

## MIKE LEONARD



Mike Leonard joined NBC News in October 1980 and, using suburban Winnetka (IL) as his base, has traveled across the country and around the world in search of stories that define our lives. In addition to his regular *Today* assignments, Mike's stories have been on *NBC Nightly News*, *Dateline*, NBC Sports, MSNBC, Showtime and PBS. He has covered political conventions, presidential inaugurations, the World Series, the Super Bowl, the Olympics, championship boxing and countless other events.

International assignments have taken him to Australia, China, Korea, Europe, The British Isles and several other countries. Most often, though, he was found roaming the overlooked territory

of everyday American life, exploring all 50 states for the true characters and humorous situations that color our day.

In January of 2004, Mike took his aging and eccentric parents on a one-month, cross-country RV adventure that became the basis of a four-part *Today* series, a 12-part Public Television series, and then a *New York Times* best-selling book: *The Ride of Our Lives – Roadside Lessons of an American Family*. Mike was nominated for a prestigious Quill Award in the category of Debut Author of the Year.

In 1989, Mike became a broadcasting pioneer as the first and only network correspondent to consolidate all of the news gathering duties — researching, producing, shooting, writing, editing — into one job. He retired from NBC in 2012, after more than 30 years on *Today* and three years after achieving the broadcasting milestone of filing more than 1,000 network stories.

Mike continues to make home movies -- that's how he says he got into the business in Phoenix at age 31. "I had no journalistic experience. I had a young family and no money. A friend had seen some of my home movies made with a Super 8 camera and suggested I try TV. I thought he was nuts, but took his advice and made the rounds showing my crude home movies to news directors. They thought I was nuts too, but a guy at a local public television station let me try out and two years later I was on the *Today* show.

## LARRY YELLEN



Larry Yellen — Fox 32's investigative reporter, legal analyst and weekend anchor — has led investigations ranging from sweatshops in Guatemala to the high numbers of children burned by fast-food hot chocolate drinks. He has also covered the trials of three former Illinois Governors — Dan Walker, George Ryan and Rod Blagojevich — and O.J. Simpson's criminal and civil trials.

A native of Waukegan, Larry's path toward broadcasting was nurtured by his parents, Morris and Dorothy Yellen, where he grew up surrounded by newspapers at the breakfast table, accompanied by Wally Phillips on WGN radio. His parents emphasized hard work and good

grades, which paid off when Larry was awarded scholarships to the University of Michigan (Chick Evans Scholarship) and Northwestern Law School (Henry Wigmore Scholarship).

At Northwestern, Larry met his wife Sue who, along with their daughter Maggie, has been a constant source of loving support (and ideas for stories!). It was Sue who suggested he investigate safety at Chicago concert venues, which resulted in Larry getting roughed up in a "mosh pit" at the Aragon Ballroom. Similarly, Maggie helped Larry get exclusive video of fans rioting when Christina Aguilera showed up late for an autograph session.

Larry's journalism career began in 1977 with the Muskegon (MI) *Chronicle*. Two years later, he moved to Washington, D.C. to work for the Better Government Association. His expose' of political clout in USDA loan programs, done jointly with *Sun-Times* reporter Bruce Ingersoll, won the National Press Club's highest award for Washington correspondence.

In 1983, Larry joined the investigative team at WLS-TV. Ten years later, teaming with WLS's Chuck Goudie, he uncovered the evidence that cleared Chicago's Joseph Cardinal Bernadin of sex abuse allegations. The story led to his hiring at WFLD-TV in 1994.

Larry has won seven Chicago/Midwest Emmy® Awards, nine Peter Lisagor Awards, and a regional RTNDA Edward R. Murrow Award. He gives much of the credit for these accomplishments to his cameramen, producers and managers, who are among the best in the business. He loves his work, but has always managed to find time for fly-fishing, tennis and, most importantly, his family.