

The IMPROPER BOSTONIAN

Soroff On CHRIS WALLACE

The Fox News host chats about inauguration parties, Obama jokes and Sean Hannity's smirk.



THE HOST AND MODERATOR OF FOX NEWS SUNDAY, Chris Wallace, 61, is a veteran journalist who has interviewed or covered every major political figure and event of the past 30 years. The son of legendary *60 Minutes* anchor Mike Wallace, he was raised primarily by his stepfather, CBS News president Bill Leonard. A native of Chicago, he graduated from Harvard University and worked at *The Boston Globe* before making the move to TV by joining NBC News in 1975. While there, Wallace served as chief White House correspondent and moderator of *Meet the Press*. From NBC, he moved to ABC, where he worked for 14 years and received a prestigious duPont-Columbia Award for journalism. He has also won three Emmys and a Peabody Award. Wallace and his wife, Lorraine, live in the Washington, D.C., area; he has six children.

Jonathan Soroff: So is Fox News really "fair and balanced"?

Chris Wallace: Absolutely, but in a different way than our detractors think we mean it. We don't wink or snicker at that phrase. We think it means something, specifically that we tell all sides of the story in a way that a lot of the mainstream media [do] not.

How about two other adjectives to describe it?
Astute and insightful.

Is Roger Ailes a barrel of laughs?

He is, as a matter of fact. He's also the best boss I've ever worked for.

Do you call Rupert Murdoch "Uncle Rupie"?
[Laughs.] Ah, no. I call him Mr. Murdoch, and so does everybody else.

Think he'd lend me a few million bucks?

I don't think Rupert Murdoch lends anybody money.

Can you truly say that you're proud to work alongside Sean Hannity?

I respect him. We do different things, and he's very valuable to the network. I generally agree with him, even if I don't always agree with his approach.

What's with his smirk? He's always smirking.

You know Bill Clinton in our interview very famously accused me of smirking. I think sometimes people are unjustly accused of smirking when, in fact, it's a smirk-free zone.

Nancy Grace. Is she insane or just on the wrong medication?

I don't watch her, so I don't have to worry about it.

True or false about your Harvard classmates: Al Gore invented the Internet?
False, and he regrets having suggested it.

Tommy Lee Jones became an actor to get laid.
I don't think he needed to be an actor to do that.

Did you ever feel competitive with your father?
I think I felt very competitive much earlier in my career. But first of all, if you're the child of somebody very famous, at some point you either have to come to terms with that, or it'll eat you up. A long time ago, I came to terms with the fact that I'm not Mike Wallace and neither is anybody else. As time has gone on, I frankly have succeeded way beyond what I ever dreamt of, so I'm a happy man.

Was it weird that your stepfather was your father's boss?

It was. I'd have conversations with one, and he'd say not to tell the other one. Not that they bad-mouthed each other. It was just opinions or information that an employee didn't want his boss to know, or vice versa. So I got pretty good at keeping secrets.

Most impressive president in history?
I guess Lincoln.

Most impressive president you've met?
Reagan.

Do you still read *The Boston Globe*?

When I'm up at my father's house in Martha's Vineyard in the summer.

Is print journalism dead?

No, but it really is going to have to figure out a way to survive in the 21st century.

**Finish this riddle: Barbara Walters and Diane Sawyer walk onto an elevator, and it gets stuck between floors...
Neither comes out alive.**

Would you rather be lost in the woods with Condoleezza Rice and Laura Bush or Michelle Obama and Hillary Clinton?

I'd probably have a better time with Condi and Laura, and I'd probably have a better chance of surviving with Hillary and Michelle.

Heard any good Obama jokes lately?

No! And I think a lot of people are worried that he's not especially funny, and there doesn't seem to be much that's funny about him.

Do you think he's going to get kid-glove treatment because people don't want to be perceived as racist?

No. I think that one of the best things about his presidency is that over time we will become increasingly color-blind, and he will be treated, for good or ill, just like every other president.

So are you a regular at inaugural balls?

The last place I'd want to be is at an inaugural ball. I went to one in 1977 when Jimmy Carter was inaugurated, and it was the worst. If your idea of fun is 5,000 people in tuxedos and gowns, standing around in a ballroom and having to buy drinks at a cash bar, waiting around for the five minutes when the president and new first lady show up, then you're in seventh heaven.

Any thoughts on Michelle Obama's dress on election night?

I'd give it a B-minus.

Three adjectives to describe the prospect of Obama as president?

Exciting, inspirational and overhyped.

Once you've got Washington on your hands, is it impossible to wash off?

No, some people leave happily. I, on the other hand, have been here 30 years, and it's like that line from *Apocalypse Now*: "I love the smell of napalm in the morning." I can wake up with a good political scandal brewing and breathe it in and just sigh with satisfaction. ***



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