



Hugh Downs

Hugh Downs, one of the most familiar American television figures in the history of the medium, was anchor for ABC News' 20/20 from 1978 to 1999, concentrating on issues of medicine, science, family, adventure, aging, space and the arts.

Selections of Downs' widely acclaimed adventure stories and travels around the globe—trademarks of his 21 years with the program—have been aired in special anniversary editions in 1988, 1993 and 1998. Among others, segments on glider aerobatics, diving features, covering marine archeology, the Great White Shark (from a cage) and visits to underwater habitats; taking the same astronaut training as John Glenn to cover Sen. Glenn's return to space in 1998.

In 1990, Downs anchored a one-hour ABC News Special, "Depression, Beyond the Darkness," which focused on a devastating illness that afflicts as many as 20 million Americans each year. The broadcast examined how the illness can be treated and how individual sufferers and their loved ones cope with the trouble it brings. In 1991 the American Psychiatric Association honored Mr. Downs with its Robert L. Robinson Award for his work on this Special.

Mr. Downs anchored a one-hour Special "The Poisoning of America", in 1988 as part of the critically acclaimed "Burning Questions" series. This program explored in depth the problems and visible damage we are faced with on land, in the air and in water, and how these changes in the environment may affect our lives in the future. This Special won Mr. Downs his second Emmy Award. In 1985, Hugh Downs hosted a three-hour ABC News Close up documentary, "Growing Old in America", which examined the problems and harsh realities facing millions of America's aged and their families.

Mr. Downs has enjoyed a distinguished career in radio and television as a reporter, newscaster, interviewer, narrator and host. In 1985 he was certified by the Guinness Book of World Records as holding the record for the greatest number of hours on network commercial television. His record of over 10,000 hours still holds.

Among a number of Emmy Awards Mr. Downs has received was one for his work as host of the PBS program "Over Easy"; a daytime Emmy Award for "Live from Lincoln Center", which he hosted for a decade; and for a 1989 in-depth interview with Patty Duke about her struggle with manic depression.

ARA Living Services presented Mr. Downs with their 1991 National Media Award for "excellence in long-term health care reporting" for his 20/20 segment on the problems families face when attempting to place loved ones in quality-care nursing homes.

Hugh Downs holds certificates in Social Gerontology (Hunter College) and Geriatric Medicine (Mt. Sinai Medical School)

He is the recipient of the National Headliner Award of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the 1985 Award of Merit from the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the National Council on Family Relations Film Award for his "20/20" report, "Diet

Unto Death: Anorexia Nervosa"; The Carr van Anda Award for "enduring contribution to journalism", and Emerson College's Joseph E. Connor Award.

Mr. Downs was host of NBC's TODAY Show from 1962 to 1971, interviewing statesmen and leaders from around the world. He hosted and narrated a number of NBC News Documentaries and specials, including "The American Wilderness (1971); "The Everglades" (for which he won an Emmy; "The Ice People" (1970); "The Great Barrier Reef" (1970); "Survival on the Prairie (1970); and "The First Americans" (1969).

He is the author of ten books.

Hugh Downs was born in Akron, Ohio. He began his broadcasting career as a radio announcer in Lima, Ohio at the age of 18. After serving in the U.S. Army, he joined NBC in Chicago as a staff announcer, and joined the "Home" Show in New York in 1954. From 1956-57, Mr. Downs was announcer for NBC's "Caesar's Hour" starring Sid Caesar. In July, 1957, he helped launch the TONIGHT Show with Jack Paar and stayed with the late-night series for five years. In August 1958 Mr. Downs became host of the daytime game program "Concentration", a role he continued when he began his TODAY Show appearances.

Mr. Downs lectures at Arizona State University and throughout the country on a wide range of subjects. He has honorary doctorate degrees from St. John's University, the University of Maryland, Daniel Webster College in Nashua New Hampshire, North Adams State College, Massachusetts, Westminster College, Fulton, Mo., and Hunter College of the City University of New York.

His books display an enormous range of interests and experiences: *Yours Truly, Hugh Downs* which he describes as 'a premature autobiography' (Holt, Rinehart & Winston); *Rings Around Tomorrow*, a collection of science articles he authored for science periodicals (Doubleday); *A Shoal of Stars*, his account of sailing a 65-foot ketch across the Pacific (also Doubleday); *Potential*, a study of human emotional maturity; *Thirty Dirty Lies about Old*, which debunks the myths about aging; *The Best Years Book* a manual on late years' planning; *On Camera: My 10,000 Hours on Television*; *Fifty to Forever* a philosophy and planning guide for later years; *Perspectives*, a collection of more than 50 of his best received essays on ABC Radio; *My America: What America Means* to me through the eyes of 150 people of high visibility, published by Scribner/Simon & Schuster, shortly after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

He has written a book for Scribner titled *Letter to a Great Grandson*, inspired by his grandson who was born in 2002.

Mr. Downs has chaired the Research and Education Committee of the Geriatrics Advisory Council of Mount Sinai Medical Center, is a member of the Board of Overseers of the Brookdale Center on Aging of Hunter College, chairs the Board of Governors of the National Space Society, is chair emeritus of the United States Fund for UNICEF.

When Arizona State University upgraded their Department of Communications to a School, they named it The Hugh Downs School of Human Communication.

He and his wife Ruth make their home in Paradise Valley, Arizona. They have two children, two grandchildren, and three great grandchildren.