



# That's the Way It Is: A History of Television News in America

*Charles L. Ponce de Leon*

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When critics decry the current state of our public discourse, one reliably easy target is television news. It's too dumbed-down, they say; it's no longer news but entertainment, celebrity-obsessed and vapid.

The critics may be right. But, as Charles L. Ponce de Leon explains in *That's the Way It Is*, TV news has *always* walked a fine line between hard news and fluff. The familiar story of decline fails to acknowledge real changes in the media and Americans' news-consuming habits, while also harking back to a golden age that, on closer examination, is revealed to be not so golden after all. Ponce de Leon traces the entire history of televised news, from the household names of the late 1940s and early '50s, like Eric Sevareid, Edward R. Murrow, and Walter Cronkite, through the rise of cable, the political power of Fox News, and the satirical punch of Colbert and Stewart. He shows us an industry forever in transition, where newsmagazines and celebrity profiles vie with political news and serious investigations. The need for ratings success—and the lighter, human interest stories that can help bring it—Ponce de Leon makes clear, has always sat uneasily alongside a real desire to report hard news.

Highlighting the contradictions and paradoxes at the heart of TV news, and telling a story rich in familiar figures and fascinating anecdotes, *That's the Way It Is* will be the definitive account of how television has showed us our history as it happens.

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