



The News Sorority: Diane Sawyer, Katie Couric, Christiane Amanpour--and the (Ongoing, Imperfect, Complicated) Triumph of Women in TV News

Sheila Weller

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“Weller rivetingly recounts these gutsy ladies' time on the front lines... an inspiration for future generations of journalists.” --*Vanity Fair*

For decades, women battered the walls of the male fortress of television journalism. After fierce struggles, three women—Diane Sawyer, Katie Couric, and Christiane Amanpour—broke into the newsroom’s once impenetrable “boys’ club.” These women were not simply pathbreakers, but wildly gifted journalists whose unique talents enabled them to climb to the top of the corporate ladder and transform the way Americans received their news.

Drawing on exclusive interviews with their colleagues and intimates from childhood on, *The News Sorority* crafts a lively and exhilarating narrative that reveals the hard struggles and inner strengths that shaped these women and powered their success. Life outside the newsroom—love, loss, child rearing—would mark them all, complicating their lives even as it deepened their convictions and instincts. Life *inside* the newsroom would include many nervy decisions and back room power plays previously uncaptured in any media account. Taken together, Sawyer’s, Couric’s, and Amanpour’s lives as women are here revealed not as impediments but as keys to their success.

Raised in Louisville, Kentucky, Diane Sawyer was a young woman steering her own unique political course in a time of societal upheaval. Her fierce intellect, almost insuperable work ethic, and sophisticated emotional intelligence would catapult Sawyer from being the first female on-air correspondent for *60 Minutes*, to presenting anchoring the network flagship *ABC World News*. From her first breaks as a reporter all the way through her departure in 2014, Sawyer’s charisma and drive would carry her through countless personal and professional changes.

Katie Couric, always conveniently underestimated because of her “girl-next-door” demeanor, brazened her way through a succession of regional TV news jobs until she finally hit it big. In 1991, Couric became the cohost of *Today*, where, over the next fifteen years, she transformed the “female” slot from secondary to preeminent while shouldering devastating personal loss. Couric’s greatest triumph—and most bedeviling challenge—was at *CBS Evening News*, as the first woman to solo-anchor a nighttime network news program. Her contradictions—seriously feminist while proudly sorority-girlish—made her beyond easy typecasting, and as original as she is relatable.

A glamorous, unorthodox cosmopolite—raised in pre-revolution Iran amid royalty and educated in England—Christiane Amanpour would never have been picked out of a lineup as a future war reporter, until her character flourished on catastrophic soil: her family’s exile during the Iranian Revolution. Once she knew her calling, Amanpour shrewdly made a virtue of her outsider status, joining the fledgling CNN on the bottom rung and then becoming its “face,” catalyzing its rise to global prominence. Amanpour’s fearlessness in war zones would make her the world’s witness to some of its most acute crises and television’s chief

advocate for international justice.

Revealing the tremendous combination of ambition, empathy, and skill that empowered Sawyer, Couric, and Amanpour to reach stardom, *The News Sorority* is a detailed story of three very particular lives and a testament to the extraordinary character of women everywhere.

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