



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
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That's The Way It Was

JEFFERSON CITY – I've spent quite a bit of time in the last week watching the tributes and profiles of one of Missouri's best-known natives, Walter Cronkite. Many of the people of my generation grew up with "Uncle Walter" bringing us news of the day's events each evening in his calm, reassuring baritone, signing off each newscast with his signature line, "And that's the way it was." Cronkite was our guide through many of the seminal events of the 20th Century – the JFK assassination, the moon landings, Vietnam, Watergate and the hostage crisis in Iran. The one thing I found missing in most of the national coverage of Cronkite's death at 92 was his connections to and his love of his home state – Missouri.

Walter Cronkite was born in St. Joseph. During the dedication of his bust in the Hall of Famous Missourians at the state Capitol in 1999, Cronkite said his grandfather traveled west from New York after the Civil War and found his way to St. Joseph, Missouri. He said his grandfather took one look at the place and said 'This is it.'

Cronkite said he fell in love with newspapers at an early age and worked as a newspaper reporter in Kansas City during the Tom Pendergast era, which he called an exciting time for a young reporter. "My mother was horrified and frightened, as I suppose many mothers have been, or should have been, when their children got into newspapering," he wrote in his autobiography.

Cronkite began his broadcasting career at the age of 19 when he was named news director of KCMO Radio in Kansas City. He met his wife Betsy (an MU Journalism School graduate) at the radio station and they married a few years later. When Betsy became pregnant with their first child, she insisted on returning to Kansas City to give birth rather than in Moscow, where Walter was stationed as Bureau Chief for United Press International.

Cronkite received numerous awards during his 60 years in journalism but was left somewhat speechless during the dedication of his bust in the Hall of Famous Missourians on the Senate side of the third floor rotunda in the Capitol.

“One can’t put into words what it’s like for one who has so much pride in his home state, and to know that pride is reciprocated in this extraordinary way,” he said when his bust was unveiled March 8, 1999. “I think how proud my grandfather Cronkite would be if he could only be here tonight.”

I think all Missourians are proud of the accomplishments of St. Joseph native Walter Cronkite, known throughout his career as “the most trusted man in America.” There will never be anyone like him.

If you would like to learn more about this Missouri native and broadcasting legend, I suggest you read his autobiography [A Reporter’s Life](#), written in 1996.

If you have any questions or comments about this or any other issue, give my Capitol office a call at (573) 751-7852, send me an email at wes.shoemyer@senate.mo.gov, or drop a line to Room 434, State Capitol, 201 West Capitol Ave., Jefferson City, MO 65101.