

Journalism Milestones

—Arnold Cheyney

Theodore “Teddy” Harold White

Theodore, or “Teddy,” as he was often called, was born on May 6, 1915. His father, a Russian Jewish immigrant had settled in Boston with his wife, Mary, in the 1890’s. Teddy remembered the great strength of his father. He would bend nails with his fingers, which delighted Teddy. He also remembered his father telling him about the revolution in China and how the people there were fighting imperialism. His father died of a heart attack when Theodore was sixteen years old.

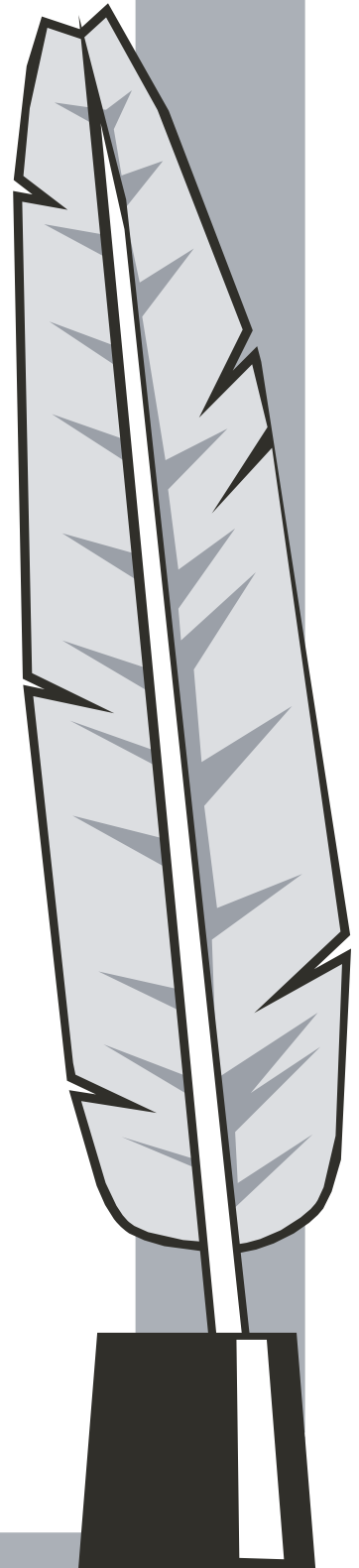
Theodore helped to care for his mother, two brothers, and a sister by selling newspapers on streetcars – his initial entrance into journalism. For two years he rode the trolleys for hours each day selling newspapers for two cents apiece. When he collected two dollars, he could keep seventy cents.

By 1934 he received a scholarship to Harvard University and a grant from the Newsboy Foundation. At Harvard, he majored in Chinese history. In 1938, he graduated from Harvard summa cum laude. After graduation he was awarded a Sheldon Traveling Fellowship and traveled to Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. Along the way he wrote articles for the *Boston Globe* and the *Manchester Guardian*. Then he worked for the Chinese Information Committee.

Journalism became his passion and he became a stringer for Time magazine. By 1940, he moved up to staff reporter. When the United States entered WWII, he returned to Asia as a war correspondent and chief of Time’s Asian Bureau. By 1946, his book, *Thunder Out of China*, written with Annalee Jacoby, was selected by the Book-of-the-Month Club and became a best seller.

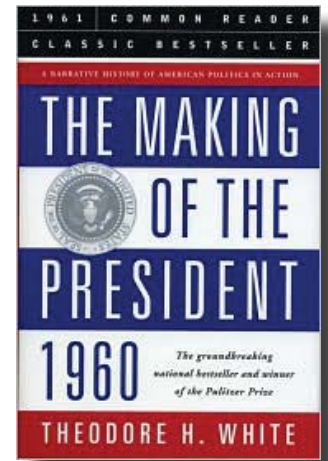
In 1951, Theodore was the European correspondent for the *The Reporter* magazine. He covered stories in post -World War II countries. His book *Fire in the Ashes* was another Book-of-the-Month Club choice. He also wrote on many topics for magazines such as the widely read *Colliers* magazine. The emerging national highway system in the United States and articles on aviation were especially interesting to him.

In the mid 1950’s, he turned to fiction writing. One book was set in China, *The Mountain Road* (another Book-of-the-Month Club selection) and became a movie.



The work for which Theodore White is best known is *The Making of the President, 1960*. He followed seven major candidates for more than a year analyzing their speeches, strategies, and those interesting things that happen in the daily routine of the candidates seeking to be President of the United States. The book sold more than four million copies over the years and earned him over a half million dollars. This success was followed with a series of books of this nature in the 1964, 1968, and 1972 campaigns for President.

Theodore White received over twenty journalism awards, two Emmys for television writing, and a Pulitzer Prize in 1962. He had two children by his first wife and dedicated his 1978 autobiography, *In Search of History: A Personal Adventure*, to his second wife. A stroke took his life in New York City on May 15, 1986.



Learning Activities

Language Arts

- Make a list of the following words found in this biography and write after each one its dictionary definition as it is used here: imperialism, trolley, summa cum laude, Pulitzer Prize, autobiography, stringer.

Mathematics

- How much money did the newspaper receive when Teddy sold one hundred newspapers?

Social Studies

- What foreign language would you prefer to learn as a second language? Read about the country where that language is the major language spoken. Search in a reference book or encyclopedia for five facts about the people in that country that make them unique in your opinion. Compare and contrast your facts with those of a classmate.
- Colliers was a popular magazine in the last century. Ask older relatives what they remember about Colliers magazine and other periodicals of that time. Share these remembrances with your classmates.

Health

- Read about strokes in a reference book. Write a paragraph about ways a person can avoid one. Share what you learn with your classmates.

Media

- For five days, cut from your daily newspaper all items you find about China. Also check clothes and other items you have in your house that may be labeled "Made in China." Discuss with your classmates what you learned from this activity.

Notes: