

Prior to her time in San Diego, she worked briefly as a reporter and weekend anchor at WBZ-TV in Boston. From 1972 to 1979, she was an anchor and reporter at KTVU in Oakland, where she received an Emmy® award in 1974 for her coverage of the **Patricia Hearst** kidnapping.

Beginning as a news writer at what is now KCBS-TV (formerly KNXT) in Los Angeles, Duron moved to the Bay Area in 1971 to join KRON as a writer. She then spent a year as a reporter at KPIX, also in San Francisco.

In 1997, Duron was inducted into the *Silver Circle* of the San Francisco/Northern California Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for her significant contributions to the Bay Area television community.

Silver Circle Profile: James Stimson



GOLD & SILVER CIRCLE PROFILES

by Kevin Wing



"TV news has been a big part of my life," says **James Stimson**, assistant news director at Sacramento's KCRA.

And, for nearly 40 years, Stimson has been a big part of KCRA's.

There aren't many television journalists like Stimson who have remained with a station as long as he has. His tenure at the powerhouse NBC affiliate has another professional distinction: it's the only place Stimson has ever worked at.

The five-time Emmy® Award-winning newsman has worn many hats since his arrival there in 1974. Stimson, who was inducted in 2008 into the *Silver Circle* of the San Francisco/Northern California Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, has also served as a news writer, assignment editor, office manager, field producer, weekend reporter, news producer, senior producer and executive producer.

Born in Pasadena and raised in nearby San Marino, Stimson caught the broadcasting bug as a young boy.

"I was fascinated with television and broadcasting," he explains. "I could see the TV towers atop Mount Wilson from my

bedroom window. I was fascinated with live TV coming into my house."

Growing up near the Rose Bowl and seeing the famed parade march its way through the streets of Pasadena, Stimson was more interested in watching the TV crews cover the event.

"I would wander away and watch the TV crews at work," he says. "I was fascinated with the whole idea of TV production and live broadcasts. I grew up watching us go to the moon. I watched KTLA's coverage of the Watts riots. By the time I was in the sixth grade, I was listening to (radio news stations) KFWB and KNX. The news bug hit me pretty early in life."

Television took on a certain type of importance in Stimson's years of growing up in southern California.

"Something about it.. it just seemed exciting and important," he recalls. "I remember when **(President John F.) Kennedy** was killed. The family was gathered around the TV that entire afternoon. I was at school in the fifth grade when I heard what happened. I learned a new word that afternoon - assassination."

As the young Stimson grew older, he was "addicted" to the Watergate hearings. "It was real stuff, and real people, doing real things. Definitely an interesting time in our nation's history," he says.

Stimson eventually moved to northern California to attend the University of California, Davis, where he went to study engineering. But, after one quarter, he learned he wasn't cut out for an engineering career.

"The university had a radio station," Stimson says, "so I wandered down there to see what they did. As it turned out, they needed help. They asked me if I could push buttons and open microphones. I had a ham radio license in high school. Soon, I began working at the station and doing news there.

Stimson grew very comfortable with his job at student-run KDVS Radio. And, he was valued there so much that he eventually became news director.

"That was during Watergate, and the **Patty Hearst** kidnapping, and the SLA (Symbionese Liberation Army). We traded stuff with other campus radio stations, and worked out some deals to which we could carry presidential news conferences, live," Stimson says.

He parlayed his experience at university radio station into an internship at KCRA Radio in Sacramento. The year was 1974.

Living in Davis at that time, Stimson didn't own a car, so he took a Greyhound bus to work every morning.

"It would drop me off downtown, and I'd go to the radio station and do morning drive," he says. "I had a split shift, and I did afternoon drive, too, but instead of taking the bus home, I would hang out at the *Associated Press* office and freelance for ABC Radio and NBC Radio and give soundbites for free. It got me the press credentials. Soon, I was doing SOTs and packages. NBC Radio News had just launched its all-news radio network. It was an exciting time. **Jerry Brown** was governor. He was dating **Linda Ronstadt** at that time, too."

A year later, he became an employee at the radio station, staying for an additional three years.

Stimson's big break came on Sept. 5, 1975, when **President Gerald Ford** was in Sacramento to give a speech to the state Legislature.

"That day, I tried to get a soundbite from Ford, but that didn't happen," Stimson says. "What did happen was that **Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme** tried to kill the President. It was the woman in the red dress who pulls a gun on the President. That's how AP got the story out of Sacramento."

In 1978, Stimson jumped ship, sort of. He moved from KCRA Radio to KCRA Channel 3.

At Channel 3, Stimson worked on the assignment desk in the morning, then wrote for the evening newscasts. He also produced the station's 5 p.m. newscast on Saturdays.

Eventually, Stimson would produce the noon newscast, before being returned to the weekday 5 p.m. news. From 1980 to 1990, Stimson was one of the station's top, talented news producers. It was enough to propel him to executive producer of every KCRA newscast.

In 2000 - 26 years after first walking through the door as an intern for KCRA Radio - Stimson became assistant news director of KCRA Channel 3.

In the industry, Stimson - and KCRA - are known for setting high standards in the KCRA newsroom.

"Our slogan, from day one, has been 'where the news comes first', but it's so much more

than just a slogan," Stimson says. "You have to make good on it, or it's just a slogan. There are commitments to covering news. It sends a message to our viewers, and to our staff, and to everyone. We have had the kind of leadership to make these kinds of commitments."

The goal, through the years, is to brand KCRA in such a way that Sacramento-area viewers know which station to watch when it comes to news.

"Viewers have always said that if there's something big happening, anywhere, let's go to KCRA," he adds. "We have the commitment from the ownership of our station, and we have the support. It's the culture of who we are. And, viewers expect this from us."

That kind of mantra has helped turn KCRA into a ratings powerhouse through the years. The station has, for most of its 58 years on the air, dominated the Sacramento market in the ratings.

But, Stimson is cautious not to dwell on the numbers.

"If you worry about ratings all of the time, you're not doing your job," he explains. "If we are being responsible to the communities we serve, and we're doing all things right, the ratings will take care of themselves."

Stimson explains this is a good way to run an organization, like KCRA.

"First and foremost, we have a responsibility to the people who turn to us for the news," he says. "Whether it's TV, online, or mobile, we have a responsibility to them, just as we have a responsibility to our colleagues here. We value their opinions and input. We have the ability to affect a lot of good to help various organizations in need, to shine light in dark places, to give voices to people who may not have strong voices."

Naturally, as the years have passed, the faces of those who deliver the news to viewers of KCRA have changed.

Stimson says something that hasn't changed is the high standards KCRA has set for itself when it comes to reporting the news.

"What hasn't changed here is good reporting, good pictures, good interviewing, good writing, and we always ask ourselves if we're doing the right thing," he says. "We still have these conversations. This part of the business hasn't changed. The gizmos and the whiz-bangs have had an effect on how we deliver the news, and we've got some remarkable tools. When I started, we had typewriters."

KCRA has certainly been committed to full and complete coverage of numerous events on national and international levels as well as on a local level.

"Take, for example, the Super Bowl. The Niners were in the Super Bowl for the first time in years. We put a lot of resources into it. We sent four crews to New Orleans. NBC wasn't carrying the Super Bowl this year, but we wanted to be the Super Bowl station. We did a one-hour special the night before the game, and when the game was finally over, we were on the air with our own special," Stimson explains.

"When the tsunami happened, it occurred during our 11 p.m. news," Stimson says. "We stayed on all night. We started pulling in resources. We called our reporters and photographers at 2 in the morning. Not everyone answered the phone, but everyone called back. We ended up being on the air for 15 or 16 hours until we knew the worst had passed us."

While Stimson's work is a big part of his life, he does like to "tinker around" at home, in Davis.

"I like working with my hands. I garden on weekends. I'm away from the sounds and fury of the newsroom out there, and it's very calming," he says.

But, the recipient of those five Emmy® awards (and more than 45 Emmy® nominations) and **Edward R. Murrow** and Radio Television News Director Association awards can certainly admit that TV news is a "24-hour-a-day business."

"I've had the very good fortune to work with some very talented people," Stimson says proudly.

And, for 39 years, KCRA has had the good fortune and honor to have someone like Stimson in their newsrooms. Much of KCRA's success is because of him.



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The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences
San Francisco/Northern California Chapter



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The *Gold Circle* honors individuals who have been actively engaged in television broadcasting for 50 years or more (with at least half of those years in the chapter region) and who have fulfilled the same criteria as *Silver Circle* nominees. *Gold Circle* inductees are elected by the NATAS Chapter Board of Governors.

Neither the candidate nor the nominator need be a member of NATAS.

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