

# Charles Bishop Kuralt '55

DSM

There is that one time that Charles Kuralt wanted Captain Kangaroo booted off television. Other than that, we recognize him as the embodiment of honorable intentions and journalistic ethics, the poet laureate of the common man, the leader of the resistance against hype and pizzazz.

The tool that he has used best to help us understand the news of the day is his voice. For years we woke up to it on CBS every morning, those of us who like the news without the bells and tumbling charts. And for years it gave us the news—and some things not really so newsworthy—with carefully measured tones and gentle Carolina inflections, on Sunday mornings.

Not everyone remembers the voice just that way. Mrs. V.A. Hill occasionally rented rooms back in those quiet student days of the 1950s. Years later when she remembered Charles Kuralt, she remembered the voice. “You could hear that boy talk all over the house,” she said. “The other boys used to kid him when he would get talking fast and loud.”

Ed Yoder '56, now a national columnist based at *The Washington Post*, knew Charles in those days, when they both worked on *The Daily Tar Heel*. Yoder remembers that if you sat across the table from Charles and rested your elbows on it, you could feel it vibrate when he talked. It had, Yoder said, “the influential rumble of a diesel.”

“The DTH taught all the lessons of journalism and some of the lessons of life,” Charles has said, “If only we had possessed the wit to learn them.”

Wit was not his problem; time was. “I started dropping courses to keep up with the work on the Tar Heel,” he told the DTH in 1987. “I kept dropping courses until I finally had dropped them all—so I was editor of the Tar Heel, but I wasn't a student.” That explains why, despite membership in Golden Fleece, Order of the Grail, Order of the Old Well, and despite winning the Mangum award for achievement in English, the 1955 graduation came and went without him.

Charles moved on to *The Charlotte News*—and statewide awards for writing—and in short time to CBS as a television correspondent. After several assignments that strike us today as odd—he was based in Brazil for a couple of years, for example—Charles and CBS found the vehicles for Charles's intelligence and his respect for the intelligent viewer: those morning news shows and, of course, the evening news segments, *On the Road*. The love and admiration of millions of Americans followed, along with the respect of his colleagues clearly evident in the roomful of Emmys and Peabodies and awards too numerous to mention. He is one of the five initial inductees into the North Carolina Journalism Hall of Fame.

And still, despite the fame, Charles Kuralt has remained the servant of his home state and his University. This time he is helping out the annual workshop of the state Scholastic Press Association; that time he is kicking off Carolina's Campus Campaign as part of the Bicentennial fund-raising effort. One Sunday morning he's delivering a Commencement address in Kenan Stadium while one Saturday morning he's helping to initiate the General Alumni Association's 13-year-old “Saturday Morning in Chapel Hill” reunion program just months before he narrates the Association's award winning sound/slice show, “On the Road in Chapel Hill.” Another time he is spearheading the effort to build a modern home for UNC's School of Social Work. And another he and brother Wallace Kuralt, Jr. are raising funds to endow a professorship to honor their late father.

Today, it is with pride that we join others at the University who have recognized Charles Kuralt's accomplishments and service. Already he has received the Honorary Doctor of Letters Degree and the Distinguished Alumnus Award, and the Board of Governors have bestowed their highest honor, the University Award.

As Charles Kuralt enters the next phase of his journalism career, this University and the people of North Carolina will continue to call on him. We are confident he will continue to respond. It's in the nature of the man. Everyone agrees.

Well, maybe not Captain Kangaroo. There was that time he stood in the way of CBS's *Morning with Charles Kuralt* expanding to two hours. The Captain won.

But North Carolina and our University are the permanent winners for a life of devotion from Charles Kuralt.