MARY LANEY

After graduating from the University of Wisconsin/Madison, Mary began her career in Chicago at WFLD-TV. From there, she went to cable television and then she joined WBBM Newsradio 78 as a writer, producer and anchor of Week in Review. Mary went to WBBM-TV as a writer and then became a news reporter. Her talents were duly noted and she was offered positions in New York, Washington and Paris. Wanting to raise her children, Tom and Chris, in Chicago, Mary instead decided to accept the post of Editorial Director at WMAQ-TV before becoming news anchor and commentator for the station. While she was at WMAQ, Mayor Richard M. Daley asked Mary to become Chicago's Tourism Director. During Mary's tenure, Chicago went from 40th place to one of the top ten world destinations to visit. Upon reaching her goals in this endeavor, Mary went to CNN as Midwest correspondent and to WMAQ Radio as a talk show host. At this time, Mary also launched Mary Laney, Inc., a production company that specializes in video and audio production, scripts, concepts, and crisis management and training. Mary is a columnist on the editorial page of the Chicago Sun-Times, has written a novel, has sold the option on two movie scripts, and is currently collaborating on a script in Hollywood. She has received more than 100 national, regional and local awards including Emmys, UPI and AP awards. She also has been honored by American Women in Radio and Television, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the Salvation Army, Chicago Firefighters and the Newspaper Veterans Association. She has been cited for excellence by the U.S. Senate, U.S. House, Illinois General Assembly, Chicago City Council and Chicago Public Schools. And she's the first woman honored by the Newspaper Veterans with the “Classy Guy Award”.

Mary does charity work for Haymarket House, Maryville City of Hope and Prentice Hospital. She is also on the Northwestern Women’s Board, the International Visitors Board and the Board of Governors of the Chicago/Midwest Chapter of NATAS. She has many special interests including government, politics and golf. She has been asked to play in Michael Jordan's Celebrity Golf Tournaments annually, along with other charitable tourneys.

PHIL RUSKIN

Phil Ruskin worked in Chicago television as a Staff Director for about 42 years which Phil himself describes as “something of a feat!” He started at WBKB Channel 4 on January 2, 1949, and retired from WBBM-TV Channel 2 in 1991.

Phil, considered the Dean of Chicago Directors, is perhaps best known for his technically-sharp orchestration of WBBM’s 5 O’clock News and 10 O’clock News. Phil’s directing credits go far beyond the news studio. Among the shows he has directed: Joan of Arc, one of Mariette Hartley’s first appearances in a live TV drama; WBBM’s kids program, Good Gang Express; the Joseph Jefferson Awards; several Emmy Awards programs; and various New Year’s Eve celebrations.

Phil left WBBM a couple of times to experience directing elsewhere. He went to London to work as Manager of Television for an advertising agency just as commercial television was ramping up in Great Britain. He also worked at WLS-TV for three years as a staff director. He won two Emmy Awards during his career for Excellence in Directing, while being involved with countless other programs that garnered Emmys, in part, because of his flawless direction.

Phil always kept busy even beyond his career at WBBM-TV. He was an Instructor at Columbia College Chicago for about 20 years. Phil served as an officer or board member for the Radio and Television Directors Guild, the Directors Guild of America and the Chicago Press Club. He spent two and a half years in the U.S. Army during the Second World War, and was with the U.S. Infantry in Europe during the Battle of the Bulge.

Phil married his best friend, Esther Slovick, in Chicago on Dec. 21, 1946. Phil and Esther had three lovely children, Elizabeth, Peter and Jane, and four terrific grandkids. Esther died last year just a few weeks before she and Phil would have celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. Phil says he wants to honor Esther with his induction into the Silver Circle. In Phil’s words: “She mentored me and nurtured me and stood by me for 60 years. She will always be with me and I will always love her. I am such a fortunate man.”