

## WORDS AT WAR

An essay by Duncan Schiedt written for the  
Indianapolis Literary Club and read  
on the evening of May 7, 2012

We often hear the expression "the right person in the right place at the right time." It may take years to recognize such a person and his or her impact on historic events.

In the memories of many of us here, a voice and the way that voice spoke, was an unforgettable window into events that marked the lives of all of us... World War II.

The voice and the person was that of Edward R. Murrow. The place was primarily London. Through Murrow and his colleagues - men and women who came into their own fame through his vision and his tireless pursuit of truth in broadcasting - his stage became the world.

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You may forgive a personal note at this point. In the late 1930s, I graduated from high school in New York City, with a desire to enter what was then an alluring profession: big-time network radio. I wanted to emulate people like Harry Von Zell, Paul Douglas and Ken Carpenter, all of whom seemed to inhabit a magic world where things were constantly happening and being "on the air" just had to be the ultimate career that one could imagine.

The voices of these men were our only clues to their identity, and now and then I remember wondering what they looked like, what kind of lives they led, and would I really be able to achieve their kind of fame. Beyond the usual puffery of the pulp magazines, it wasn't possible for a teenager like me to get behind those compelling voices and really know my heroes.

It took the rise of Adolf Hitler, and the events that led to World War II to give me an entirely different outlook on radio. More and more I turned to the news, delivered by men in studios, reading material

based on information from the great news services. It was informative, but seldom gripping

To be sure, not all the news people back then were mere readers of prepared bulletins. The stars of the time were well-established. There was the slightly pompous H.V. Kaltenborn, with his clipped delivery and a sing-song tone; Lowell Thomas, of whom an NBC executive once remarked "Lowell's got a million dollar voice, but not a nickel's worth of news" and, strange to tell, one of CBS's prime time figures, Boake Carter.

If Kaltenborn was the most authoritative news analyst of the day, Boake Carter was a charlatan. While some might have thought him a self-made man, a more correct term would be "self-manufactured." He, too, was well compensated and had a large following among listeners. Assuming an English origin of unspecified distinction, and an accent to go with it, he was in reality an Irish immigrant born in Azerbaijan. His trick was to speak and dress the part, complete with tweeds, a pipe, jodhpurs and riding boots, as featured on publicity stills of the time taken at his Bucks County home in Pennsylvania.

There was just one problem. Despite his persona as an internationalist, Carter rarely left his farm to discover what went on in the outside world. He needed back-up assistance to determine the relative importance of the incoming news reports. Accordingly, CBS asked the United Press to supply a teletype machine for him which would connect with a companion teletype in Manhattan. A part-time UP employee would act as a "news consultant" and answer Carter's questions about the day's events and their meaning. This consultant was named Larry LeSueur. We shall meet him later.

Boake Carter's on-the-air comments were sometimes made up by himself on the spot. As Bob Trout, a veteran CBS announcer, said: "Nobody had the slightest idea what he was doing - or from where he got his news." His political views, decidedly anti-Roosevelt, became increasingly strident, and led to pressure from the Administration, resulting in the loss of Carter's sponsor, Philco Radio. His out-of-step support for Hitler's claim to Austria in 1938 proved to be the last

straw, and the big boss at CBS, William Paley, who always showed a fine regard for the bottom line, finally removed him from the air.

All the while, during Adolf Hitler's rise to power in Germany, a young American named Egbert Roscoe Murrow had been accumulating valuable communications experience both at home and abroad. Not from a wealthy family, he needed to self-finance his education at Washington State College. A year was spent working as a lumberjack. During this time he dropped the name "Egbert," according to him, "to avoid having to fight every other lumberjack on the West Coast". Henceforth he would be simply known as "Ed."

A course with a gifted female instructor proved to be a turning point in his life. While taking her "Fundamentals of Freshman Speech," he persuaded her to include the advanced course "Intermediate Public Speaking." She knew talent when she observed it, and their association would continue as friends for the rest of her life.

Following graduation, Murrow became active in national student association work, running the New York office. The salary was small, but the chance to learn more about the world was irresistible. He attended an international student federation meeting in Brussels, where he so impressed others that he was asked to serve as their president, which he had to decline.

In a forecast of the future, he began radio activities, helping to arrange guest speakers for a CBS program "University of the Air." These included world figures such as Mohandas Gandhi, Germany's President von Hindenburg and Britain's Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald.

In early 1933, Hitler, now Chancellor of Germany, began to transform the nation in alarming ways, including anti-Semitic persecutions. Murrow joined a group headed by a Professor Duggan, one of whose efforts was to help German academics, primarily Jews, escape the Nazi regime and find positions in American universities. During his two-year tenure, Murrow would assist in bringing over some 335 intellectuals to this country.

Through his contacts at CBS, he had become acquainted with William Paley's right-hand man and adviser, Ed Klauber, an experienced newspaper man, who now offered Ed a job known at the network as "Director of Talks." Murrow promptly accepted.

He was kept busy. Though not yet behind a microphone, in 1936 he coordinated 311 broadcasts, both domestic and foreign. Ed Klauber, dedicated to bringing CBS up to speed in Europe versus its rival network, NBC, kept Murrow in mind. When CBS planned a London office in February 1937, he was offered the choice assignment. By the first of April, Murrow and his wife, Janet, were aboard the liner Manhattan, enroute to what would be his greatest assignment. During the crossing, they befriended a young photographer and film maker named Mary Marvin Breckinridge, who preferred to be called "Marvin" because a cousin was already using "Mary." She intended to cover the coronation of George VI, which, surprisingly, was not part of Murrow's assignment.

Her resume was impressive. She was descended from a vice president of the U.S., John Breckinridge, and also the tire magnate B.F. Goodrich. She was neither a journalist nor a broadcaster, but was an established photographer, with published images and articles in major magazines. After the coronation, she returned to America but would return in 1939 as a reporter for several publications. She had planned a six week visit to England, but was instead overtaken by war. When she learned that Britain had declared war upon Germany, she decided to extend her visit and do some freelance photo assignments. One was a story about the evacuation of British children from London to the countryside. Later, over dinner, she told the Murrows about it, and Ed suggested that she relate it over CBS. Nothing daunted, she complied, saying that she thought it would be nice that her parents in California would be able to hear her voice. Murrow subsequently wanted to hire her, but the New York office turned thumbs down. No female reporters would be countenanced in a war zone. Murrow, his back up, was adamant, and Marvin was hired. During the next six months, she would prove herself with fifty broadcasts from seven countries, including Germany itself.

But let's turn back the years to pick up the career of the man who would become Murrow's earliest broadcasting colleague and friend in

Europe, a seasoned newspaperman named William L. Shirer. His experience as a reporter in Europe dated from 1925, following his graduation from Coe College, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. A trip to France on a cattle boat resulted in his first love affair - with the city of Paris. Living and loving every minute, he dreaded having to go home to the Midwest. Virtually broke, he was packed and ready to go when a note in his room offered him a position with the *Paris Tribune*. Reprieved, he started on his way through some of the most significant and important years of the century - a reporter's dream. Within two years he was appointed foreign correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune*, to report from Paris, London, Rome and Vienna. Along the way he met and befriended a number of American expatriates, among them Sinclair Lewis, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Isadora Duncan and James Thurber. He was there for the arrival of Lindbergh's flight and covered League of Nations meetings in Geneva.

Sent by the paper to cover Gandhi's nonviolent revolution in India, he virtually attached himself to the man, and stayed for most of two years, during which time he married Tess, an Austrian he had met in Vienna, and gathered material on Gandhi for a planned book. In 1932, during massive layoffs at the *Tribune*, Shirer was let go and, with no job, moved to Spain, where he and Tess lived frugally for a year on his savings. From here, he landed another job, this time with the Universal news agency, with a posting in Berlin.

It was not the same Berlin he had known in prior years. In his absence, a demagogue had taken charge, with an agenda as yet unsuspected by most of the world. Shirer, however, who had been on the scene long enough to recognize evil when he saw it, was to spend the next three years trying to alert his countrymen of the looming Nazi threat.

In August, 1937, with a pregnant wife to support, he received notice of termination from Universal. As luck would have it, the same day brought a cable from Ed Murrow, with the prospect of a news broadcasting spot. They were to meet for dinner in a Berlin hotel, and Shirer, in poor financial straits, agreed to the get-together. He was highly skeptical, for he had spent over twenty years as a print reporter and rarely listened to radio, which had been of little consequence when he left Iowa. But a free dinner was worth something!

It is worth relating the episode, based on Shirer's memoir. He wrote that when they met, the twenty-nine year old Murrow, in his London-tailored suit, looked like just another handsome face out of the radio business...or Hollywood. But after they had repaired to the hotel bar, his opinion had changed. Murrow proved to be serious, sensitive and intelligent, with humor scarcely concealed behind a natural reserve. And he was a persuasive salesman for radio and its potential as a news source. The offer included \$125 a week, just what Shirer had been earning at Universal. Murrow asked "Is it a deal?" Shirer replied that he guessed so, whereupon Murrow said that he'd left one thing out - an audition that CBS in New York insisted upon before approving a hire. Shirer was thunderstruck, thinking "Here I am with a world of experience in international matters, and they're questioning the voice that God gave me, as if that mattered." But ten days later he found himself in a dingy room in Berlin - a government telegraph office. Since rival NBC had contracted with Germany and other countries to have exclusive rights to use state broadcasting facilities, CBS was effectively shut out. However, Shirer was assured by the lone technician that everything would be all right.

The microphone hung from a boom some seven feet above the floor, and neither Shirer nor the technician could make it budge. The German suggested that Shirer turn his face up and shout toward the microphone, but that cut off his air and made his voice even thinner. With less than a minute remaining until the scheduled hookup, they finally dragged a piano crate over, and Shirer was helped to a seated position on the edge, legs dangling like those of a ventriloquist's dummy.

Despite some prior coaching by Murrow in microphone technique, the voice test was an utter failure. Shirer's mouth was dry, his lips were parched, and when he started talking his voice quivered, more than once leaping an octave like a schoolboy in puberty. He could think only of William Paley and the vice presidents listening to him in New York, frowning and shaking their heads in disapproval.

The pessimism persisted during a week in which he heard nothing from Murrow. Finally, Ed called and said: "Well, the bastards in New York came through at last. They think you're terrific." Actually, Shirer's misgivings were not unfounded. The "bastards in New York"

had tried to dissuade Murrow from hiring him. The main opposition had come from the CBS network's news director, Paul White, who was then sensing in Ed Murrow an up-and-coming rival within the company. White, whether intentionally or not, would tend to put a spoke in Murrow's efforts from then on. Murrow, however, was both persuasive and stubborn, and ably defended his own turf, arguing successfully to keep Shirer. Murrow stressed that reporting ability and ingenuity in getting the report on the air was more important than voice quality.

But hired to do what? Despite the fuss about vocal matters, neither Murrow nor Shirer was permitted to broadcast. Their assignment was to arrange interesting broadcasts and help overcome the advantage held by NBC. If a news event required analysis, then a news service person could be put in front of a microphone for the purpose. Shirer was particularly incensed at this, certain that he had longer and more significant experience in the field than any casual analyst brought in for the day.

The battle with NBC was a story in itself. Murrow's assignment to London had quickly set off alarms at the rival network, and between 1937 and the outbreak of war, NBC did everything it could to derail CBS's efforts to establish itself on the Continent. They used veteran personnel on the scene to counter Murrow and Shirer when they tried to break NBC's contractual monopoly. The tendency at CBS was to ignore Murrow when he insisted that a good way to break this monopoly was to allow himself and Shirer to actually broadcast their own stories. It would take the approach of war to change things.

Shirer's patience was short, and he planned to quit his new CBS post as soon as a better job appeared. At that juncture, it was decided to assign him to Vienna rather than Berlin.

He was being sent into a tinderbox. Austria was in ferment; its people were increasingly disturbed and anti-Semitism was on the rise, abetted by local Nazis and sympathizers. Hitler, maneuvering politically, was determined to annex Austria, his native country, using the threat of war against its government. As a crisis was about to explode, Shirer and Murrow found themselves on totally unrelated assignments, arranging broadcasts of children's choirs in Poland and

Bulgaria. Shirer, acutely aware of what was happening, tried vainly to get permission to broadcast events direct to American audiences, but New York turned him down. By now, Hitler had browbeaten the Austrian chancellor into removing a ban on the Nazi party in that country and to accept Nazis in key positions in the government.

As Shirer completed his Bulgarian assignment and returned to Vienna, the Austrian government was showing signs of disintegration. Nazi gangs were rioting in the streets. His wife, Tess, was in a hospital following an emergency Caesarian operation, and for a time the lives of both mother and daughter hung in the balance. Both did survive. On March 9, the Austrians made a last-ditch effort to save their country by announcing a plebiscite four days hence.

Even then, incredibly, Paul White, back in New York, dispatched Shirer to yet another children's choir event, this one in Belgrade. Two days later, he returned to find Tess in even worse shape, with phlebitis. Chaos reigned in the capital. A Nazi mob rampaged through the streets, shouting "Sieg Heil," as the Austrian police, some wearing swastika arm bands, smiled and did nothing. There were yells that the plebiscite had been cancelled, that the Chancellor had resigned, and that the Army had been told to offer no resistance.

Shirer, for his part, had had it. He was in the midst of the greatest news story of his life. No other broadcaster seemed to be on the scene and he rushed to Austrian State Radio, hell-bent to report this day, no matter the cost.

Armed men wearing Nazi uniforms were all over the building, and he was denied the use of a studio. After arguing for hours, he was thrown out, and, utterly dejected, went back to his apartment and the solace of a beer or two. The phone rang. It was Murrow, in London. "Get on a plane and you can broadcast what you've seen from here" was the word, and Shirer's heart leapt. *On the air with the first account of the Anschluss!* Murrow continued: "When you get here, don't let them tell you that you're not supposed to be broadcasting. Just do it. I'll also be on the air. And I'll cover you in Vienna, too."

But Bill Shirer would not have his scoop. An NBC man, out of Vienna that day, heard what was happening and hurried back to the capital,



where he talked himself into the state studio with a quickly typed script which he presented to the censor. Not only did he beat all the radio outlets, but got off a report of Adolf Hitler's triumphal entry into the city.

Back home, Bill Paley, hearing of the NBC scoop, was frantic. Heretofore, he had gone along with Paul White's edict against any CBS involvement in political reporting from Europe. He was wary of seeming to take sides and offend powerful political figures on either side of the Atlantic. But this was different. NBC had beaten them, and badly. Picking up the phone, Paley ordered a round-up broadcast of European correspondents that very evening.

The task was more than formidable; any normal individual would have thrown up his hands in frustration. Shirer and Murrow had just eight hours on a Sunday to cobble together a thirty minute program on reactions in London, Paris, Vienna, Berlin and Rome, using people who were probably away for the weekend and facilities which might well be unavailable. Shirer, for one, was used to a reporter's life, where you got the story, wrote it out and sent it off to an editor somewhere. Murrow, accustomed to program elements measured in mere seconds, probably aged noticeably in those eight hours prior to 1 a.m., London time, when the last commentators were tracked down, the last words were typed, and the last switch was thrown connecting the old world with the new. A unique type of news program made its debut. CBS had won, after all.

Murrow had also won, and he had the backing of the Big Man... William Paley, who now saw the possibilities of bettering NBC in the war that was already being waged - a war of words.

For the exhausted team, there was no time for rest. Paley, delighted by the reception of the first roundup, ordered another for the following day. Murrow, in Vienna, was able to cover the Fuhrer's arrival and the near-hysterical enthusiasm of the partisan crowds.

To keep up this pace on a regular schedule would require an increase in personnel, and the first addition, if and when authorized, was to be a handsome, introspective twenty-six year old named Arnold Eric Sevareid, whose writings Murrow had spotted in the *Paris Herald*.

Here was someone to watch.

"Arnie," as he was called at home in North Dakota and Minneapolis as he grew up, was raised in a stern and cold family, and he yearned for affection. Apparently he also yearned for adventure. At age seventeen, on a dare by an older friend, he and a companion set out on a challenging canoe trek up the Mississippi and across Canada to Hudson's Bay, which they reached after 2200 miles and six weeks of taxing effort. The urge to do things and later write about them became a pattern. After returning to the Midwest, he enrolled full time at the University of Minnesota. A strong leaning to the left became evident when he joined others and signed the controversial Oxford Oath not to fight for God and Country. He met and married a fellow activist student, Lois Finger, in 1934, and after graduation worked for two years at the *Minneapolis Journal*. This lasted until 1937, when he was fired, apparently for siding with the paper's union in a dispute. He and Lois decided to head for Europe, and what he saw as a great opportunity for a budding newsman like himself. In Paris, he dropped the "Arnie" and became Eric Sevareid.

While Sevareid was settling into his job at the *Paris Herald*, the little CBS team went about its business of covering the next looming crisis, this one involving Czechoslovakia, on Germany's border. Hitler, whose appetite for political conquest was evident, now set his eyes upon a portion of that country called the Sudetenland, which had a large German-speaking population and the bulk of Czech military defenses. He insisted that this area be added to his Third Reich. Despite treaties that pledged both Britain and France to defend the Czechs against invasion, he threatened war if there were no peaceful resolution of his demands. The tempo of the situation increased almost daily, with subversion and Nazi-inspired internal disorder. Fictitious reports of Czech atrocities flooded German newspapers, and Bill Shirer, on the scene, was quick to debunk this propaganda, but his broadcasts for three critical days were foiled by atmospheric conditions.

The crisis would last three weeks, and Murrow bore the brunt in London, from where he personally made thirty-five broadcasts and arranged for 116 others. Many of these were improvised on short notice because of the ever-changing diplomatic maneuvers; all were in the familiar "roundup" pattern of the previous year.

As for Shirer, he was in his element. At one point he was in Bad Godesberg, a spa on the Rhine, to cover a meeting between British Prime Minister Chamberlain and Hitler. Walking near the river, he unexpectedly encountered the German chancellor, and vividly reported his impression: "Every few steps, he cocked his right shoulder nervously, his left leg snapping up as he did so. He had ugly patches under his eyes. I think this man is on the edge of a nervous breakdown."

Hitler was perhaps nervous, but he was keeping up the pressure on the British delegation, threatening war within a week if his demands were not immediately met. The French were brought along through British persuasion. Neither wanted war. Britain was unprepared, while France felt secure behind her Maginot Line.

Back home, the American public was fast losing its complacency. In those fateful three weeks, CBS broadcast five hundred reports; the veteran H.V. Kaltenborn alone was heard over one hundred times.

Murrow, in London, anchoring a roundup of European reports, was obviously wearing down with the pressure, but at the end of September, he broadcast in what was becoming a unique, closeup style, giving his listeners simple but graphic word pictures in his laid-back delivery, which was beginning to capture public interest back home, and, to a certain extent in Britain itself, where his voice was frequently heard, always subject to censorship.

Hitler, no doubt attempting to defuse any lingering objections to a "deal" in the Czech question, offered a final chance for peace. It was a proposal to get together at Munich with the leaders of Britain, France and Italy. The Czechs were noticeably uninvited. The tactic worked. Members of Parliament stood and cheered the announcement, trumping any thought that Chamberlain might have had to resist this carving up of a loyal ally. The four nations met, and history records that the end for the Czech nation began at that moment.

Murrow, spending the evening in London with his friend the Czech foreign minister, waited in vain for news, but nothing was heard. Finally, using an interpreter, he heard the outcome over Munich radio.

His report to New York was a scoop for CBS, though NBC was the first to broadcast the specifics of the agreement.

Shirer considered Munich to be a sellout. Eric Sevareid, still a newsman in Paris, observed the return of Premier Daladier's return, writing: "I watched him in the hysterical, almost praying crowd on the Champs-Elysees - a dumpy, bent little man, carrying his black hat in one hand, looking bewildered and uncertain."

The coverage had been expensive. Taken together, CBS and NBC spent the huge sum of \$190,000. The networks and the participants were hailed as heroic - Murrow was written up in Scribner's magazine as being thirty-three (he was prone to add a little to his actual age of thirty), but the writer offered this description: "Tall without being lanky, darkish without being swarthy, young without being boyish, dignified without being uncomfortable.." adding that he was a "stout chap" who had never done anything outlandish. No doubt he was unaware of the time when young Murrow, tipsy, drove a car up the steps of the Capitol building!

The Munich crisis was past, but the view ahead was anything but rosy. The British started to build an underground broadcast facility against the possibility of future bombing. Britain was heavily committed to building up its entire military, with an emphasis on warplanes and pilot training. It was generally understood that war was inevitable, but some at headquarters were unconvinced. Paul White, as chief of the network's news operations, arrived in London in July, 1939, to take a reading on the odds of a conflict and what the news team might need if war did break out. He was presented with a plan already formulated, which included improved facilities for of sending news. A further request was for more correspondents to strengthen the team.. White, skeptical, approved hiring only one additional correspondent, though there was some agreement on technical improvements.

But Sevareid, Murrow's immediate choice, demurred, not sure whether he had it in him to do the job. Already a good writer, as Murrow knew, he had absolutely no broadcasting experience, and hardly any confidence. There would be the inevitable audition and the tension

that went with it. "Never mind that," Murrow said. "You'll do just fine. Go ahead and quit your other job."

Where Shirer's delivery was flat and dull, Sevareid came across as a numbler, which was a good reason to disqualify him, but Murrow knew his man. He did eventually succeed in hiring him at \$250 per week, but specified that all publicity releases on Sevareid state his age at "only twenty-nine." His actual age was twenty-six. Murrow's perception was proven sharp, for Sevareid was the best writer among a formidable band of writers. But, almost from the start, he admired the person and the performance of the man who hired him, and would readily admit the Murrow influence when others brought it up.

His arrival as one of "Murrow's Boys" was timely, for he would be present for the start of World War II and a considerable part of the action thereafter, not to mention an illustrious post-war career in television.

Today it may not be generally recalled, but at the outbreak of the war, much of CBS's radio fortunes soared simply because the opposition - NBC and the much smaller Mutual network - fearful of running afoul of the American Neutrality Act and thereby jeopardizing their broadcast status, ceased all news operations from Europe. CBS, taking advantage, moved into the opening, and NBC, off the field for many weeks, lost their dominance, and were never able to catch up. With the German attack on Poland in 1939, the CBS team went into action. There was Shirer in Berlin, Murrow in London, and Sevareid, who shared the Paris beat with Thomas Grandin, a correspondent whose command of languages and expertise in international issues had brought him into the team.

Also in France was an aspiring radio journalist who had left United Press in the summer to be a part of the developing action. He was Larry LeSueur, erstwhile "news consultant" to Boake Carter. Murrow and LeSueur hit it off immediately, and as soon as an opening occurred, he was hired. During the months of the so-called "phony war" he worked in London with Murrow, and later on the Continent, contributing humor and enthusiasm to the job. At the fall of France he was told to evacuate with the British forces at Dunkirk. Perversely, he turned away and

walked and hitchhiked 150 miles from the Belgian border to Paris, just in time to join the mass evacuation taking place. In a rented car, he made it to Tours, then to Nantes, where he hoped to get some sleep before boarding a British troopship in the morning. As fate would have it, or by design (we will never know which) the only overnight accommodations he could find were in the hotel room of a prostitute. The next day, he made it to the gangplank, only to be told that the ship was full. Unfazed, he hitched a ride to where there was another ship. Looking back at the original ship, he watched with horror as a German bomber made a direct hit on it, the explosion and fire killing thousands of military personnel. Shaken, Larry would be back in London within days.

We have not lost track of "Marvin" Breckinridge, who had been assigned by Murrow to cover Scandinavia and the Low Countries, working out of Amsterdam. During her busy six months, she also filled in for Shirer in Berlin, and there met the man she would soon marry, an American diplomat named Jefferson Patterson. In fact, the marriage would be her ticket out of the Murrow team, and back home, just after the fall of France.

The summer of 1940 provided a lull in the action. The Germans consolidated their gains on the Continent while they plotted a cross-channel invasion of the British Isles. Britain, for its part, took inventory of what remained of its forces and dug in against an expected attack. Churchill provided the voice of the nation's backbone, but Murrow became the most famous broadcaster from the war zone, if not the entire radio world. His opening words on every broadcast were a dramatic "This...is London." These words came from his old college speech mentor, Ida Anderson, who thought the previous salutation was too "stagy."

Murrow was a true pioneer in bringing the news home to the living room, in terms that any American could understand, but with a particular humanity that was lacking among traditional announcers. Perhaps it was his natural way of speaking, the way he could get to the core of a story in just a few words, but once you heard Ed Murrow, you would not forget him. His conviction that a story on radio required empathy, clarity and a

sense of involvement, tended to inspire his team along the same path. Longtime print newsmen were drawn to this intimate style, far from the deliberately impersonal one they had learned. He was surely radio's counterpart to the immortal Ernie Pyle.

Murrow's greatest moments came during the Blitz, the relentless bombing of London and other population centers, which reduced vast areas to ruins and took a heavy human toll in the attempt to drive Britain out of the war. He made strong appeals to the authorities for permission to make direct broadcasts from rooftops during raids, but was repeatedly rebuffed. Uncensored, uncontrolled broadcasts could not be allowed. It took action by Churchill himself to clear the way for Murrow, Sevareid and LeSueur to fully bring the tragedy of the Blitz to American radio audiences.

Murrow refused to enter an air raid shelter, claiming he might get too used to it. He would stand outside during the heaviest bombings, alert for new subjects for his word pictures. He also defied a CBS plea to quit going along on bombing raids over Germany, perhaps wanting to get ever-closer to the action. He eventually went along on twenty-five missions, more than the average Allied air crew could expect to survive. One story told by Murrow himself, is of standing in the street next to a uniformed British airman, a bomber pilot who had made runs over enemy territory. A stick of bombs came whistling down from the sky, causing a series of explosions. The pilot exclaimed "My God! What was that?" Ed told him they were bombs. The pilot, related Murrow, turned white as a sheet and said, "I had no idea they were like that!"

There were contradictions in Murrow, too. Despite his success, he remained uneasy before a microphone. The calm voice going on the air would often belie the fidgeting and fiddling which was taking place on and under the table. Ernie Pyle once wrote vividly of the sweat and strain of a Murrow broadcast, half scripted and half ad-libbed.

At times, Murrow seemed to live on cups of coffee and three packs of cigarettes a day. Janet Murrow, who left London only

at Murrow's insistence, but soon returned to their flat, found him tense, always preoccupied and often sleepless. She developed an outlet in volunteer work and occasional broadcasts devoted to 'womens' subjects., arranged by her husband.

The daytime hours, before the nightly bombings, offered a degree of relaxation, and Ed found a stimulating companion in Larry LeSueur, whether for golf at a nine-holer, which boasted a few additional holes, some of which contained unexploded enemy bombs; or at a fashionable French restaurant near their studio in Broadcasting House where there was a great glass skylight that Murrow would insist on sitting beneath. Among the "Murrow Boys," courage was prized, and their leader was not to be outdone. LeSueur, predictably, would always meet any challenge, whereas the ever-cautious Sevareid was more selective in the risks he would accept, something that Murrow had trouble with. In later years, Eric said "I think that Ed was afraid of being afraid."

One incident exists in two versions: Murrow's and LeSueur's. Air raid sirens were wailing as the two were walking to the restaurant, and suddenly bombs began to land close by. They threw themselves to the pavement, and in Murrow's recollection, Larry turned his head to his boss and said: "You know, Ed, this could be dangerous," drawing a great laugh from Murrow. LeSueur remembered it differently. "Actually, it was Ed who was flat on the ground. I was kneeling. I didn't want to get my suit dirty. It was the only time I ever looked down on Ed."

As for Sevareid, after a month of the Blitz, he was doing his job, but exhausted and sick of the strain. He missed Lois and their twins back home. The New York office agreed to a return home on leave, though his conflicted state and habitual self-doubt made the move difficult for him. Upon leaving London, he knew that he would return; that he would recapture his self-respect and that of Murrow.

He had come to think of their radio work as men talking to inanimate equipment in a grubby room, not knowing who might be hearing what they said, or particularly caring. He appreciated the friendly



reception in New York at the home office and the celebrity that almost immediately surrounded him, thanks to the CBS publicity department, but there came an awakening to what he and the others had really done when, out of the open window of a parked taxi, he heard a familiar voice, that of Larry LeSueur, speaking from that little cubby hole of a studio in London where he and Murrow were probably still dodging bombs. Here he was, in New York, and what he had been told would happen, *was* happening. It was working! He wanted to shout to them and tell them it did matter - *they were being heard!*

Bill Shirer, too, was ready to go home. He had fought the Nazi censors and witnessed the destruction of a society he had once admired; he had suffered indignities and been detained by the authorities; once-reliable news sources had dried up and now ordinary Germans were afraid to converse with strangers. To stay and do his job meant parroting the regime's bulletins as they were handed out, and never knowing if his own observations would get by the censors or would they lead to his expulsion. And how must it sound to his countrymen back home? It had become untenable, and he wanted to go back and tell the truth.

Unlike Sevareid, he had no qualms about leaving, nor did he plan to return. What he did regret was separating himself from his old friend Murrow.. But once back in America, he would have something priceless...a journal of his years that would tell the story of what he could not relate while in Germany. In book form, it became a great best-seller...*Berlin Diary*.

What of the other members of that unlikely band who collectively became known as Murrow's Boys? Membership in the group, as it turned out, was almost a guarantee of future celebrity. After the war, writers and other broadcasters sought to list who deserved to be included and who did not. It is possible today to mention some whose place in the list is certain. The one criterion is that they were truly CBS foreign correspondents and that they were either hired by Murrow or came under his jurisdiction as radio personalities before or during the War.

Here are some of them, every one owning his unique story:

Howard K. Smith

Charles Collingwood

Cecil Brown

Winston Burdett

Richard C. Hottelet

Bill Downs

WORDS AT WAR.....about a time fast-receding beyond living memory, but a time when the vision of one man, together with a team of eager seekers of adventure, risked much, did something original, and changed the way America and the world would learn about themselves and their own destiny.

Finally, a postscript:

During a critical German counteroffensive near Arnhem Holland, a newsman named Walter Cronkite was sharing a ditch with one of the Murrow boys, Bill Downs. As they huddled together, Downs raised his head and said: "Just think, Walter, if we survive them, these will be the good old days!"

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