

Charles Wheeler: the great innovator

 blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2008/07/04/charles-wheeler-the-great-innovator/

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[wheeler.jpg](#) Charles Wheeler was quite simply the foreign correspondent's correspondent. He was the benchmark for TV news reporting. Other journalists got bigger scoops, had more charisma or brought down governments. Meanwhile, Wheeler remained honest, engaging, human and intelligent at a consistently high standard for more than half a century.

His great looks and whiskey-smooth voice helped. But what he understood was the special language and grammar of TV journalism. His scripts were actually quite personal in an unassuming way. [Listen](#) to his reports and you will be surprised at how often he departs from the strictly factual without ever appearing biased or opinionated.

Telling the story

He also understood completely that when performing on TV in the midst of war and riots you have to speak more quietly and with fewer adjectives. The pictures will tell the story and the reality provides the drama.

He knew that he personally could bring people into the heart of the story by standing in the right place and talking directly one to one to the viewer. It sounds obvious but watch how he does it. There is no hand-waving or pointless walks, just presence. He was often in front of camera but never in the way of the story.

Pioneering

So in that sense [Wheeler](#) was an innovator who helped create some of the best of broadcast news. He worked in the States for long periods and adopted many of the techniques of American network news during its most pioneering years in the 1960s.

Later on [Wheeler](#) was not happy with the direction that news was taking. Few veteran journalists ever are. But while he represented the best timeless values of journalism he also embodies its ability to adapt to new technologies and styles.

Read Martin Bell's tribute to Wheeler [here](#).

Watch Newsnight's wonderful 12 minute obituary film narrated by Jeremy Paxman [here](#).

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