

Mediabuddies discloses ITN's secret weapon to

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ITN, the British television news service, used a secret weapon to beat the rest of the world in reporting the first landing on the Moon in 1969, it was disclosed today in an interview on www.mediabuddies.com, the industry's worldwide reunion club.

Telling the first full story of the landing, Frank Miles, the TV journalist, said that the secret weapon was an American "electronic typewriter" which could make captions appear instantly onto television screens.

It was the first time that a character generator was used as a television tool and it enabled Miles to tell the story of the descent and landing on the moon, as it happens, in real time.

The whole operation was shrouded in secrecy. Only six people within ITN were allowed to know of the machine's existence until the night. A production assistant) and Miles were literally locked in a room for several hours each day to learn and practice on the machine.

"My first caption was transmitted on the night of July 20, 1969 as the astronauts went behind the moon for the last time before the final descent....and when they reappeared I flashed captions on the screen as a running commentary every fifteen seconds throughout the 'eleven minute drop.'

"We flashed 'Touchdown' the exact instant I heard Buzz Aldrin say 'Contact Light', knowing this meant a five foot long probe beneath the craft had touched the surface and the engine would cut. After flashing the caption for several seconds I changed it to 'The Eagle has landed' and, fortuitously, a moment later Armstrong said "Houston this is Tranquility Base. The Eagle has landed."

"We won the race to be first with the news...BBC had to wait for Armstrong to say he had landed, a minute or so later. We also beat the Americans and were praised by the media on both sides of the Atlantic.

End

Notes to Editors

The full interview with Frank Miles is published on www.mediabuddies.com. Miles started his journalistic career as an office boy to become a top television journalist. When he retired from ITN in 1988 it was said of him: "Twelve men have walked on the moon's surface. In spirit there was a thirteenth present - Frank Miles."

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