

Lila Diane Sawyer

TELEVISION NEWS ANCHOR · GLASGOW/LOUISVILLE

ONE OF THE NATION'S MOST prominent television journalists, once dubbed "a thinking man's Angie Dickinson," began her career as a weather girl for WLKY-TV in Louisville.

Diane Sawyer was born on December 22, 1945, in Glasgow to Jean Dunagan, an elementary school teacher, and Erbon Powers "Tom" Sawyer, an attorney who later became a Jefferson County judge. Soon after her birth, the family moved to Louisville where Diane attended Seneca High School.

After winning the America's Junior Miss pageant in 1963 and graduating from Wellesley College, Sawyer returned to Louisville and began doing weather forecasts and part-time reporting for WLKY. She also attended the University of Louisville Law School at night but dropped out after one semester. "It's not gracious to think of law school as amusement, but it was a perfect antidote to what I was doing during the day," Sawyer later said.

Several months after her father was killed in a car accident in Louisville, Sawyer moved to Washington and, aided by a family friend, was hired by the White House press office. When Richard Nixon resigned the presidency to avoid impeachment during the Watergate scandal, Sawyer returned with Nixon to San Clemente, California, and spent four years helping him write his memoirs. She also prepared him for the famous interviews with British journalist David Frost.

"I had a sense of duty," Sawyer told *Parade* magazine. "I felt you don't get to choose just being there in the celebrated times and then get to walk away when someone is living in defeat....I just don't think that's the person I can be."

Her political experience made Sawyer's return to television journalism somewhat difficult. Top *60 Minutes* correspondent Dan Rather made no secret of his opposition to the former Nixon aide when CBS News hired her for its Washington Bureau in 1978. Regardless, Sawyer was a consummate professional who worked long hours and rose through the ranks.

A year after being promoted to CBS's State Department correspondent, she joined Charles Kuralt (and later Bill Kurtis) in hosting the *CBS Morning News*. Then, in 1984, Sawyer shattered the glass ceiling at the highly rated *60 Minutes* by becoming its first

female correspondent. While she was earning an estimated \$1 million annually, Sawyer said "the real source of excitement is to be part of that team...It's an honor to be among those four intrepid souls."

She jumped ship to ABC-TV five years later to take the helm of the new *PrimeTime Live* with Sam Donaldson, followed by a co-host stint at *20/20*, another ABC news magazine. Though one reviewer characterized Sawyer as "the warm ice maiden," Margo Howard, entertainment critic for *People* magazine, wrote that "...she got to the top with a formidable blend of smarts, drive, [warmth], and earnestness."

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In 1999, Sawyer returned to morning news, co-anchoring *Good Morning America* with Charles Gibson. The job was supposed to be temporary, but Sawyer circled the globe approximately 14 times for the show before saying good-bye in 2009 to anchor *ABC World News Tonight*.

Throughout those jobs, the erudite Sawyer covered important news stories such as 9/11 and asked hard questions of countless world leaders. But she also conducted "tabloidish" interviews with such people as Donald Trump's mistress Marla Maples and Mr. and Mrs. (Lisa Marie) Michael Jackson.

Still, Sawyer has been a great success, earning millions in profits for her network employers as well as Peabody Awards for public service, Robert F. Kennedy and Walter Cronkite awards, and nine Emmys.

The 5'9', blue-eyed blonde has been happily married to award-winning director Mike Nichols for more than 25 years. "He's generous and adventurous and a little wild and utterly kind," Sawyer told *People* magazine. Nichols raved similarly about Sawyer, his fourth spouse. "When I first met my wife, I thought nobody can be that perfect. But she is." ■

Diane Sawyer arrives at the White House Correspondents Dinner April 28, 2012 in Washington, D.C.

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