



## KANSAS LEGEND BIOGRAPHY

### John Cameron Swayze (1906-1995)

In a time when mass media was undergoing dramatic changes, a native Kansan became one of America's friendliest faces. People throughout the country knew John Cameron Swayze, the first network news anchorman, both by face and by voice. Swayze's role in the media continued to evolve throughout his days as a media professional, but his popularity never waned.



John Cameron Swayze was born in Wichita, Kan., in 1906. Even in his school career, Swayze was a notable speaker with a distinctive voice, which led him to win oratory competitions in his Atchison, Kan., high school. Swayze attended the University of Kansas but decided to pursue a career on Broadway and moved to New York in 1929. The stock market crash, however, made it difficult for Swayze to find work, and he returned to Kansas City the following year.

In 1930, Swayze took a job as a reporter for The Kansas City Journal-Post. Soon Swayze was giving news updates from the KMBC radio microphone located in the newsroom. By 1933, he began appearing on television in an early experimental program taped in the Kansas City Power and Light building.



Swayze moved to KMBC radio full time in 1940, for which he earned \$30 a week. Eventually, Swayze left Kansas City for a position with NBC's western news division in Hollywood, but NBC moved him to New York in 1947. The following year, Swayze began hosting a radio news program titled "Who Said That," and in the fall, Swayze was chosen to moderate the first televised Republican and Democratic national conventions.

On the heels of all of his success, Swayze became the host of NBC's first television newscast, the fifteen-minute "Camel News Caravan." He memorized most of his scripts in order to keep his eyes on the audience, and his signature sign-off became legendary: "That's the story folks – glad we could get together." In 1956, Swayze stepped down from his position with NBC.



Although Swayze would never again be a newsman, he continued to appear on television for more than 20 years as a spokesman for Timex watches. Swayze popularized the brand's timeless slogan, "It takes a licking and keeps on ticking!" Timex sales soared with the success of this advertising campaign. Periodically, Swayze made cameos in film and had a brief stint hosting and narrating the CBS television drama series "The Armstrong Circle."

Swayze remained in good health until he suffered a broken hip in 1995. He passed away in August of the same year from natural causes at age 89. Today, television viewers can still see Swayze as the first person shown in a montage of former anchors at the beginning of the "NBC Nightly News."

