

NBC names CBS producer to head news division



NEW YORK (AP) — NBC named Andrew Lack, a longtime CBS News magazine show producer, to head its embattled news division Wednesday.

"They want me to spend a lot of time with their producers," said Lack, executive producer of CBS' *Street Stories*. "They need to know that they've got a guy who cares how these broadcasts get made and how good they can be."

"Someone who respects deeply what they do for a living is coming to the office of the president of NBC News, and looking forward to working with them, and trying to lead them in a way that brings out the best in them," he said.

Lack, 45, succeeds Michael Gartner, who announced his resignation last month in the aftermath of the botched *Dateline NBC* report in which a General Motors truck was rigged to catch fire on impact.

Lack, a 16-time Emmy Award recipient, winner of the Peabody, Polk and many other awards, is himself no stranger to controversy.

As creator-executive producer of *Face to Face with Connie Chung* in May 1990, he was criticized for that show's re-enactments of news events. "I tried it once," Lack said. "Once was enough."

Lack said his top priority was *NBC Nightly News*, the third-ranked evening newscast, anchored by Tom Brokaw. "That's the flagship," Lack said. "The first place I'm heading is Tom's place. He knows he has in me a real partner and an ally."

Brokaw said he was thrilled that Lack was coming aboard. "At this time in the history of NBC News, we need a strong leader with a thorough knowledge of television news," Brokaw said. "Andy Lack fits that bill on all counts."

Lack also was creator and executive producer of *West 57th*, the jazzy, prime-time news magazine described by *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network TV Shows* as a "fast-paced, yuppie version of *60 Minutes*." It premiered in August 1985 and aired for four seasons.

"I couldn't think of a better person to help us," said NBC President and Chief Executive Officer Bob Wright. "It's hard to get a good producer to walk away from pro-

duction and I think we caught him at the time in his life when he wanted to do that."

Wright said Lack's name kept cropping up during the search for the news chief, but never as a leading contender.

"They'd say ... oh, and, by the way, there's this guy you ought to talk to, Andy Lack. But he's a producer," Wright said. "Finally, I came to the view that I was going to spend some time with him."

Lack joined CBS News in 1976, became a *60 Minutes* producer in May 1977 and joined the *CBS Reports* unit in 1978, becoming its executive producer in 1981.

He was senior executive producer of *Crossroads*, the weekly newsmagazine anchored by Charles Kuralt and Bill Moyers during the summer of 1984.

Gartner resigned after the embarrassing staged incident that took place during a report to show the alleged fire dangers of the "sidesaddle" fuel tanks in General Motors pickups made from 1973 to 1987.

The truck had been rigged — without viewers' knowledge — with tiny rocket engines to ensure it would catch fire if gasoline leaked.

Cuomo backs out of court consideration

WASHINGTON (AP) — Mario Cuomo, the best-known candidate for the upcoming Supreme Court vacancy, formally withdrew from consideration Wednesday before President Clinton had narrowed his list of prospects.

The New York governor said he told Clinton of his decision by telephone April 1 and followed up with a letter Wednesday. In the letter, Cuomo said wanted to remain governor to help New York's economic recovery and to give political support to Clinton's "good work."

He said Clinton called him April 1 to discuss the vacancy. "I think this is a simple thing, I feel a commitment to the state," Cuomo said in a telephone interview Wednesday.

Clinton refused earlier in the day to confirm reports of the withdrawal, but said, "I think he's terrific."

Cuomo's decision removes the only candidate with celebrity quality from the long list of names earning speculation in Washington. It indicates Cuomo may run for a fourth term as governor.

Aides said Clinton is at least a month away from making his choice. There is no hurry, since Justice Byron White will not retire until the end of the court's term, usually late June or July.

Cuomo's decision, which was first reported by *Newsday*, was unknown to some of Clinton's closest advisers until now. That is an indication of how hard the president is working to avoid leaks that plagued some of his Cabinet selections.

Among the candidates mentioned by administration officials are Judge Judith Kaye, chief judge of New York's highest state court; Judge Patricia Wald, who sits on the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington; and Judge Richard Arnold of Little Rock, who sits on the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Arnold is an old friend of Clinton.

Clinton has by no means limited his choices to those three people, White House officials say.

In the rampant speculation about the Supreme Court opening, Cuomo had emerged as the liberal wing's sentimental choice, though the Clinton inner circle had never tipped its hand about Cuomo's chances.

But the loss of a high-profile candidate in Cuomo could rob Clinton of one of the qualities he is seeking in a nominee. A White House official familiar with the search process said Clinton wanted "someone who will make people say 'wow' whether they agree with the person or not."

Officials: Ruling hurts black schools

WASHINGTON (AP) — Black university officials said Wednesday that a recent Supreme Court desegregation ruling and state cost-cutting measures were threatening their existence.

"This is genocide," said Alvin Chambliss, a lawyer fighting the state of Mississippi in its effort to close the Mississippi Valley State University campus and merge another traditionally black university.

"It's a political war that if we lose, black folks in America will go back to the cotton patch," Chambliss said.

Officials from the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, the only group representing all black colleges and universities, ended a four-day conference pledging to strengthen the traditional networks that support black colleges.

They argued that any reduction in traditionally black institutions will hurt the nation's work force.

"In the short-term the states will save money by closing schools," William Blakely, a University of the District of Columbia trustee said. "But they lose the productive capabilities of these institutions."

The Supreme Court recently ruled that Mississippi had not done enough to desegregate its universities, reviving moves to close Mississippi Valley State, the school that prompted the 17-year court battle.

Mississippi's Board of Higher Education proposed a plan to close the university, merge mainly black Alcorn State University with a white institution, and retain Jackson University as an "urban institution," Blakely said.

Similar battles over black colleges are looming in Alabama and Louisiana, the black college organization said.

"Mississippi is a focal point, but not the only point," Blakely said. "We can't ignore what is going on in other states. We need to be prepared everywhere."

While historically black colleges and universities make up only 4 percent of the nation's total, they graduate 34 percent of all black baccalaureates.

Black colleges and universities have traditionally provided educational opportunities for the poor and minorities, including those whose test scores are too low to qualify for other colleges.

Blakely said closing black colleges, or merging them with other white schools who have tougher admission standards, will keep potential black students from going to college.

"If black colleges and universities had ironclad admissions policies you would screen out high potential students who can succeed academically given the chance," Blakely said. "The bottom line is, we really can't afford to lose minorities in the work force."

Students at sit-in demand cultural center

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. (AP) — Students holding a weeklong sit-in at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill say they'll take their demands for a black cultural center to the school's chancellor when he returns today.

Chancellor Paul Hardin has been at the National Collegiate Athletic Association basketball championships in New Orleans while the students have demon-

strated.

"He's been partying for a week now. I think he should be ready to face the issue," Sean Denan, a freshman from Charlotte, said Wednesday.

The student protesters want Hardin to commit to a particular size and site for a new free-standing center. Hardin, who has already endorsed plans for a center, has said he won't commit to a specific size and location until

after an April 13 hearing and recommendation from the campus buildings committee.

The students, along with the Black Cultural Center Advisory Board, want a building of 53,000 square feet constructed at the center of campus.

Last year, Hardin cautioned against allowing a separate building for the center to become a symbol of racial separatism.

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