

## TV Personality Shoots Herself In On The Air Suicide

SARASOTA (AP) — "In keeping with Channel 40's policy of bringing you the latest in blood and guts and in living color you are going to see another first — attempted suicide."

With that startling announcement, Chris Chubbuck

## THE CHRISTINE CHUBBUCK CASE 40 YEARS LATER

# SUICIDE ON LIVE TV

NEW FILMS EXAMINE THE CASE OF A TV REPORTER WHO SHOT HERSELF ON AIR

Christine Chubbuck gave no hint of her intentions as she took her seat behind the WXLTV news desk in Sarasota, Fla., on July 15, 1974. Looking steadily into the camera, the morning-show news host spoke clearly and calmly: "In keeping with Channel 40's policy of bringing you the latest in blood and guts and in living color, we bring you another first... an attempted suicide."

With that, Chubbuck, 29, pulled a .38-cal. revolver from under the anchor desk, pointed it at the back of her head and pulled the trigger. As she fell forward, the technical director scrambled to fade the broadcast to black. "It was just a shock to everybody," says Chubbuck's friend Pauline Lunin.

Now, more than four decades later, Chubbuck's death continues to shock. Why a promising young journalist would end her life in such a gruesome and public way is being explored in two



**UNANSWERED QUESTIONS**  
"She was upbeat that morning," says former colleague Linford Rickard of Christine (in an on-air segment).

films that debuted at the Sundance Film Festival last month: *Christine* delves into the up-and-coming reporter's final days, and *Kate Plays Christine* is a pseudo documentary on Chubbuck's life. "Mental illness and violence in the media were issues at play in Christine's story," says *Christine* writer and producer Craig Shilowich. "We're no closer to resolving these issues."

But Chubbuck's brother Greg says he won't be watching either film. "I adored my sister," he says. "A public suicide is not a source of joy for a family. It is a pain that doesn't go away." Greg says his sister had long struggled with what he now believes was bipolar disorder. "She never felt like she was good enough," he recalls. "We adored my sister. I don't know what she needed... but we couldn't provide it."

Nor could what appeared to be a blossoming career as a newscaster. "She could handle an interview magnificently," says former colleague Linford Rickard. Coworkers found her handwritten script for her suicide on the news desk that morning, and nearby was a letter mentioning the party she had thrown three days before she died. "That was her chance to say goodbye to everyone," says former WXLTV reporter Craig Sager. "But of course we didn't realize it at the time." —CHRISTINE PELISEK