



Evangelical broadcasting pioneer Pat Robertson, 91, steps down as '700 Club' host

Son Gordon Robertson will take over trailblazing Christian television talk show

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Pat Robertson, who started the Christian Broadcasting Network in a vandalism-prone Tidewater Virginia building 60 years ago, said Friday he's giving up his microphone as host of "The 700 Club," the network's flagship daily talk show, which he has hosted since 1966. It is one of television broadcasting's longest-running programs.

"Today's show will be my final as host of 'The 700 Club,'" Mr. Robertson, 91, said on air Friday. "My replacement will be my very capable son, Gordon, who will take over as full-time host of the program."

Paul Matzko, a historian at the District-based Cato Institute, said the broadcaster's impact was impressive in the heyday of over-the-air and cable programming.

"Pat Robertson's CBN had an audience of 17 million at its peak in the 1980s which, for sake of comparison, is as many as Rush Limbaugh had at his peak 20 years later," said Mr. Matzko, author of "The Radio Right," a history of conservative-focused religious broadcasting. Mr. Matzko said Mr. Robertson represented "a large group of religious conservatives who were alienated from what was changing about society in the 1960s and 70s, who didn't feel

represented and what they saw and heard on the airwaves, who felt alienated from America's governing and social institutions. And he spoke to them.”

The elder Mr. Robertson will continue to appear periodically on the CBN flagship program — whose name derived from an early CBN telethon where 700 monthly pledges of \$10 apiece were solicited — offering commentary “as news warrants,” a statement said. He will also devote his efforts to training students at Regent University, the Virginia Beach, Va. school which he founded in 1977.

In 2018, Mr. Robertson was temporarily sidelined by a stroke. Gordon Robertson, 63, told The Washington Times Friday prompt treatment at a local clinic restored his father “to full function literally within two minutes.” He said health considerations didn't figure into his father's decision to step aside.