

Jonathan Alter

Senior Editor and Columnist

Jonathan Alter is an award-winning columnist, television analyst and author. Since 1991, Alter has written a widely-acclaimed Newsweek column that examines politics, media and social and global issues. For more than a decade, he has worked as a contributing correspondent to NBC News. His 2006 book, "The Defining Moment: FDR's Hundred Days and the Triumph of Hope," was a national bestseller. Alter is also an originator and author of Newsweek's "Conventional Wisdom Watch," which uses up, down and sideways arrows to measure and lampoon the news. As an editor, he helps shape the magazine's overall news coverage.

The 2008 campaign marks the seventh presidential election Alter has covered for Newsweek. He frequently interviews American presidents and other world leaders, regularly breaks news and has authored more than 50 Newsweek cover stories on everything from shrinking confidence in the American news media, to Bill Clinton's first interview after leaving the presidency, to Barack Obama's first magazine cover before he arrived in the U.S. Senate to Alter's personal story of living with cancer. Beyond politics and media, he has written extensively over the years about terrorism, anti-Semitism, at-risk children, national service and a wide variety of other issues.

Among his exclusives in the 2008 campaign season were that Barack Obama would seek the presidency (October, 2006), that Mike Huckabee would be a factor in the GOP contest (August 2007) and that after a quarrel with President Clinton, Sen. Edward Kennedy was likely to endorse Obama. (January, 2008).

In his role at NBC News, Alter has appeared on all NBC broadcasts including "TODAY," "NBC Nightly News," "Meet the Press," NBC News specials, MSNBC and CNBC. He appears twice weekly on "Countdown with Keith Olbermann" on MSNBC. On Election Night, 2000, Alter went on the air to break the story about confusing "butterfly ballots" in Palm Beach County, Florida that shaped the outcome of the election.

Alter has earned many awards for his political columns, including first prize from the National Headliner Awards for Special Column on One Subject for a series of columns on life after 9/11. He was also part of the teams of Newsweek reporters and editors awarded the prestigious National Magazine Award for General Excellence in 1993, 2002, 2004. He received the John Bartlow Martin Award in 2001 for his reporting on the death penalty and first place for commentary in 2007 for a story on the legacy of Martin Luther King from the National Association of Black Journalists. Alter also received the 1994 Clarion Award from Women in Communications for Best Magazine Opinion Column, and the 1993 National Headliner Award for Consistently Outstanding Feature Column.

His many awards for media criticism include the 1987 Lowell Mellett Award and two New York State Bar Association Media Awards. In 1995, Alter was selected as one of the nation's most influential media critics in a survey of leading media executives and scholars published by the Freedom Forum Media Studies Center at Columbia University. He also won the 1987 Gerald Loeb Award for Distinguished Business Reporting, and a Mentoring USA Award for encouraging mentoring. In 1993,

Alter was a Fellow of the Japan Society in Tokyo and in 1997 he was the Ferris Visiting Professor of Press and Politics at Princeton University.

Alter joined Newsweek as an associate editor in the Nation section in March 1983, and became media critic the following year. He was named a senior writer in February 1987 and a senior editor in September 1991. For two years prior to joining Newsweek, Alter was an editor at The Washington Monthly. He has also freelanced articles for such publications as The New Republic, Esquire, Slate and The New York Times.

A Chicago native, Alter received his B.A. in history with honors from Harvard in 1979. Besides "The Defining Moment" (Simon and Schuster), widely praised by critics, he is coauthor of "Selecting a President" (Farrar, Strauss & Giroux) and the coeditor of "Inside the System" (Prentice Hall). He is married to Emily Lazar. They live in New Jersey with their children