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Victor LT Museum Hosts New Documentary on Victor's Home Town Hero – Lowell Thomas

If you watch a newscast today, download a news video, listen to the radio or a podcast then you are benefitting from the work of Lowell Thomas.

In the 1930s Lowell Thomas was arguably more famous than any American journalist has ever been. Thomas dominated both network radio news and the newsreels shown in movie theaters back when they represented the only chance a mass national audience had to hear or see, rather than just read, the news. His voice, face and take on contemporary events were almost unavoidable.

Lowell Thomas, who grew up in and got his start in journalism in Victor, Colorado, is the subject of a new documentary film that will be shown in Victor Saturday, Nov. 3. The Victor Lowell Thomas will present, courtesy of the film's producer, Rick Moulton, *Voice of America: Lowell Thomas and the Rise of Broadcast News*. The full-length feature film will be shown at 3 p.m. at the Victor Community Center, 2nd St. and Portland Ave., Victor, CO. Admission is by donation at the door.

Thomas moved to Victor with his family during the days of the gold rush and graduated from Victor High School. He was a news boy and editor with the Victor Daily News and Victor Record. A creative, entrepreneurial, technologically savvy figure, he helped create Twentieth Century American journalism: mostly nonpartisan, sober, portentous, cosmopolitan but still mildly xenophobic. In the process, he helped determine how America saw the world in that century in which America dominated the world.

Thomas, also quite the swashbuckling adventure, took American audiences with him on the radio and in newsreels, helped established personality driven journalism and reported, earlier than any of his colleagues, from around the world. During the First World War, Thomas traveled to the Middle East and discovered T.E. Lawrence, the man upon whom he bestowed an outsized and inextinguishable celebrity as Lawrence of Arabia. Thomas was a role model for intrepid foreign correspondents today like Anderson Cooper and Richard Engel. The man who helped invent this way of reporting and telling the news was the Indiana Jones of journalism: crashing planes, falling from horses, staring down rifles but always coming back with the story. His stories, both beloved and belittled for their grandiosity, shaped American knowledge of the world and influenced foreign policy. Thomas was educating the country about the world right before the Second World War - when America's involvement in the world would prove perhaps most crucial. Later he courageously managed to slip into Tibet, where he interviewed the Dalai Lama just before the Chinese invaded.

In due course his enterprising zeal led him to found Capital Cities, which eventually bought ABC before being sold itself to Disney for \$17 billion.

Journalism in this country and around the world continues to follow his model: aggressive, entrepreneurial, unabashed, technologically-advanced. Indeed, before helping invent radio and television journalism, Thomas put together in 1919 what may qualify as the world's first multi-media production: his presentation on Lawrence in Arabia, employing film, photos, music and narration, and

he showed it to two million people around the world. The fame Thomas brought Lawrence helped him acquire an important role in the conferences that drew up new borders and implanted new monarchies in the Middle East, borders and regimes whose consequences we are still dealing with today.

Thomas' journalism is the journalism many today describe - sometimes bitterly, sometimes reverently - as "mainstream journalism." In many ways he was - as the host of the dominant newsreels - the original deep voiced omnipotent journalistic narrator: the first "voice of god." But his journalism was not always traditional. This documentary will tell the story of its creation.

Moulton, is an award winning documentary filmmaker, who knew and filmed interviews with Thomas in the early 1980s. The project enjoys the support of the Thomas Family and has full access to the Thomas archives. In 2012 Moulton teamed up with Lola Van Wagenen and Mitchell Stephens to produce the web exhibit: Lowell Thomas and Lawrence of Arabia: Creating History. The highly acclaimed site examines the relationship between Thomas and T.E. Lawrence, underscoring an interesting irony: while Lawrence has become a legendary, iconic figure, the man who created that legend - and became for a time America's best-known journalist - has almost been lost to history.

The same team that worked on the web exhibit, Moulton, Stephens and Van Wagenen, has collaborated on this production together with David Wright, of the UK, a Co-Producer and Director of Photography. Van Wagenen, a historian by training, is Associate Producer. Stephens has co-written the script with Moulton, and helped with interviews as well as being featured on camera. Stephens, a professor of journalism at New York University and the author of a number of books on journalism, has just released the first biography written on Lowell Thomas, *Voice of America: Lowell Thomas and the Invention of 20th-Century Journalism*. The Production was Co-Produced and shot by David Wright an award winning cinematographer. The narration is done by Robert Seigel, long-time host of PBS's *All Things Considered*.

Moulton has been an independent filmmaker since 1972. His career began in the 1960s with the making of *Freeform and Oceans*, surf movies made in Hawaii and California. He came back east with his wife Melinda and worked for Vermont Public Television in the 1970s. As an independent filmmaker in the early 1980s, his film *Legends of American Skiing* won the Baniff Mountain Film Festival and was nationally released on PBS. Moulton has produced numerous productions for the ski industry. Other clients include IBM, The Orton Foundation, and NBC. Rick has extensive archival experience, setting up the Care Collection for the New York Public Library, a film archive for the National Ski Hall of Fame, and most recently working with the Lowell Thomas collection.

For a preview of the documentary's introduction, please visit <https://vimeo.com/243898993>.

To reserve seats, visit VictorMuseum.com.