“People can tell their stories better than we can write them.”

This is how Albert T. Primo saw television news serving the public interest. Primo created the *Eyewitness News* format. His storytelling template catapulted ABC’s largest affiliates to 1970s ratings dominance. Hundreds of stations adopted Primo’s innovations, which are now the industry standard. Family was core to Primo’s philosophy. His news teams gave viewers reliable and relatable faces to share life’s events. Primo’s own family was his joy. Married to his wife Rosina for over 50 years, this beloved father and grandfather died at his home in Old Greenwich, Connecticut on September 29th. He was 87.

Al Primo’s story is the American dream. As a boy, he never saw a TV. But he became the man who revolutionized how the medium reports news. Born to Italian immigrants in Depression era Pittsburgh, Primo’s family lavished love. But they lacked in career guidance. High school counselors advised him to get a factory job. After literally making a wrong turn during a job search, Primo walked right onto the set of the rest of his life.

Starting as mail clerk for Dumont’s WDTV in 1953, Primo learned the TV news trade of the time. College grad (Pitt), husband, and assistant news director at Westinghouse’s KDKA came next. Westinghouse gave Primo a pallet to paint the future of TV news. After assuming news director duties at company flagship KYW-TV 3 Philadelphia, Primo unveiled his vision.

Eyewitness News reflects Primo’s idea that reporters act as on-camera eyewitnesses to events. Prior to Primo, both local and national newscasts were anchor centric. Rare was the reporter appearance. Primo’s careful reading of union contracts discovered that reporters cost no more on-air than in the newsroom. KYW debuted *Eyewitness News* and its band of on-scene, on-camera reporters in September 1965. Primo perfected his vision at WABC-TV in late 1968. He pushed a second key innovation at both stations—talent diversity. Giving viewers a “family” meant reflecting their ethnic and gender make-up. Primo made African Americans Trudy Haynes, John Johnson, and Melba Tolliver star reporters. Marciarose Shestack was the first woman anchor in a major market. Gloria Rojas and a TV newcomer Geraldo Rivera showed Primo’s forward-thinking emphasis on the Latinx community. And, in a nod to his heritage, Primo made Rose Ann Scamardella a household name (partially with help from Gilda Radner and *SNL*).

In network and consulting roles from the 1970s-1990s, Primo set the template for news presentation across cable, network, and local TV. Critics accused Primo of creating “happy talk” news and the “if it bleeds, it leads” culture. In reality, neither were direct Primo creations. But his direct work in breaking the Willowbrook State School story with Rivera won a Peabody. Into the early 2000s, Primo continued as an artist and visionary. He saw the Internet as visual reporting’s new platform, and founded ForeignTV.com in 1999 to introduce audiences to news from around the world. In 2003, Primo returned to his family emphasis, this time focusing on kids. Teen Kids News put children front and center as newscasters (and many were the kids of former Primo colleagues).

Primo was fond of saying in later years that he counted his friends and blessings. He was both to an entire industry and countless associates. Al Primo was preceded in death by wife Rosina and son Albert Gregg. He is survived by loving daughters Valeri and Juliet, sons-in-law Jeremy Lack and Marvin Lee, and granddaughters Livia and Eden.