

00:00:00	Music	Music	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:01	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
00:00:12	Jesse Thorn	Host	I'm Jesse Thorn. It's <i>Bullseye</i> .
00:00:14	Music	Music	"Huddle Formation" from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team plays. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.
00:00:22	Jesse	Host	Jim Lehrer died a few weeks ago. He was 85. He, of course, hosted PBS's <i>News Hour</i> .
			<i>[Music fades out.]</i>
			He was an anchor in public broadcasting for well over 35 years. He moderated a dozen presidential debates. With his Texas accent, he was affable and charming, but he was also incisive and unwavering when he needed to be. He was a giant in the world of journalism. And particularly in the world of public broadcasting.
			When I talked to him in 2010, he'd just written a sort of mystery novel. Yes, he also wrote over 20 novels. The book I talked to him about was called <i>Super</i> . It was set in the early 1950s, aboard the Super Chief—the legendary train that ran through the American Midwest and Southwest. Anyway. Let's go to my apartment, where I recorded an interview with the late, great Jim Lehrer.
00:01:16	Music	Music	Jazzy transition music.
00:01:22	Jesse	Host	<i>[Jim agrees several times as Jesse talks.]</i>
			I know that you went to a junior college—got an associate's degree before you went to four-year school. My mom's a junior college professor and I find that often—often people who go to JC, it's... because they're taking some unusual path. It's rare for someone to go to JC because they're, you know, just doing two years here and then two years there and that was the plan all along. What led you... what was—what was your path?
00:01:56	Jim Lehrer	Guest	The reason I went to JC, to my junior college, was because we couldn't afford to go the University of Texas. And I had to go to work. And the junior college in Victoria—for \$40, I could go to school the whole year. <u>Forty</u> dollars. And I took this job working in a bus depot. Worked eight hours a day, at night. And the—but I also was editor of the newspaper. Wrote and edited every story that was in the newspaper. Wrote the editorials, in addition to the news stories. And then took it to the local newspaper and they printed it. And then I came back to the campus and gave it—handed it out to all 320 of my fellow and sister students!
			So, anyhow, it was a—it was a marvelous experience, but it never occurred to me that I would not eventually go on to college and finish and get a degree, and be—get a journalism degree and be a writer and be Ernest Hemmingway or Ernie Pyle or one of those people. And the—H.L. Mencken, for instance. They had this library about the size of—you know—of two bedrooms, at this little junior

college. And there was a librarian there and said, “You wanna be a newspaper man, is that right?”

And I said, “Yes ma’am.”

And she said, “Well, there’s a guy named—you ever heard of H.L. Mencken?”

I said, “No. No.”

“Well, look—there’s a book down here. You ought to read this. It’s his—it’s a biography of him, and it was written by a guy named William Manchester.” William Manchester went on to write many books, including *Death of a President*. He was the guy who wrote the book about the Kennedy assassination.

And anyhow, I read the—I read the book and I went, “This is what I wanted to be.” Then I wanted to be H.L. Mencken. But all these things just happened and I—I’ve just been so fortunate at each step along the way. When it came time that it—okay, now I was gonna go a university and finish and get a journalism degree. I wrote, ‘cause I had a typewriter available—I had a typewriter in the office of the bus depot I was working. I wrote 37 colleges and universities and asked for their catalogues. Only state colleges. I mean, state universities. And I mean, there was no private schools like Harvard or any of that on my horizons. And decided on University of Missouri, because it had a great journalism reputation and all that. And I wrote a letter and applied at the University of Missouri.

00:04:18 Jesse Host

Working in a bus depot while you were still in school—working nights—must have been a great place both to produce an entire newspaper, but also to—you know, a place where your thoughts are on—you know, literal places you can go.

00:04:41 Jim Guest

Absolutely. It was a—it was—it was the—a—the best breeding ground I have ever have for—to be a writer. I mean, I had—I was at—behind a ticket counter, one night, and some—I heard a woman scream! And it was a very small waiting room. And I went in the waiting room and it was into the—it was a woman’s restroom. A woman had slit her wrists. One day, a guy was at the ticket counter and as he was—he had said he wanted a one-way ticket to Houston. And I made out the ticket, and just as I put the ticket on the—on the—on the counter, two guys—two cops came in and arrested him. This man had just robbed somebody and all this sort of stuff.

One time, they had to—the border patrol was coming in and rounding up—‘cause it’s South Texas. Lot of brown skinned people around. And they were being rounded up as illegal immigrants. I had a guy I worked right next to, as another ticket agent, who was fill-in for me and whatever. And he stole money from me. I didn’t know that, by the way. He sold tickets that were—he sold them, but it looked like they were—I was the agent, and so he pocketed the money and then the auditors thought I had stolen the money and it was—I mean, I learned a lot about the—and also learned how to speak into a microphone.

[Jesse laughs.]

00:06:05	Jesse	Host	You want me to demonstrate that?
00:06:06	Jim	Guest	<i>[Excited.]</i> Yes! Absolutely! <u>Please!</u> Okay. Alright. It was the first time I was paid money to speak into a microphone. <i>[Takes a deep breath.]</i> This is call and this is Victoria, Texas—halfway between Houston and Corpus Christi.
			<i>[Loudly, with a droning intensity.]</i> May I have your attention please. This is your last call for Continental Trailways 8-10PM. Silver sides, air conditioned through-liner to Houston. Now leaving from lane one for Inez, Edna, Ganado, Louise, El Campo, Pierce, Warton, Hungerford, Kendleton, Beasley, Rosenberg, Richmond, Sugarland, Stafford, Missouri City, and Houston! ALL ABOARD! Don't forget your baggies, please.
00:06:40	Jesse	Host	Ten stars!
00:06:41	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Jesse: Is what I award that performance.
			Jim: Thank you. Thank you.
00:06:44	Jesse	Host	Your first broadcast journalism job was at KERA, right?
			<i>[Jim confirms.]</i>
00:06:51	Jim	Guest	In Dallas, if I'm not mistaken.
00:06:54	Jesse	Host	That's right. Public television station.
00:07:01	Jim	Guest	How did you end up in... public TV rather than commercial TV? I was a newspaper reporter, a newspaper editor—worked—I was city editor of the afternoon newspaper, in Dallas. <i>Dallas Times Herald</i> . I had written a novel. It was made into a movie. We made \$45,000 on the movie, which was a lot of money. This is 19... 59.
			No, wait, I'm—no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.
00:07:24	Crosstalk	Crosstalk	Jim: This was 1969.
			Jesse: '62?
			Jim: Sorry. 1969.
00:07:27	Jim	Guest	The book came out in 1966. Movie came out in '69. And my wife, Kate—we still had—we had two kids and a third one coming. And Kate said, "Well, you know, you always said you wanted to write full-time. Let's do it." And she was a writer, too. And so, I quit to write full-time. And the public television station, in Dallas—I'd only been on television one time, and it was kind of a local, meet-the-press type thing. And they—they called me and asked me if I would be a consultant to them, for news and public affairs. Work two days a week. They didn't do any programs, so I figured, you know what the hell have I got to lose?
			<i>[Jesse chuckles.]</i>
			And it was great! And then we—one thing led to another and we decided to try an experimental news program. Got a Ford Foundation grant. I wrote a proposal. And Fred Friendly—the famed Fred Friendly who was in the Ford Foundation—funded us. And suddenly I was on television. And I hired nothing but newspaper—former newspaper reporters. And did that for two years and then I was offered a opportunity to go to PBS! To go to Washington.

And I never worked in commercial television. I never, ever—in fact, it—the University of Missouri School of Journalism, to be on television—I mean, give me a break! I mean, that’s not—serious people don’t go on television! Serious people write for newspapers and magazines. So, I didn’t take any courses. I had no longing to do it, at all. No desire to do it. But I had the opportunity and it was the best thing that ever happened to me. I mean, it was—I never turned back, and I have—as I say, I’ve never worked any other kind of television but public television. And I’ve been blessed to be with the—with people who shared all my values and all of my aspirations. It’s been terrific.

00:09:10 Jesse Host

It must have been exciting to get involved in public television at a time when public television was really figuring out what it was and what it could be.

00:09:24 Jim Guest

Absolutely. Absolutely. It was—it was kind of created as a result of a—of a—of a meeting. You know, there were some people who thought, “Well, now we’ve got this thing, here. It’s called educational television.” Now, educational television was, you know, television from the classroom. And there was television stations all over the country. Education—‘cause it had been mandated by congress. And then somebody said, “Well, let’s—let’s do more than just—just more than classroom stuff. Well, let’s do things for children.” And *Sesame Street* got developed. And they were—they started doing documentaries. And I can’t—the time I came in with KERA and then the PBS—PBS had just been formed.

Public Broadcasting Service, which is—everybody called us a network. It’s not a network, at all. It’s essentially a programming service. It’s a cooperative. It’s run by all—the three—or, more than three hundred public television stations. And it keeps reinventing itself all the time. It had—the purposes kind of remain the same, but there’s always been funding problems in public broadcasting.

00:10:28 Crosstalk Crosstalk

Jim: And you’re always—

Jesse: [*Laughing.*] You don’t have to tell me! We’re sitting in my second bedroom!

Jim: Yeah—well, yeah! [*Laugh.*] Have you heard the—have you heard that?

Jesse: Yeah.

00:10:33 Jim Guest

Jim: Yeah. Yeah.

And so, you know, the interesting thing about it—about not having a lot of money to broadcast in a business that requires a lot of money to broadcast, is that you get your priorities straight, whether you want to—you don’t—you can’t afford to waste any money on something that doesn’t matter. And so, you—if you say, “Well, we could—we could do this with a cute story about, you know, pineapple sundaes or something like that. Or! We could probably do something on the fall of the Berlin Wall, maybe send somebody there for an extra day.” Well, we do the Berlin stuff, ‘cause you can’t do both! So that really focuses your mind. And it exists to this very day. I mean, public broadcasting right now—the *News Hour*. We’ve been on the air for 35 years. We have financial problems. But we

are more vital, more viable, and more innovative now than we were before, because we have to use our money so wisely.

We use every little technological thing—you know, you used to spend thousands, millions of dollars on satellite feeds. Well, you can do that, now, through the internet! But it's very difficult to do, and it takes time. You gotta have—and you get—you gotta have people, most of them young, who know how to do—use the technology to our advantage. And it keeps you—a little bit of hunger is good for people who are trying to do serious business in journalism.

00:11:57 Jesse Host

We'll finish up my interview with Jim Lehrer, after a break. Stick around, it's *Bullseye*, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:12:04 Promo Promo

Music: Cheerful, upbeat music.

Speaker: It's Oscar season, and we don't want you to show up on the red carpet unprepared. That's why NPR's *Pop Culture Happy Hour* is here to help you sort through the nominees and separate the best from the rest. Listen now, and we might even help you dominate your Oscars pool.

00:12:21 Promo Promo

[Music fades out.]

[Sound of a gavel banging three times.]

Music: Upbeat music plays under dialogue.

Speaker 1: Judge John Hodgman ruled in my favor.

Speaker 2: Judge John Hodgman ruled in my friend's favor.

Speaker 3: Judge John Hodgman ruled in my favor.

Judge John Hodgman: I'm Judge John Hodgman. You're hearing the voices of real litigants. Real people, who have submitted disputes to my internet court, at the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. I hear their cases. I ask them questions—they're good ones—and then I tell them who's right and who's wrong.

Speaker 1: Thanks to Judge John Hodgman's ruling, my dad has been forced to retire one of the worst Dad Jokes of all time.

Speaker 3: Instead of cutting his own hair with a Flowbee, my husband has his hair cut professionally.

Speaker 4: I have to join a community theatre group.

Speaker 5: And my wife has stopped bringing home wild animals.

Judge John Hodgman: It's the *Judge John Hodgman* podcast. Find it every Wednesday at MaximumFun.org, or wherever you download podcasts.

[Sound of a gavel banging three times.]

Speaker 1: Thanks, Judge John Hodgman!

00:13:17 Jesse Host *[Music ends.]*
It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. We're replaying my 2010 interview with the late Jim Lehrer. He was the host of PBS's *News Hour* and the moderator at 12 presidential debates. He died last month. He was 85.

You know, TV news is—by its, sort of, very nature—a linear form. There's no way to—I mean, there is to some extent now, in new media, but essentially what you're doing is—unlike a newspaper where you're essentially providing a smorgasbord of different stuff. Everything from crossword puzzles, to the Jumble, to international news, to—you know—a real estate column. Television news is presenting something to you where the assumption is that you're going through from beginning to end and, you know, paying attention to all of it. Even if, maybe, you care a little bit more about one part or another.

How do you think that that linearity—that need to, sort of like, make a judgement of, "This is the stuff that everyone who's watching should get," effects your news judgment, relative to—for example, to in print?

00:14:38 Jim Guest Sure. Well, that's basically the old-fashioned view. I mean, it's the gatekeeper form of journalism. I've been a gatekeeper for over 30 years. And before, when I was an editor of a newspaper, I was gatekeeper. 'Cause essentially you just outlined it. Stuff comes and you're known by the stories you don't do as well as the stories you do do. And it's a—you're absolutely right. It's linear. Now, the new world order in information is completely horizontal. It's coming at you all the time and you turn to your right and your left and it's over you, under you. It's everywhere. The flood information. You cannot go anywhere without somebody either yelling at you, or they—or telling you something that you, analytically or—otherwise it may be true or may not be true or whatever.

In the old days, in the linear days, we would—we, the old-fashioned gatekeeper, would sort through all of that and then we'd have a neat and tidy newspaper. Or a neat and tidy newscast. Now, the horizontal—what we're doing with the *News Hour*, we are—we're going where—I've—as I've said a million times to people, I don't care if you watch it linearly as a television program, or you watch it horizontally on a pink iPod. It's the journalism that matters. And what we're also doing, and everybody's doing it. We're not the only ones—is we—anybody—if you're a—if you've got a kind of—a journalism perspective that is real and that is verifiable and professional, we'll make a deal with you. Collaboration to advertise, journalism—that's where—what we have to do.

The idea that the newspaper's gonna afford to send to or three reporters to city hall anymore, forget it. You know? You—they may send one reporter, and that person may also have to do television, may also do blogs, may also do radio things. Etc., etc., etc.. And that's what we all have to do. All of us who care about journalism and are in the business, we have to—we have to familiarize ourselves with all of the horizontal stuff and let the mechanics worry about how we get all that out there. And eventually, what's happening now, is it's become almost—there's gonna be a

reinvention of the linear approach, 'cause there's so much stuff. Most people do not wanna spend all day in front of a computer screen reading blogs or listening to—or listening to radio. Not your program, but other programs—people screaming at each other.

00:17:05 Jesse Host Most people do wanna spend their whole day listening to my program.

00:17:08 Jim Guest Yes, that's right. But that's the only exception that I can think of.

[Jesse agrees.]

Everybody but that. But I could—I—we would have folks—the new gatekeepers, they won't be old white men like I am. They'll be a—there's gonna be whole new generation of gatekeepers and they're gonna have to build trust, just like Newspaper A and Newspaper B and television, newspaper, whatever. And they will say, "Okay. I wanna listen—I wanna know what Jesse had to say, today. But I don't have—I didn't have time to listen to—I don't wanna hear the whole thing, maybe. But I wanna be—if I do, I wanna be able to do it. But I also wanna know what to—what did *The New York Times* say about this, today? And also, by the way, someone—there's some—there's a weird blogger out here who's got *[mumbles]*—

And somebody who does this, professionally, goes through all of this for people. And that—those gatekeepers, those people who do that, are—they have to build up trust and all that sort of stuff. That's where we're going. That's where we're headed. There's too much stuff out there, and it's driving people crazy. In a good way, you know. All this information's available, but we—they need some help.

00:18:16 Jesse Host We talked about the ways that resources shape priorities. In public radio news, there was always this joke—and maybe it's a little less applicable today, but—it was that since *[laughing]*—since there were very few reporters, since NPR maybe had a couple dozen reporters, they would mostly read about something in the newspaper, report it the next day, and call it analysis.

[Jim agrees.]

In a funny way, while NPR now, say, has a few hundred reporters rather than a few dozen reporters—and hundreds more, if you count local stations—that perspective has been a strength of the form, as those resources have grown, rather than a weakness. That idea that timeliness isn't the only essential quality of news. And I wonder what ways you can distinguish your news content that aren't just first and most, but it seems like public broadcasting is uniquely set up to compete and differentiate itself in other areas, besides those two.

00:19:37 Jim Guest Well, I agree with you. I think that by the—in this new world order that we're in, now, if you wanna know, "Did they arrest the suspect in the—in the attempting bombing in—at Times Square," there—you can find out in a second. Alright, but the—but who was this guy? Well, what do you wanna know about him? Was he part of a group? What group? Well, what—where'd that group come from? And you just keep asking questions. Well, was the law enforcement thing right? What about the—why did they—how did this guy get loose to get on an airplane in the first place? And why was he going to Dubai? Well, where's Dubai? What is Dubai?

In other words, every step along the way, there's gotta be a place that you can continue to go. And public broadcasting, in my opinion, is the place that takes you through those various steps. And you—the—we always gotta keep in mind that the old way of doing things, which is—the first thing—used to be, the first time you heard about a story was when you read your newspaper. By the time you read a newspaper now, you know everything—you never—you know what happened, long before you ever see that newspaper. So, what's the point of the newspaper, now? It's to go ask—start peeling it back, keep moving back, moving back, moving—and one of the reason newspapers are not doing very well is because they haven't caught onto that! They didn't—they haven't hired the same—they haven't—they haven't trained their folks to move the story with where they—where the curiosity is about the story.

And public broadcasting, at the *News Hour*, we tried very hard to do that. And sometimes we—sometimes we don't—we fail. We—it doesn't—it doesn't work. We cannot—we can no longer see ourselves as the first responder journalist. You've gotta be that second and third. And you're talking—you're—you've put your finger on it, with—this is still a development stage, for that. And you've got—it's gotta be compelling. I mean, you gotta realize there are all kinds of places you can go second or third time. Second or third step, after you find—"Well, we already know about—they arrested the guy. Alright, but now who do I wanna go to go and take the next step?" And you've got—it's, you know, "well, I—you know, oh yeah! Oh, maybe it's—I'm not interested in *The New York Times*. Maybe I'm, you know—" But you've gotta—it's gotta all be there.

[Music fades in.]

00:22:10 Music Music
00:22:16 Jesse Host

And those of us who are—who are in this business have to—have to go with the new flow. And public broadcasting should be leading the way. In some ways, we are. In some ways, we're not. Upbeat transition music with occasional vocalizations plays. Jim Lehrer. He died January 23rd, at the age of 85. It was an incredible honor to get to meet Mr. Lehrer. The fact that he showed up in person, at my apartment in Los Angeles, was sincerely one of the highlights of my career. And he was as kind and engaged and warm and brilliant off the microphone as he was on. I don't think I've ever been more thrilled than when he said to me he was really impressed with the operation I was running and he'd love to have lunch with me, sometime, if I ever visited Washington D.C.

[Music fades out.]

I didn't get to have lunch with him, unfortunately. But I am so grateful for his incredible work and his incredible career. I'll never lose the memories, not only of meeting him, but also of watching the *News Hour* with my dad, as a kid, on our ten-inch, black-and-white television.

It—he was an unimpeachable journalist. And I'm grateful for his contributions to our world.

00:23:24	Music	Music	Rhythmic, thumpy music with light vocalizations.
00:23:27	Jesse	Host	<p>That's the end of another episode of <i>Bullseye</i>. <i>Bullseye</i> is produced at MaximumFun.org world headquarters, overlooking MacArthur Park in beautiful Los Angeles, California—where Kevin, our producer, and Christian Dueñas—a producer here in our office—were walking around, when they saw two squirrels holding a total of three peanuts. And they were unshelled.</p> <p>The show is produced by speaking into microphones. Our producer is Kevin Ferguson. Jesus Ambrosio is our associate producer. We got help from Casey O'Brien. Our production fellows are Jordan Kauwling and Melissa Dueñas. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. Our theme song is by The Go! Team. Our thanks to them and their label, Memphis Industries, for letting us use it.</p> <p>We're also on Facebook and Twitter. Just search for <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i>. Like us there. Follow us there. And I think that's about it.</p>
00:24:27	Promo	Promo	<p>Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature sign off. Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.</p> <p><i>[Music fades out.]</i></p>