

Journalism Milestones

—Arnold Cheyney

Jim Lehrer

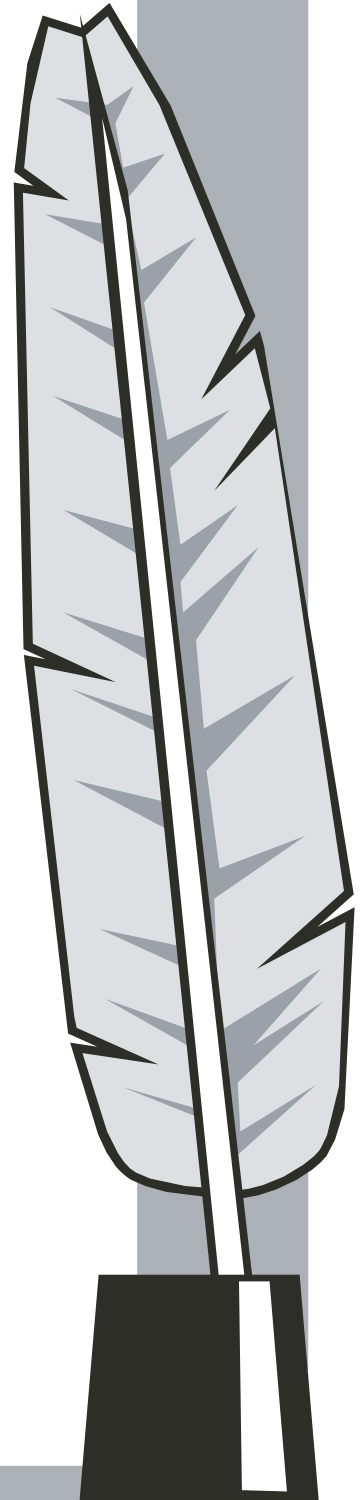
Jim Lehrer was born in Wichita, Kansas on May 19, 1934. Because his father had served in the Marines, Jim and his brother learned The Marine's Hymn, the art of standing straight, and the meaning of the Marine Corps motto, Semper Fidelis (often shortened to Semper Fi, it means "always faithful.")

Lehrer was accepted at the University of Missouri School of Journalism. In the summer break between his junior and senior years, Jim went to Quantico, Virginia to begin training as a Marine officer. The drill instructor (DI) called the roll of those in the summer training program. When his last name was incorrectly pronounced, he instinctively yelled his name back properly. There was a distinct silence. The only sound was that of the DI's shoes striding across the asphalt toward Jim. The tongue-lashing ended with, "Candidate, if I say your name is Little Bo Peep, it is Little Bo Peep. Do you hear me?" The answer was a quick, "Yes, sir!"

After graduating from college, Lehrer spent three years on active duty as a Marine officer. Some of that time was on Okinawa, where the last battle of WWII took place. He spent his last six months at Parris Island in South Carolina as officer-in-charge of *The Boot*, a weekly newspaper for Marines.

In the summer of 1959, Lehrer began his journalism career at *The Dallas Morning News*. In the following decade, he covered news of automobile wrecks, house fires, firemen trying to revive children they carried from burning homes, and even interviewed Elvis Presley. In 1963, he covered the assassination of President Kennedy. Lehrer also wrote fiction along with his work as a journalist. One of his books, *Viva Max!*, published in 1966, later became a movie. By 1970, he anchored a news show on a local PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) station. By 1973, Jim worked for the PBS network and two years later shared the MacNeil/Lehrer Report with Robert MacNeil. This has now become *The NewsHour* with Jim Lehrer.

Lehrer moderated ten debates for candidates vying for the Presidency of the United States. CNN's Bernard Shaw gave him the nickname, "Dean of Moderators." In 1999, he was awarded the Presidential National Humanities Medal.



An area of continuing interest to him over the years is buses. In college he was a Trailways ticket agent. His father was a bus driver and for a short time operated a bus company. Lehrer supports bus museums in Williams, California and Hershey, Pennsylvania. His wife Kate Lehrer is a novelist. They have three children and six grandchildren.

Learning Activities

Language Arts

Read the biography again and list ten positive characteristics that you think Lehrer has. Use a thesaurus or dictionary to help you. Put the list in order of importance to you with 1 being most important. Compare and contrast your list with those of your classmates.

Semper Fidelis was adopted as the motto of the Marines in 1883. If you had a motto, what would it be? Why do you think they chose, "Always faithful?"

Social Studies

Lehrer has been many places in his lifetime. With a classmate, search for the location of each place mentioned in this biography. Find out one fact about each place.

Media

Read about the Marine Corps online or in a reference book. Write an essay about what they do.

Book to Read:

Lehrer, Jim. *A Bus of My Own*.
New York:
G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1992.

