2005 for his coverage of the 2004 presidential campaign. It was the second consecutive Cronkite Award for Shandobil. He also won in 2003 for his coverage of the 2002 California Governor’s race.

Besides his eight Emmy® awards, Randy has also received the Gold and Bronze Medals at the New York International Film and Television Festival, the Freedom of Information Award from the Society of Professional Journalists, and the California Journalism Award for excellence in political reporting four times, most recently in 2003.

In November 2007, Shandobil won the Society of Professional Journalists “Career Achievement Award.”

Last year Shandobil moderated the televised U.S. Senate debate between **Barbara Boxer** and **Carly Fiorina** at St. Mary’s College in Moraga, and

asked both candidates tough questions on the issues.

Randy believes that the most frustrating interviews are often with first-time political candidates. “The newcomers are the ones who rely most heavily on pre-rehearsed answers and almost never answer actual questions,” he said. “The most recent example: **Meg Whitman**, an intelligent woman with some intriguing ideas, but interviewing her never seemed to make for interesting TV.”

So why did Randy leave KTVU last year when he was at the top of his profession? He said for precisely that reason: he’s still going strong and after 32 years of deadlines, he’s decided he wants to try something new.

So here’s a follow up question for Randy, “What’s next?”

Hopefully the Bay Area has not seen the last of Randy Shandobil.

