

## J. Nelson Benton, Jr. 1924-1988

A native of Danville, Virginia, Nelson Benton was born in 1924. He married the former Milli Patterson, and together the couple had one son, Joseph Nelson Benton, III. Benton attended the University of North Carolina, and received his Bachelor of Science degree in 1949. Prior to receiving this degree, he served as a fighter pilot in the United States Army Air Force from 1942-1945.

Early in his career Benton worked at WBTV in Charlotte, North Carolina, first as a reporter (1952-55) and later as news director (1955-1960). In 1960, however, Benton joined CBS, a critical move in his career, as a news writer. A year later he became a reporter / assignment editor in New York. From that position he moved to the southern Bureau, and in succession was a CBS News Midwest Correspondent based in Chicago (1965-67); a CBS News Vietnam Correspondent (1967); and a CBS News Washington Correspondent beginning in 1968.

As News Chief for CBS southern Bureau in New Orleans, a position he held from 1963-65, Benton followed developments in southern civil rights. He also covered the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, and the subsequent trial of Jack Ruby. In addition to serving as courtroom reporter at the Ruby trial, Benton was instrumental in making broadcast arrangements for the trial verdict.

Following his coverage of internal unrest in the United States, Nelson Benton recounted the domestic turmoil of other nations. In 1965, he reported on the revolution in Santo Domingo. In 1967, he covered the Vietnam War, and the political developments in South Vietnam. Benton's campaign assignments for CBS also included the third-party candidacy of George Wallace in 1968, as well as the 1964, 1968, 1972, and 1976 national party conventions.

In addition to pursuing news in the field, Nelson Benton has anchored the CBS Morning News, and along with CBS News Correspondent George Herman, co-anchored CBS coverage of the Watergate hearings. He also took part in the CBS broadcast of the Gemini space flights and most of the Apollo moon flights, including the Apollo 11 moon landing flight. In 1973 he began covering energy and the environment for CBS News.

Nelson Benton's long career with CBS gave him the opportunity to experience up close what most people only witnessed on television. He reported on many of the landmark events that shaped the 1960's, and continued reporting on those stories that defined the 1970's.