



VA Medical Center's 2003 Veterans Day Parade

Hugh Downs *Celebrity Grand Marshal*



Hugh Downs, one of the most familiar American television figures in the history of the medium, was anchor for ABC News' 20/20 from 1978 to 1999, concentrating on issues of medicine, science, family, adventure, aging, space and the arts.

Selections of Downs' widely acclaimed adventure stories and travels around the globe—trademarks of his 21 years with the program—have been aired in special anniversary editions in 1988, 1993 and 1998. Among others, segments on glider aerobatics, diving features, covering marine archeology, the Great White Shark (from a cage) and visits to underwater habitats; taking the same astronaut training as John Glenn to cover Sen. Glenn's return to space in 1998.

Mr. Downs has enjoyed a distinguished career in radio and television as a reporter, newscaster, interviewer, narrator and host. In 1985 he was certified by the Guinness Book of World Records as holding the record for the greatest number of hours on network commercial television. His record of more than 10,000 network broadcast hours still holds.

Among a number of Emmy Awards Mr. Downs has received was one for his work as host of the PBS program "Over Easy"; a daytime Emmy Award for "Live from Lincoln Center", which he hosted for a decade; and for a 1989 in-depth interview with Patty Duke about her struggle with manic depression. He earned another for "The Poisoning of America", in 1988 that explored the pollution problems and visible damage we are faced with on land, in the air and in water, and how these changes in the environment may hurt us.

Hugh Downs was born in Akron, Ohio. He began his broadcasting career as a radio announcer in Lima, Ohio at the age of 18. After serving in the U.S. Army, he joined NBC in Chicago as a staff announcer, and joined the "Home" Show in New York in 1954. From 1956-57, Mr. Downs was announcer for NBC's "Caesar's Hour" starring Sid Caesar. In July 1957, he helped launch the TONIGHT Show with Jack Paar and stayed with the late-night series for five years. In August 1958 Mr. Downs became host of the daytime game program "Concentration", a role he continued when he began his TODAY Show appearances.

He and his wife Ruth make their home in Paradise Valley, Arizona. They have two children, two grandchildren and a great grandson.