

MARK AUSTIN

Pro-Chancellor,

Mark Austin is an internationally respected journalist and broadcaster, best known currently as ITV's leading newscaster. He started his career in journalism on the Bournemouth *Evening Echo*, switched to the BBC and then joined Independent Television News, which produces the news for ITV, in 1986. Mark has covered many of the major world stories of the past two decades, including both Gulf Wars, the Balkan conflict, the September 11 attacks, the Rwandan genocide, Hurricane Katrina and the Asian tsunami. He effectively became the face of ITV news in 2006, as successor to Sir Trevor McDonald.

Mark was born in Portsmouth, went to Bournemouth School and then faced a choice between going to university and being a trainee reporter at the *Evening Echo*. He chose the *Echo* and, as he puts it, 'got stuck in' to what he still believes was the best training for the job. After four years Mark took a job with the BBC: a pivotal move, because the training it offered was second to none. He started at BBC World Service radio, and then transferred to BBC TV News. In turn he was a newsroom writer, news reporter and sports reporter. Then in 1986, as a seasoned broadcasting journalist, he joined ITN as a sports correspondent. His first assignment, an Ashes tour of Australia, was as successful for him as it was for the England cricketers. But versatility was required too, because while in Australia he also found himself covering the bizarre 'Spycatcher' trial.

By his own account Mark took this job in order to become a foreign correspondent. He had his wish, and the defining moment in his career came in 1990 when ITN sent him on the first of many international postings: two stints as Asia Correspondent, in 1990 and again in 1996, and Africa Correspondent in 1993. As Senior Correspondent from 1998 to 2002 he covered all major international and domestic news stories.

Here we can mention only a few of his achievements during a 15-year period when he was on the move for more than six months each year, often travelling to places everyone else was trying to leave. He witnessed many extraordinary, sometimes horrific scenes, among which Rwanda is still his most disturbing memory, unmatched even by the 30-odd wars which he covered. With masterly understatement he describes Rwanda as 'once-in-a-career stuff'. Here he reported the worst of the genocidal massacres; this nightmarish experience, and especially the memory of children dying as he and his crew filmed, haunted him for months afterwards.

But TV journalism has brought Mark much joy and satisfaction too. He saw the end of apartheid and the coming of majority rule in South Africa, and witnessed historic events such as the inauguration of President Nelson Mandela. It is easy to forget that this was no safe assignment: civil war was still a serious possibility six months before the first elections in which the Black majority had the vote. But here he lived, as ITV's Africa Correspondent,

through those momentous times; here he saw the miles-long queues of black people at the polling stations, and watched Mandela himself vote. And South Africa also became very special to him in a personal sense, for here his elder daughter Madeleine was born.

Foreign affairs has been one of Mark's two great passions; the other is sport. During his career he has covered five Olympics, including Beijing 2008, and four football World Cups. Occasionally he has taken on the role of explorer-journalist; thus last year, in another 'first' for UK television news, Mark broadcasted live from Antarctica. Incidentally this could well have been his last appearance, because at one point a 250-ton iceberg collapsed, almost crushing the boat carrying Mark and his crew.

Mark Austin has been the presenter of ITV Evening News since 2003 and News at Ten since 2006. He remains a quintessential working journalist and continues to cover some of the biggest stories around the world; indeed until yesterday he was in Washington DC, sending us reports of America's historic presidential election. Far more than a news anchorman, he has the reputation of a reporter's reporter, who takes pride and pleasure in putting together an authoritative story in the age of 24-hour news, with all its emphasis on live broadcasting and sound-bites.

The outstanding quality of Mark's work has been recognised by a number of prestigious awards which include an International Emmy for his work on the Mozambique floods in 2000. He won a joint Gold Medal at the 1996 Film and Television Festival of New York, for his reporting of the conflict in Bosnia. His war reporting in the Balkans also brought him a Gold Nymph award at the 1999 Television Festival of Monte Carlo. Previously he had won the top prize for Sports News at the 1993 Royal Television Society Sports Awards for his coverage of a drug scandal at the Barcelona Olympics. With a second Gold Nymph at Monte Carlo in 2000, and Gold and Silver Medals at the New York Television Programming Awards, his list of international awards is hugely impressive.

Pro-Chancellor, I have the honour to present Mark Austin, and ask you to confer upon him the degree of Doctor of Arts, *honoris causa*.