

AVENUE

A full-page photograph of Deborah Norville, the host of the magazine, wearing a black hat, a black long-sleeved blouse with a large bow at the neck, and a black skirt. She is wearing large, ornate earrings and has her hands in her pockets.

NOVEMBER 2007

DEBORAH
NORVILLE
GIVES THE
INSIDE STORY TO
DONNY
DEUTSCH

KEN
AULETTA
ON THE
NIGHTLY
NEWS BLUES

CHRISTOPHER
MASON
REMEMBERS
'80s SOCIAL ICON
JERRY ZIPKIN

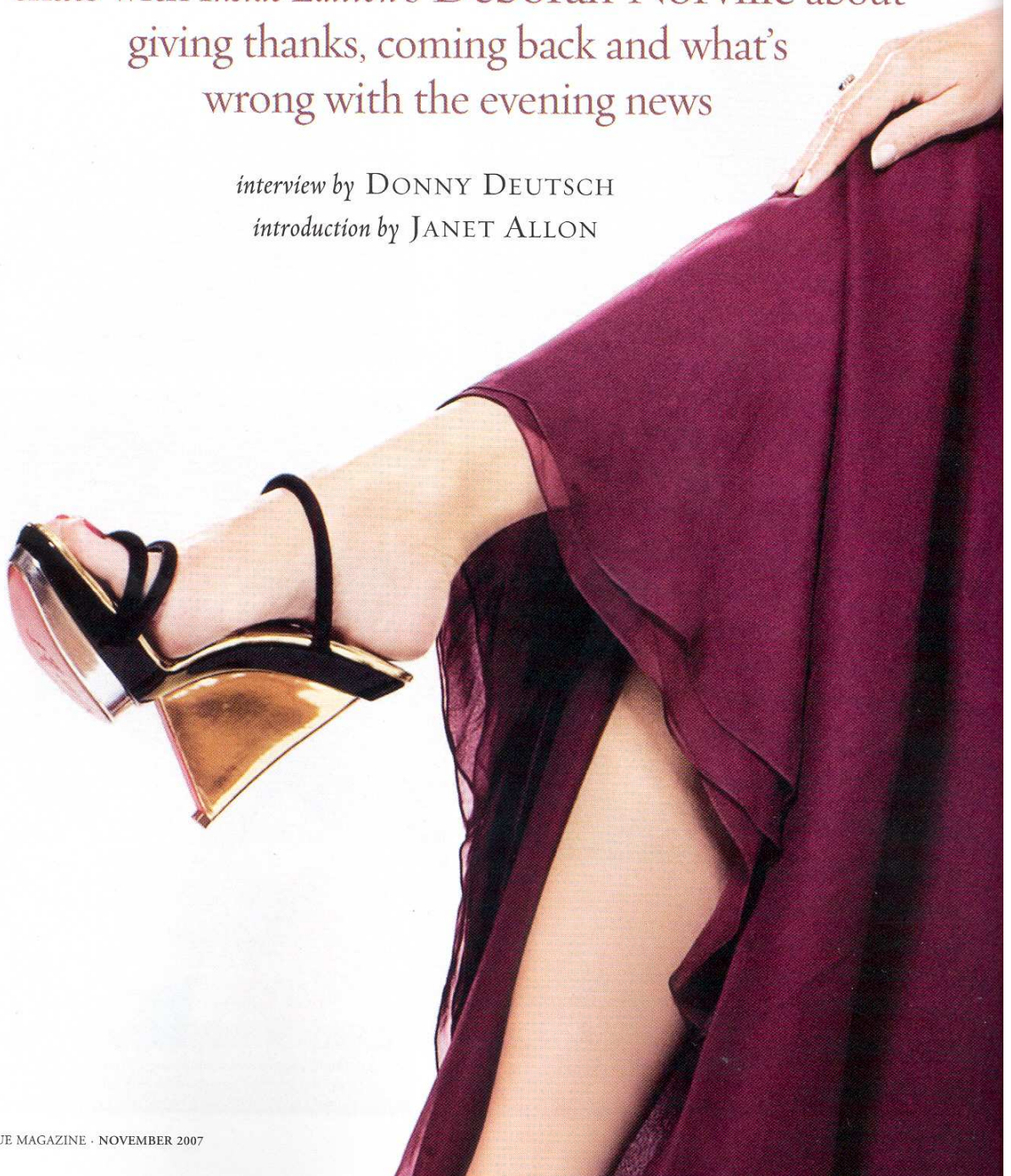
*Author and Inside Edition
host Deborah Norville*

AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

Branding guru and television interviewer Donny Deutsch chats with *Inside Edition*'s Deborah Norville about giving thanks, coming back and what's wrong with the evening news

interview by DONNY DEUTSCH

introduction by JANET ALLON





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ARTHOUSEMANAGEMENT.COM ■ Fashion Assistants ERIN M. FISCHER AND VICTORIA J. CHIN

J. Mendel berry mousseline wrap gown. Christian Louboutin Pic black, gold and white triangular
wedge platform sandals. De Grisogono rose gold Boules earrings.

If anyone could be labeled the comeback kid, it would have to be Deborah Norville. At one time, as co-host of the *Today* show with Bryant Gumbel, she seemed to be on track to become the first woman anchor of a prestigious network evening news show. All that ended when Norville took the fall for the *Today* show's declining ratings and the departure of the beloved Jane Pauley. Fired by NBC, and lambasted in the press, Norville's television career all but vaporized. Those days seem like ancient history now. The personable and attractive blonde, a former Georgia Junior Miss, has been hosting *Inside Edition*, the longest-running syndicated news magazine—where, by the way, she succeeded Bill O'Reilly—for the last 12 years.

She also became an author along the way, penning children's books and self-help tomes like *Back on Track: How to Straighten Out Your Life When It Throws You a Curve*, and her latest, *Thank You Power*. Deborah and her good friend, advertising genius and CNBC-TV host Donny Deutsch, recently got together for a chat about the latest chapter in her life, what it feels like to come back, and the fortunes and struggles of another woman in the television anchor hot seat, who happened to succeed Norville at the *Today* show, Katie Couric.

DONNY DEUTSCH: It's a pleasure to be talking to you. This is exciting. First of all, tell me the essence of your new book, *Thank You Power* . . . where gratitude is kind of the new black, in effect.

DEBORAH NORVILLE: It is. When you talk about gratitude, it's sort of shapeless and ephemeral, nothing really to it. Thank-you power is real. It is the science behind what most of us suspect when we look at what's working in our life as opposed to the garbage that's going wrong. Thank-you power is why that works—why you seem to make better decisions, why you feel better about yourself when you wake up in the morning, why, when you go to a tough business situation, you're really strong and you're really good. You know those moments. Thank-you power is the way to make sure that all the cylinders are firing.

DD: How do you do that? How does thank-you power work and make me better in a situation?

DN: It starts with you, every day—it doesn't have to be the same time everyday, but on a regular basis—literally writing down what was good in your life that day. There's something very affirmative about that. When you see all these affirmations in totality, there's a kind of elevation that happens. Scientists have actually proved this—there's a hormonal change that goes on. Oxytocin starts going through [the body], and you really do have this sort of elevated sense.

DD: Gratitude has a chemical effect.

DN: Gratitude does have a chemical effect, yes. Look, I'm a journalist—I'm paid to be skeptical. It's my job. I want proof. That's why I wrote this book. When I read this research, I thought, "Man, I've got to show this to people."

DD: Good transition. When journalists write books, they're usually about journalism. It's unusual for a journalist,

a well-known journalist, a broadcaster, to be writing a self-help, feel-good book. Talk to me about that.

DN: There aren't too many nationally known journalists still in the business who had the ups and downs as publicly as me. Fifteen years ago, my career was handed to me in a paper sack. And I'm back. I'm anchoring a show that brings nearly 5 million viewers every day. I've got a 20th wedding anniversary coming up in December, and I've got three kids who actually enjoy being with their parents. Fifteen years ago, I was at rock bottom.

DD: Take us to that moment. We all know about the sensational stuff . . . the very public firing by NBC, the terrible press blaming you for the decline of the *Today* show. How did that make you feel? And where do you find the reservoir to pick yourself up after something like that?

DN: I had to recognize that I had fallen into the trap that so many of us as successful professionals do: I had allowed my definition of who I was to be what I do.

DD: Oh, I'm sure.

DN: You know. Like for you, Donny, you're the ad guy with the TV show.

DD: You get a comma after your name.

DN: And it's a lovely thing to be so well-identified with your profession, but there's a dark flipside to it. And I was consumed by that dark side. I had allowed my definition of who Deborah Norville was to be what Deborah did. Suddenly, I wasn't doing anything. And the likelihood was that I wasn't going to do anything in this field for a very long time, if ever. So, I had to redefine who I was. A couple of things happened. First of all, it didn't matter that I wasn't the TV lady. I was still a valued and valuable person. My core was



Karambelas black cocktail dress with sleeve drape. Christian Louboutin Pretty Woman black patent knee-high stiletto boots. LaCrasia opera-length gloves. Tom Binns small cuff with large screws.

START RETHINKING THE NEWS

Questions for Ken Auletta

by JANET ALLON

When *AVENUE* wanted someone to help sort out the problem of the dwindling audience for the network evening news, the quandary of Katie Couric, and what it all means for the business and for the country as a whole, Ken Auletta was our go-to guy. No one knows the media better than the longtime *New Yorker* columnist and author of 10 books. He is known for his clear-eyed analysis, meticulous reporting and refreshingly candid takes on such personalities as Ted Turner, Les Moonves and Lou Dobbs.

On the road reporting his next piece, Auletta did not disappoint. He generously offered his insights into the Katie problem, the state of the networks and how the right woman could negotiate the inescapable double standard in the television news business.

AVENUE: What are the problems faced by the 6:30 network news? And to what degree do the network evening news programs still move the country?

KEN AULETTA: As reflected in their shrinking viewership, network newscasts are in large measure the victim of forces beyond their control. People, particularly women, are often not home to watch in the early evening. Or viewers no longer feel compelled to wait until evening to retrieve news that is at their fingertips all day long via the Web or 24-hour cable newscasts. In this sense, network news—like all media—is the victim of more consumer choice. Information has become more democratically available, which is good. But the information is not always better. Those (like me) who believe network newscasts spend too much time seeking to entertain rather than educate their audience, also believe that

back. And, once my core was back, I was able to make the decisions that were right for me. And I didn't have to worry about what the naysayers, the opinion-makers, or gossips were going to say. I didn't give a flying fig if they liked whether I went to *Inside Edition* or not. I knew that the decisions I was making from that point forward were right for me, right for my family, and the rest of them could take a hike.

DD: You mention *Inside Edition*, which is a wild success. Some people refer to shows like that as tabloid shows. How do you feel about that?

DN: You know, look up "tabloid," because I did.

"Look up 'tabloid,'
because I did. It means easy
to digest, easy to hold.
Inside Edition is very easy
to digest, and
we're accessible."

DD: It's no longer a bad word, by the way.

DN: It's fine. "Tabloid" means easy to digest, easy to hold. We are easy to digest, and although you don't hold a television show, we're very accessible. We were all over the recent O.J. Simpson story and the Anna Nicole Smith story. But at the same time we also did a nearly three-minute piece (which is very long for our kind of television program) on Hillary Clinton's campaign. And there is no way that the Clinton camp wouldn't have been thrilled with this portrayal, because we have an audience that they can't get to any other way.

DD: Sure.

DN: Our audience, our research tells us, looks to *Inside Edition* as one of their primary sources of information. They really want to know about O.J., but we also really feel it's important that they know about the presidential candidates. So my hope is that we'll send a DVD to Mr. Giuliani, Mr. Thompson, Mr. McCain, Mr. Romney, and all the other candidates, and they will go, "Whoa . . . we'd really like to get the *Inside Edition* treatment." We ask tough questions . . . you know you're going to have tough questions.



Chloé green silk tie-neck blouse from Bergdorf Goodman. TSE exaggerated trousers with suspenders. Makins black velour fedora with grosgrain ribbon.

(Ken Auletta interview continued)

network news has diminished its value, which gives viewers less reason to turn to the network for authoritative news.

AVENUE: What do you think the future of broadcast news is? Will it be personality-driven? Fair and balanced? News with a clear agenda?

KA: When you subtract the ads, and bumpers, and music, a half-hour network newscast only runs for about eighteen and one-half minutes. This betrays, in part, the networks' desire to squeeze more money out of a dwindling asset, as well as its desire to try and lure more viewers. Inevitably, more TV choices—or iPods or IE or Google News—will shrink the audience further. Because news brings real stature to a network, and provides a news service throughout the day to its 200 or so affiliated TV stations, I don't think network news will soon disappear. But the business folks who run the networks will continue to try and differentiate themselves with fresh personalities and with opinion or attitude, which is cheaper to produce than overseas bureaus or lengthy investigative reports. And this will further diminish "the brand."

AVENUE: What do you think happened with Katie Couric? Was she set up to fail?

KA: Any anchor making about \$15 million a year is not a victim. Knowing that the evening news audience was shrinking, that its average age was about 60, and that many fewer women watch, CBS tried to address those woes by recruiting Couric. They didn't set her up to fail. They wanted her to succeed. They invested monies in a new set, and a huge marketing campaign. But they—and Couric—failed to think hard enough about the kind of newscast they were going to produce. And though they understood what a smart interviewer Couric can be, they failed to grasp that she is not an accomplished news reader, which is a requirement. The softness of the newscast inevitably reinforced Couric's lighter *Today* show persona, which detracts from what evening news viewers seek: authority.

DD: Let's talk a little bit more about television news in general—the evening news. All three anchors are highly talented, so this is not an indictment of them. I know Katie and Brian personally. They are both fantastic people. But you watch the 6:30 news, and all the commercials are for incontinence and prune juice. Literally, every single one of them. The audience is 64.

DN: And they're falling apart fast.

DD: What does that mean for the networks' evening news?

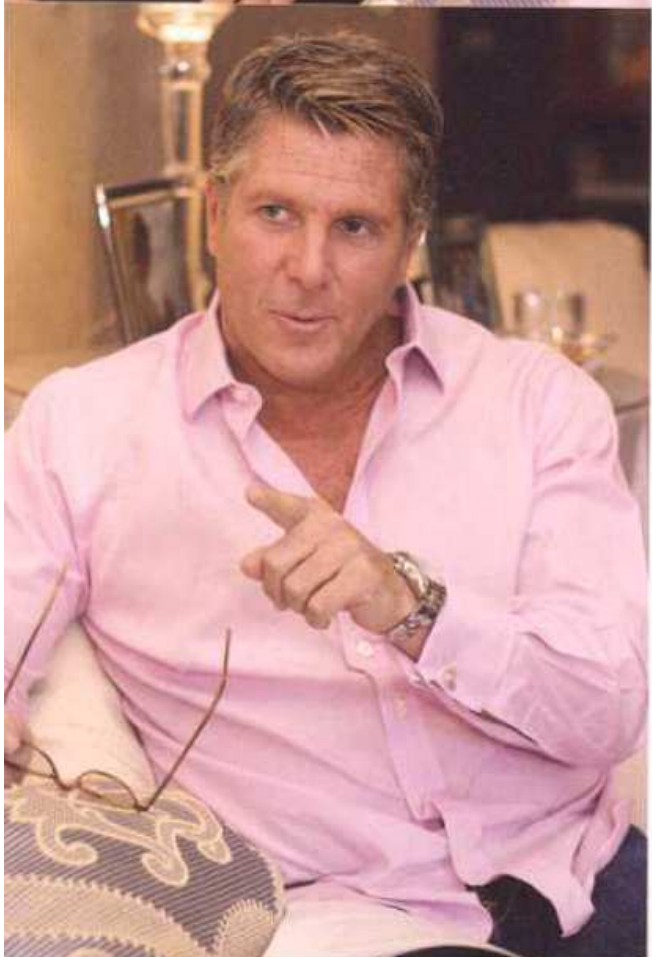
"So what do we do
[about dwindling evening
news numbers]?"

Do we wave the white flag
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And it just shatters me
to say that."

DN: I don't think it bodes well at all. Great minds in television tell me that this will never happen, but I harken back to the days of Mr. [William S.] Paley, who truly believed that a public trust was being served in financing the operation for the CBS news division. Back then you really didn't make money on news; it was only when *60 Minutes* starting hitting that they realized *cha-ching* was the sound that show was making. What I would like to see happen is for the evening news to move from 6:30 in the evening, or even 5:30 in some markets, to 8 or 8:30 at night. It is impossible for me to see the evening news on any regular basis at 6:30 in the evening. At 8, my life is calmer. I can sit down and watch the news.

DD: But you and I both know the networks would never give up a half hour of prime time when now they're going to be competing with the people who do it 24/7. It's just never going to happen.





DN: I thought that citizenship and freedom and an educated populace were core values.

DD: Come on, Deborah, you know better. They've got shareholders. These are businesses. It's capitalism. You then need to move the broadcasting into government hands, which obviously we're not going to do. You and I both know that it is an impossibility for that to ever happen.

DN: I agree it's highly unlikely, but I hate to say impossible.

DD: I'll say impossible.

DN: So what do we do? Do we wave the white flag and say: "It's over. America doesn't care"? I think America does care. Maybe television isn't the place for them to get their information. And it just shatters me to say that.

DD: It's the Internet.

DN: I think there's actually a real opportunity here. One of the great things that the networks do in their news departments is vet stories. The producers, the minds that decide "this, this and this are worthy of extended coverage on our newscast," are the smartest of the smart. It would be great if someone of the bona fides that those producers have were to create a clearinghouse on the Internet where I could go as a truly interested news consumer, bookmark this site, and know that this will take me to the sites I need, because no one site will have everything. I personally love the material on the Council on Foreign Relations site. Their policy reports are just so insightful, and they're apolitical. But the Internet in its current state of organization isn't very effective for the truly motivated news consumer.

DD: One more news question: our friend Katie Couric, who once replaced you on the *Today* show. What are your thoughts on why she hasn't succeeded? I love Katie. But is it that her brand, the very thing that made her spectacular in the morning, doesn't work for the evening news? I think it's very simple. Sylvester Stallone could not be in a comic role. It doesn't mean he is not a funny guy; we bought his brand as an action figure. That's what he was. Katie's brand is what made her great in the morning. She's bubbly, your next-door neighbor, bright . . . that's the brand. That's why we love you, Katie. She was never bought as the brand, or never groomed as the brand that anchors the evening news. So yes,

of course, as soon as she walked in they said, "Let's repackage it and stay true to her brand." But guess what? To our early conversation, 64-year-olds are watching it, and we're not going to change behavior. Now, they're trying to recast it, but it's not her brand. And it's unfortunate.

DN: There's probably a lot of truth to that. I think CBS also did Katie an enormous disservice with that humongous publicity campaign leading into it. Katie, who we already knew was being paid \$15 million just to have the job, was then supported by an advertising campaign that cost the network \$13 million, which is unheard of. It's just jaw-dropping. So for \$28 million, what they've seen is a decrease in the number of viewers over the past year. The network made a huge error

"For \$28 million, what CBS has seen is a decrease in the number of [Evening News] viewers over the past year. The network made a huge error in the way they set up this thing."

in the way they set up this thing. I also think that (and I don't know if this was Katie's publicity team that she had worked with, or if this was the network publicity team's idea) the listening tour, a very smart thing for a political candidate who is unknown to the New York electorate, was silly in this case. Katie was known to the television audience. They didn't need to go trot her around. And I think that, again, did her a disservice. What they should have done right from the start was maybe get Katie a plane ticket, a flak jacket, and put her on a plane to Baghdad. By the time they did that, it was too late.

DD: See, I don't think that she can win at this point. Her recent trip to Baghdad didn't help.

DN: The ratings didn't move. And now she's being criticized for that. It's really difficult. ♦

(Ken Auletta interview continued)

In the morning, they want to wake up to pleasant personalities; in the evening, viewers are more businesslike.

AVENUE: What will happen to Couric?

KA: She is an immense talent, but if her viewers continue to flee (no other word is appropriate), I suspect that sometime in the next year or so she will be an important, and expensive, part of a more youthful *60 Minutes*.

AVENUE: Will a woman ever be able to successfully anchor the 6:30 news solo?

KA: Sure. But one of the secrets of the surveys the networks conduct is that there are two essential traits the audience seeks in the network anchor: authority and likability. Traditionally, women newscasters received higher grades for likability, and men for authority. There are double standards—women are expected to look prettier. However, the woman who scores high in both authority and likability stands a good chance of becoming the second solo female anchor.

AVENUE: How can Les Moonves fix this?

KA: I'm not sure. I thought Couric and CBS did a really good job when they went to Iraq and Syria recently, yet their numbers dropped when they should have risen. Does this mean that Couric has a Dan Rather problem, that the audience has a frozen impression of her? I don't know.

AVENUE: To what extent are Couric's struggles a barometer of the country's feelings about a potential woman president, aka Hillary Clinton?

KA: I'm not big on victimitis. So far, Hillary Clinton seems to be doing pretty well in the polls. And though she is a woman—and black—Oprah ain't doing too badly. If Couric fails as evening news anchor, she'll have a second act.