



Merchant of Words: The Life of Robert St. John

Terry Fred Horowitz

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During World War II, Robert St. John of NBC, broadcast from London opposite CBS's Edward R. Murrow. Afterward, St. John would become a noted writer and commentator on world affairs, as well as a prominent and vocal supporter of the state of Israel. In *Merchant of Words: The Life of Robert St. John*, Terry Fred Horowitz not only documents St. John's accomplishments and adventures but takes readers behind the scenes with St. John, who, for over three quarters of a century, served as a firsthand witness to history as it was being made in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

From his auspicious beginnings when lying about his age in order to join the U.S. Navy during World War I to his final days as a well-established author and "righteous gentile," St. John was both a participant and critical observer of American and world history. He became the youngest newspaper editor-publisher in the United States, breaking a story on prostitution in Cicero, Illinois, that resulted in his beating by Al Capone's mob. When World War II began he became a war correspondent for the Associated Press, later escaping from the Nazis when they invaded Yugoslavia, he was wounded by a Messerschmitt's strafing. He subsequently wrote *From the Land of Silent People*, the first full account of the fall of Yugoslavia and Greece during the war. Shortly afterward, he was hired by NBC as a radio broadcaster, covering the Blitz in London and D-Day and becoming the first commentator to announce the end of the war in Japan. During the McCarthy era, he was "pinklisted" and his passport was confiscated for a year, stranding him in Switzerland. During its War of Independence he started his lifelong love affair with Israel, becoming the only foreign correspondent to cover, in person, all of its wars, including the Israel-Lebanon War of 1982, during which he was known as the "dean of correspondents."

In addition to working as a regular contributor for the *World Book Encyclopedia*, St. John eventually wrote twenty-three books, many of them about Israel and the Middle East. These included well-received biographies of David Ben-Gurion (*Builder of Israel*), Eliezer Ben-Yehudah (*Tongue of the Prophets*), Abba Eban (*Eban*), and Gamal Abdul Nasser (*The Boss: The Story of Gamel Abdal Nasser*). *Merchant of Words* is a must-read for anyone interested in the history of journalism and the adventures of recognized war correspondent. For historians and history buffs it offers unique details from a journalist's perspective on World War II, the Cold War, the Red Scare, Vietnam and the history of Israel and the Middle East.

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