



Mike Wallace

Myron Leon Wallace (May 9, 1918 – April 7, 2012) was an American journalist, game show host, actor, and media personality. Known for his investigative journalism,^[1] he interviewed a wide range of prominent newsmakers during his seven-decade career. He was one of the original correspondents featured on CBS news program 60 Minutes, which debuted in 1968. Wallace retired as a regular full-time correspondent in 2006, but still appeared occasionally on the series until 2008. He is the father of Chris Wallace.

Wallace interviewed many politicians, celebrities, and academics, such as Tina Turner, Joseph Bonanno, Vladimir Horowitz, Bobby Fischer, Luciano Pavarotti, Maria Callas, Malcolm X, Richard Nixon, Pearl S. Buck, Deng Xiaoping, Ronald Reagan, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Jiang Zemin, Ruhollah Khomeini, Kurt Waldheim, Frank Lloyd Wright, Yasser Arafat, Menachem Begin, Anwar Sadat, Louis Farrakhan, Manuel Noriega, John Nash, Gordon B. Hinckley, Vladimir Putin, Barbra Streisand, Salvador Dalí, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, William Carlos Williams, Mickey Cohen, Roy Cohn, Dean Reed, Jimmy Fratianno, Morgan Freeman, Aldous Huxley, Bertrand Russell, and Ayn Rand.^{[2][3][4]}

Early life

Wallace, whose family's surname was originally Wallik, was born on May 9, 1918, in Brookline, Massachusetts, to Russian Jewish immigrant parents.^{[5][6]} He identified as Jewish and claimed it was his ethnicity (instead of religion) throughout his life. His father was a grocer and insurance broker.^[7] Wallace attended Brookline High School, graduating in 1935.^[8] He graduated from the University of Michigan four years later with a Bachelor of Arts degree. While a college student, he was a reporter for the Michigan Daily and belonged to the Alpha Gamma Chapter of the Zeta Beta Tau

Mike Wallace



Wallace in 1997

Born	Myron Leon Wallace May 9, 1918 <u>Brookline</u> , <u>Massachusetts</u> , U.S.
Died	April 7, 2012 (aged 93) <u>New Canaan</u> , <u>Connecticut</u> , U.S.

fraternity.^[9]

Career

1930s-1940s: Radio

Wallace appeared as a guest on the popular radio quiz show *Information Please* on February 7, 1939, when he was in his last year at the University of Michigan. He spent his first summer after graduation working on-air at Interlochen Center for the Arts.^[10] His first radio job was as a newscaster and continuity writer for WOOD radio in Grand Rapids, Michigan. This lasted until 1940, when he moved to WXYZ radio in Detroit, Michigan, as an announcer. He then became a freelance radio worker in Chicago.

Wallace enlisted in the United States Navy in 1943 and during World War II served as a communications officer on the USS *Anthedon*, a submarine tender. He saw no combat but traveled to Hawaii, Australia, and Subic Bay in the Philippines, then patrolling the South China Sea, the Philippine Sea and south of Japan. After being discharged in 1946, Wallace returned to Chicago.

Wallace announced for the radio shows *Curtain Time*, *Ned Jordan: Secret Agent*, *Sky King*, *The Green Hornet*,^[11] *Curtain Time*,^[11] and *The Spike Jones Show*.^[11] It is sometimes reported Wallace announced for *The Lone Ranger*,^[12] but Wallace said that he never had done so.^[13] From 1946 through 1948, he portrayed the title character on *The Crime Files of Flamond* on WGN and in syndication.

Wallace announced wrestling in Chicago in the late 1940s and early 1950s, sponsored by Tavern Pale beer.

In the late 1940s, Wallace was a staff announcer for the CBS radio network. He had displayed his comic skills when he appeared opposite Spike Jones in dialogue routines. He was also the voice of Elgin-American in the company's commercials on Groucho Marx's *You Bet Your Life*. As Myron Wallace, he portrayed New York City detective Lou Kagel on the short-lived radio drama series *Crime on the Waterfront*.

1940s-1960s: Television

Education	<u>University of Michigan</u> (BA)
Occupations	Television personality • radio announcer • journalist • game show host • actor
Years active	1939–2008
Notable credit	<i>60 Minutes</i> (1968–2008)
Spouses	Norma Kaphan (m. 1940; div. 1948) Buff Cobb (m. 1949; div. 1955) Lorraine Périgord (m. 1955; div. 1986) Mary Yates (m. 1986)
Children	2, including Chris

In 1949, Wallace began to move to the new medium of television. In that year, he starred under the name Myron Wallace in a short-lived police drama, *Stand By for Crime*.^[14]

Wallace hosted a number of game shows in the 1950s, including *The Big Surprise*, *Who's the Boss?* and *Who Pays?*. Early in his career, Wallace was not known primarily as a news broadcaster. It was not uncommon during that period for newscasters to announce, to deliver commercials and to host game shows; Douglas Edwards, John Daly, John Cameron Swayze and Walter Cronkite hosted game shows as well. Wallace also hosted the pilot episode of *Nothing but the Truth*, which was helmed by Bud Collyer when it aired under the title *To Tell the Truth*. Wallace occasionally served as a panelist on *To Tell the Truth* in the 1950s. He also made commercials for a variety of products, including Procter & Gamble's Fluffo brand shortening. In the summer of 1959, he was the host on the NBC game show *Who Pays?*.^[15]

Wallace also hosted two late-night interview programs, *Night Beat* (broadcast in New York City during 1955–1957, only on DuMont's WABD)^[16] and *The Mike Wallace Interview* on ABC in 1957–1958. See also *Profiles in Courage*, section: Authorship controversy.

In 1959, Louis Lomax told Wallace about the Nation of Islam. Lomax and Wallace produced a five-part documentary about the organization, *The Hate That Hate Produced*, which aired during the week of July 13, 1959. The program marked the first time that most white people heard about the Nation, its leader, Elijah Muhammad, and its charismatic spokesman, Malcolm X.^[17]

By the early 1960s, Wallace's primary income came from commercials for Parliament cigarettes, touting their "man's mildness" (he had a contract with Philip Morris to pitch their cigarettes as a result of the company's original sponsorship of *The Mike Wallace Interview*).

Between June 1961 and June 1962, Wallace and Joyce Davidson hosted a New York-based nightly interview program for Westinghouse Broadcasting^[18] called *PM East* for one hour; it was paired with the half-hour *PM West*, which was hosted by *San Francisco Chronicle* television critic Terrence O'Flaherty. Westinghouse syndicated the series to television stations that it owned and to a few other cities. WFAA channel 8 in Dallas, Texas carried it, but viewers in other southwestern states, in the Deep South and in the metropolitan areas of Chicago and Philadelphia were unable to watch it.

A frequent guest on the *PM East* segment was Barbra Streisand, though only the audio of some of her conversations with Wallace survives,^[18] as Westinghouse wiped the videotapes and kinescopes were never made or were thrown away.



Publicity photo for the television program *Mike Wallace Interviews*, 1957

Also in the early 1960s, Wallace was the host of the David Wolper-produced *Biography* series.

After his elder son's death in 1962, Wallace decided to get back into news and hosted an early version of *CBS Morning News* from 1963 through 1966. In 1964 he interviewed Malcolm X, who, half-jokingly, commented "I probably am a dead man already."^[19] The black leader was assassinated a few months later in February 1965.

1960s-2000s: *60 Minutes*



Wallace and Harry Reasoner on the *60 Minutes* premiere, 1968

Wallace's career as the lead reporter on *60 Minutes* led to some run-ins with the people interviewed and claims of misconduct by female colleagues. While interviewing Louis Farrakhan, Wallace alleged that Nigeria was the most corrupt country in the world. Farrakhan immediately shot back that Americans were in no moral position to judge, declaring "Has Nigeria dropped an atomic bomb that killed people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Have they killed off millions of Native Americans?" "Can you think of a more corrupt country?" asked Wallace. "I'm living in one," said Farrakhan.^[20]

Wallace interviewed General William Westmoreland for the CBS special *The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception* that aired on January 23, 1982.^[21] Westmoreland then sued Wallace and CBS for libel. The trial ended in February 1985 when the case was settled out of court just before it would have gone to the jury. Each side agreed to pay its own costs and attorney fees, and CBS issued a clarification of its intent with respect to the original story.

In 1981, Wallace was forced to apologize for a racial slur he had made about Blacks and Hispanics. During a break while preparing a *60 Minutes* report on a bank that had been accused of duping low-income Californians, Wallace was caught on tape joking that "You bet your ass [the contracts are] hard to read if you're reading them over the watermelon or the tacos!"^{[22][23][24]}

^[25]

Attention was again drawn to that incident several years later when protests were raised after Wallace was selected to deliver a university commencement address during a ceremony within which Nelson Mandela was awarded an honorary doctorate in absentia for his fight against racism. Wallace initially called the protesters' complaint "absolute foolishness".^[26] However, he subsequently apologized for his earlier remark and added that when he had been a student decades earlier on the same university campus, "though it had never really caused me any serious difficulty here ... I was keenly aware of being Jewish, and quick to detect slights, real or imagined.... We Jews felt a kind of kinship [with blacks]", but "Lord knows, we weren't riding the same slave ship."^[27]



Wallace interviewing President Ronald Reagan in 1989

Wallace's reputation has been retrospectively affected by his admission that he had harassed female colleagues at *60 Minutes* over many years. "Back in the 1970s and '80s, *60 Minutes* correspondent Mike Wallace was known for putting his hand on the backs of his female CBS News co-workers and unsnapping the clasps on their bras. 'It wasn't a secret. I have done that', Wallace told *Rolling Stone* magazine in 1991."^[28] In 2018, claims of sexual misconduct at *60 Minutes* led to the resignation of executive producer Jeff Fager, who had assumed the role of Executive Producer following the retirement of the show's creator, Don Hewitt. He resigned several months after a July 27 story by Ronan Farrow in *The New Yorker*.^[29] Not only did Farrow's story accuse Fager of ignoring and enabling misconduct by several high-ranking male producers at *60 Minutes*, but Farrow also cited former employees who accused Fager himself of misconduct.^[30]

On March 14, 2006, Wallace announced his retirement from *60 Minutes* after 37 years with the program. He continued working for CBS News as a "Correspondent Emeritus", albeit at a reduced pace.^[31] In August 2006, Wallace interviewed Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.^[32] Wallace's last CBS interview was with retired baseball star Roger Clemens in January 2008 on *60 Minutes*.^[33] Wallace's previously vigorous health (Morley Safer described him in 2006 as "having the energy of a man half his age") began to fail, and in June 2008 his son Chris said that his father would not be returning to television.^[34]

Wallace expressed regret for not having secured an interview with First Lady Pat Nixon.^[35]

Personal life

Wallace had two children with his first wife, Norma Kaphan.^[36] Their younger son, Chris, is also a journalist. Their elder son, Peter, died at age 19 in a mountain-climbing accident in Greece in 1962.^[37]

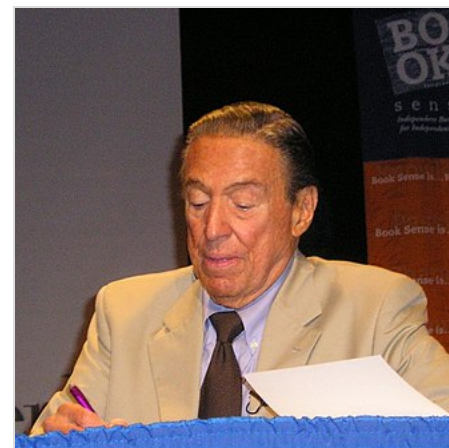
From 1949 to 1954, Wallace was married to his second wife, Patrizia "Buff" Cobb, an actress and stepdaughter of Gladys Swarthout. The couple hosted the *Mike and Buff Show* on CBS television in the early 1950s. They also hosted *All Around Town* in 1951 and 1952.^[38] She died in 2010.^[39]

He was married to his third wife, Lorraine Perigord, from 1955 until their divorce in 1986.^[40]

The same year as his divorce from his third wife (1986), he married his fourth and final wife, Mary Yates, the widow of one of his best friends and television producer, Ted Yates, who died in 1967 while on assignment for NBC News during the Six-Day War.^[41]

In addition to his two sons, Wallace had a stepdaughter, Pauline Dora, and two stepsons, Eames and Angus Yates.^[42]

For many years, Wallace unknowingly suffered from depression. In an article that he wrote for *Guideposts*, Wallace related, "I'd had days when I felt blue and it took more of an effort than usual to get through the things I had to do."^[43] His condition worsened in 1984 after General William Westmoreland filed a \$120 million libel lawsuit against Wallace and CBS over statements that were made in the documentary *The Uncounted Enemy: A Vietnam Deception* (1982). Westmoreland claimed that the documentary made him appear as if he had manipulated intelligence. The lawsuit, *Westmoreland v. CBS*, was later dropped after CBS issued a statement explaining they never intended to portray the general as disloyal or unpatriotic. During the proceedings, Wallace was hospitalized with what was diagnosed as exhaustion. His wife Mary forced him to go to a doctor, who diagnosed Wallace with clinical depression. He was prescribed an antidepressant and underwent psychotherapy. Out of a belief that it would be perceived as weakness, Wallace kept his depression a secret until he revealed it in an interview with Bob Costas on Costas' late-night talk show, *Later*.^[43] In a later interview with colleague Morley Safer, he admitted having attempted suicide circa 1986.^[44]



Wallace in 2007

Wallace received a pacemaker more than 20 years before his death, and underwent triple bypass surgery in January 2008.^[5] He lived in a care facility the last several years of his life.^[5] In 2011, CNN host Larry King visited him and reported that he was in good spirits, but that his physical condition was noticeably declining.

Wallace considered himself a political moderate. He was a friend of Nancy Reagan and her family for over 75 years.^[45] Nixon wanted Wallace to be his press secretary. Fox News said, "He didn't fit the stereotype of the Eastern liberal journalist." Interviewed by his son on *Fox News Sunday*, he was asked if he understood why people feel disaffection toward the mainstream media. "They think they're wide-eyed commies; liberals," Mike replied, a notion he dismissed as "damned foolishness".^[46]

Death

Wallace died at his residence in New Canaan, Connecticut, from natural causes on April 7, 2012.^{[5][47]} The night after Wallace's death, Morley Safer announced his death on *60 Minutes*. On April 15, 2012, a full episode of *60 Minutes* aired that was dedicated to remembering Wallace's life.^{[48][49][50]} He was buried at West Chop Cemetery in Tisbury, Massachusetts.^[51]

Awards

In 1989, Wallace was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws from the University of Pennsylvania.^[52] Wallace's professional honors included 21 Emmy Awards,^[5] among them a report just weeks before the September 11 attacks for an investigation on the former Soviet Union's smallpox program and concerns about terrorism. He also won three Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards, three George Foster Peabody Awards, a Robert E. Sherwood Award, a Distinguished Achievement Award from the University of Southern California School of Journalism, the Golden Plate Award of the American Academy of Achievement,^[53] and a Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award in the international broadcast category. In September 2003, Wallace received a Lifetime Achievement Emmy, his 20th. Most recently, on October 13, 2007, Wallace was awarded the University of Illinois Prize for Lifetime Achievement in Journalism.

- 1991: Paul White Award, Radio Television Digital News Association^[54]
- 1999: Gerald Loeb Award for Network and Large-Market Television for an investigative piece on the international pharmaceutical industry^[55]

Fictional portrayals

Wallace was played by actor Christopher Plummer in the 1999 feature film *The Insider*. The screenplay was based on the *Vanity Fair* article "The Man Who Knew Too Much" by Marie Brenner, which was about Wallace caving in to corporate pressure to kill a story about Jeffrey Wigand, a whistle-blower trying to expose Brown & Williamson's dangerous business practices in the manufacture of cigarettes. Wallace disliked his on-screen portrayal and maintained that he was in fact very eager to have Wigand's story aired in full.

Wallace was played by actor Stephen Rowe in the stage version of *Frost/Nixon*, but he was omitted from the screenplay of the 2008 film adaptation and thus the movie itself. In the 1999 American broadcast television movie *Hugh Hefner: Unauthorized*, Wallace is portrayed by Mark Harelik. In the film *A Face in the Crowd* (1957), Wallace portrayed himself. In 2020, Greg Dehm played Wallace in episode 6 of the second season of *Manhunt*, re-creating Wallace's 1996 interview on *60 Minutes* with Richard Jewell, the security guard who discovered a bomb at Atlanta's Centennial Olympic Park in July 1996.

Autobiographies

- *Close Encounters: Mike Wallace's Own Story*. New York: William Morrow, 1984. ISBN 0-688-01116-0 (co-written

with Gary Paul Gates).

- *Between You and Me: A Memoir*. New York: Hyperion, 2005 (co-written with Gary Paul Gates).

See also

- *The 20th Century with Mike Wallace*
- *The Hate That Hate Produced*
- *The Mike Wallace Interview*
 - *Profiles in Courage* authorship controversy on *The Mike Wallace Interview*
- *Mike Wallace Is Here*, a 2019 biographical documentary film directed by Avi Belkin
- *Raising Hell: How the Center for Investigative Reporting Gets the Story* (foreword)
- *Westmoreland v. CBS*

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Further reading

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External links

- [Mike Wallace \(https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0908794/\)](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0908794/) at IMDb
- [Mike Wallace \(http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/w/mike_wallace/index.html\)](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/w/mike_wallace/index.html) collected news and commentary at *The New York Times*
- [Appearances \(https://www.c-span.org/person/?1344\)](https://www.c-span.org/person/?1344) on C-SPAN
- [Mike Wallace Interview \(http://www.emmytvlegends.org/interviews/people/mike-wallace/\)](http://www.emmytvlegends.org/interviews/people/mike-wallace/) at the [Archive of American Television](#)
- [Mike Wallace interview / William Waterway \(1986\) \(https://vimeo.com/40252066\)](https://vimeo.com/40252066) on Vimeo
- *The Mike Wallace Interview* (<https://hrc.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15878coll90>) — archives of his New York interview show from the late 1950s in the [Harry Ransom Center](#) at the [University of Texas at Austin](#) (68 in total, some are audio-only)
- [Mike Wallace \(https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4992445\)](https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4992445) on *Fresh Air*
- [One-on-One with Mike Wallace \(http://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/2012/04/09/archives/then-and-now/from-our-archives-one-on-one-with-mike-wallace.html\)](http://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/2012/04/09/archives/then-and-now/from-our-archives-one-on-one-with-mike-wallace.html) from *The Saturday Evening Post*
- [Mike Wallace \(https://web.archive.org/web/20090725023707/http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/W/htmlW/wallacemike/wallacemike.htm\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20090725023707/http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/W/htmlW/wallacemike/wallacemike.htm) in The Museum of Broadcast Communications

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