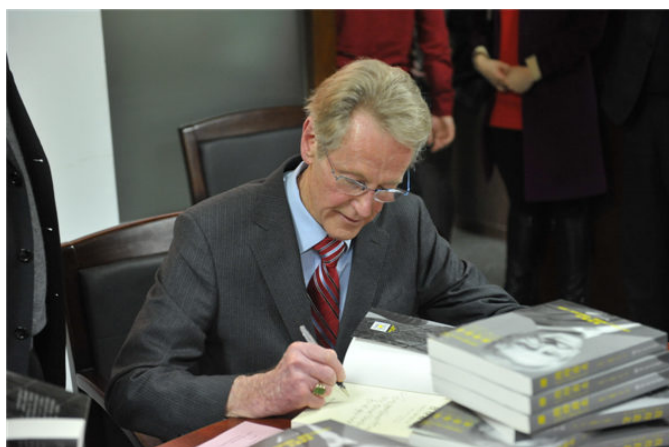


**28 January 2015 - Steady anchor**

By Xing Yi ( China Daily )



Edwin Maher at the signing event for his new book Caught on CCTV! held in Beijing. Photos provided to China Daily

In his new book, CCTV's Edwin Maher relives his decade on Chinese television. Xing Yi reports. When you are a Westerner and you have lived for a decade in China, you're bound to have many stories to tell.

So it is for Edwin Maher, who has worked at the country's state television as a foreign anchor since 2004. Last Thursday, he launched his book, in which he shares his observations on and stories from the fast-paced media industry in this ever-changing country.

The title of the book, Caught on CCTV!, is a play on words. In most English-speaking countries, CCTV stands for closed-circuit television, but for the Chinese, it only means China Central Television, the country's biggest broadcaster with millions of viewers.

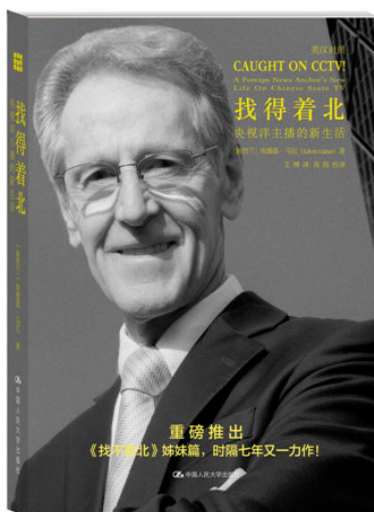
A New Zealander, Maher was the first non-Asian face anchoring the news program on its English channel that was launched in 2000.

Maher writes about the many highlights during his stay in China, including being bestowed the Friendship Award, the highest award the Chinese government gives annually to expatriates who have contributed to the country, and meeting the previous premier, Wen Jiabao.

His most memorable experience, he says, was his first show on CCTV.

"I was quite anxious when I went to the studio," recalls Maher, who had been a veteran TV reporter and weatherman in Australian Broadcasting Corporation before he came to China.

"By the grace of God, or, in this case, perhaps Confucius, everything seemed to go OK."



Caught On CCTV!

Since then, Maher has been reporting on events ranging from the Beijing Olympics to the Shanghai World Expo, and from the tragic earthquake that shook Sichuan province in 2008 to the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 last year.

Maher's appearance on the state-run TV station drew both praise and criticism.

In the book, he recalls accepting an interview from The Los Angeles Times in 2007. When answering the question: "What do you say to those who describe you as a mouthpiece for the Chinese government?"

Maher shot back: "I don't care if that's what they say. My job is to read the news as clearly as I can", which in hindsight he thought was a bit rash because it drew much flak from the paper's readers.

Still, as he tells China Daily: "I couldn't change the structure of broadcasting in China. But we have to acknowledge that over the years, the door has opened so much wider, and we are now able to report stories that wasn't possible when I first came here."

As a foreigner, Maher had always wanted to see a military parade in China, and was optimistic in 2009 when New China celebrated the 60th anniversary of its founding. But he learned that the viewing point at Tian'anmen Square was not open to the public, and the chance to be invited was slim.

Before resigning himself to watching it on TV, Maher made his last attempt: He called the Beijing Municipal Government and explained his wish. Two days later, Maher received a phone call from the government's Foreign Affairs Office, and he asked if he would be invited to watch the parade.

"Watch it?" the caller responded. "We want you to be in it!"

He and several other foreigners (\*) were included into a float, becoming the first foreigners to take part in China's National Day parade. "This is China, where anything can—and often does—happen," Maher writes in his book.

Maher had come to China in a way that he had never expected.

It was in April 2003, and he was stalled at the lowest period of his life—he had lost his wife, who died of a brain tumor in 2000, and then he had quit his job at ABC.

One day, when he was tuning into his antique valve radio, a news report from China Radio International crackled on the short wave. On a whim, he sent an e-mail to CRI, mentioning his background in radio and TV. To his surprise, he received a job offer as a voice coach.

Hoping to leave his past behind, Maher flew to China, and after completing his contract with CRI, he joined CCTV and began a new chapter in his life in 2004.

Already in his 70s, Maher looks energetic and exercises every day. "I feel that age is just a number," he says.

"As long as I can read the news at the same level that I have done in the past decade, and as long as CCTV wants me, I will stay."

Note:

(\*) Gilbert joined Edwin on the float for the parade in 2009.