

Beloved Mississippi television meteorologist dies from COVID-19

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By Magnolia State Live



Mississippi's longest-serving meteorologist on local television died of complications from COVID-19

Dick Rice, chief meteorologist emeritus for WTVA in Tupelo, died Saturday at North Mississippi Medical Center in Tupelo. He was 80.

Dick Rice, the longest-serving meteorologist in local television, died from the coronavirus Saturday at North Mississippi Medical Center in Tupelo. He was 80.

Rice first appeared on local television in 1979 when WTVA hired him after his more than two decades in the U.S. Navy to do the weather for the morning and midday newscasts.

He eventually became the station's chief meteorologist and served in that role until he stepped away from his day-to-day duties in 2011.

He has been inducted into the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences Silver Circle and the Mississippi Associated Press Broadcasters Association Hall of Fame for his more than 25 years of dedication to the television industry.

His passing came two months after the death of his wife, Jill. They were married for 60 years.

https://www.djournal.com/letter-to-the-editor/article_5683bc7f-9283-5471-be87-5793e5f1f2d6.html

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Jan 24, 2021

Dick Rice was a weather warhorse

You often hear the name Walter Cronkite when the conversation centers on legendary television broadcasters. There are very few who have matched his reliability, credibility and longevity. But for North Mississippi viewers, Meteorologist Dick Rice met all of those high levels of performance.

He was the most consistent and levelheaded meteorologist that I ever had the pleasure of working with. On air, he could be calm and informative while in the midst of a terrifying outbreak of tornadoes and playful and light-hearted when the skies were clear. He was always there, hitting his mark at the right time with the right information ... a weather warhorse.

An unlikely transplant from Massachusetts, Dick embraced North Mississippi and viewers embraced him. For more than forty years he made the area his home, and over most of those years, every weekday night, tens-of-thousands of viewers let him into their homes.

A face they could trust to deliver not video game-like graphics, but reliable information about how the weather would impact their lives.

Over the years, Dick tutored many freshly minted meteorologist who benefited from his real world experience in weather forecasting. He also caringly advised them on their career paths. Many moved on to lasting jobs at other stations across the country.

I have fond memories of a side talent that Dick had. I, along with many co-workers at WTVA, benefited from his wizard's touch at growing blue-ribbon quality tomatoes. He regularly shared the seasonal harvest from his garden in Mooreville.

Dick Rice, the consummate weatherman, will be greatly missed. And by the way, Walter Cronkite served as the anchor of the CBS Evening News for a mere 19 years. Dick was the Chief Meteorologist at WTVA for more than 30 years.

- Guy Hornbuckle
Huntsville, Alabama