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Inside Journalism

Columbia College Chicago

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INSIDE JOURNALISM

APRIL 1989

A Newsletter Published by the Journalism Department of Columbia College

SPORTS REPORTER INTERVIEWED AT CC

Warner Saunders, sports anchor and reporter at Channel 5 news, spoke to a packed room at Columbia on March 8. "Anything I wanted to do in my life I have been able to accomplish," Warner said in response to a student's question about the effects of racism on his career. "Race has nothing to do with it," he repeated firmly. "Race is no excuse for failure and it is no reason for success."

These words, stated strongly, were not what the 90-minute student press conference revolved around but were the topic about which Warner spoke most passionately. "If you are thinking about discrimination, you're concentrating on what someone else thinks," he says. "Rather you should concentrate on the books; concentrate on what you're doing, not what others think."

Warner, 54, grew up in Chicago and knows the effects of racism firsthand. He has never needed an excuse for failure, however, because he's been successful in so many areas.

He attended Xavier University in New Orleans on a basketball and track scholarship. He later spent a year playing for the Harlem Globetrotters.



Warner Saunders

Making an "unorthodox entrance into television," Warner started as a host of small talk shows on various Chicago stations.

While hosting the Channel 2 late night show, "Common Ground," he began to develop a following. From there he crossed over to reporting for Channel 5 ten years ago. "I had to learn to be a reporter while on live television," he says, "with thousands of people watching me make mistakes."

Since then, he has made a transition to sports—a very natural one considering his athletic abilities and interests. He's won a dozen Emmys, many for sports and some for his work in specials such as "Gangs: The New Chicago Mob," to which he contributed in 1980.

His conference with Columbia students was for Nick Shuman's Front Page Lecture class in which students interview a guest speaker. Warner came without a prepared speech, but responded to questions from students about sports personalities, the media and his personal beliefs.

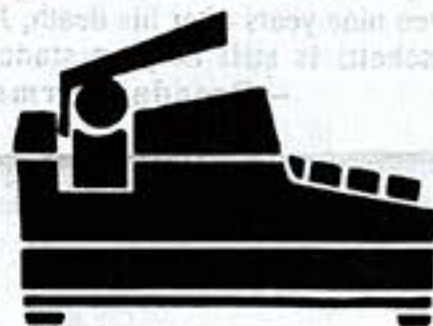
One student even suggested he run for office. "I am only six years away from Hawaii," Warner replied. "The only thing I'm going to run for is the border!"

Despite his hopes for a happy retirement, Warner clearly loves television. "It's a combination of technology and creativity and when they mesh it's a beautiful thing," he says. "Unhappily they don't mesh that often...that's why they pay us a lot—to look cool when things are really messed up." —Brenda Herrmann

THE FISCHETTI SCHOLARSHIP

Given in honor of a great man

Every year Columbia's journalism department awards the John Fischetti Scholarships to deserving journalism



and editorial art majors. Last year 19 students won this award, some receiving enough to cover the cost of books and incidentals, others winning full tuition. The award means more than school money, however. It's a high honor and it gives students exposure. The winners were honored at a dinner reception at the Chicago Hilton and Towers, where they met master of ceremonies Mike Royko of the Chicago Tribune and guest speaker Judy Woodruff from the "MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour." The winners were also featured in a special edition of *Inside Journalism* (November 1988).

The award was established to help students who combine good academic records with service in journalism—which can be in outside writing, part-time employment, internships, freelancing or college publications. Financial need is also a consideration. The endowment honors the memory of John Fischetti, the nationally syndicated, Pulitzer Prize winning political cartoonist for the Chicago Daily News and Sun-Times. His cartoons were admired by his peers for their wit and conscience; they were humorous yet poignant.

Friends say he was much more than an unusually gifted and compassionate cartoonist. He was a friend to all.

"John gave himself to his public," says Nick Shuman, associate director of Columbia's graduate program in journalism and one of John's close

friends, "even to total strangers, like the kids aspiring to be cartoonists who regularly trooped into his office seeking counsel."

"It was impossible to be around him for very long without finding your own spirits being raised and carried along by his incredible buoyancy," says Mike Royko, who also worked with John.

After he died in 1980, John's widow Karen and his friends organized the memorial. Since then, friends have gathered at the annual dinner that directs the proceeds to the fund for students. Even nine years after his death, John Fischetti is still helping students.

—Brenda Herrmann

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

Bobbi Rathert to the rescue

Behind every good newspaper is an organizational staff that plans meetings, gets reporters to the right place at the right time and helps the editor-in-

chief with all details large and small.

In the same manner, the journalism department has one person that keeps it organized—the assistant to the chair, Bobbi Rathert.

A six-year veteran of Columbia, Bobbi, 35, is thought of as the full-time journalism advisor, counselor and all-around answer person. J-chair Nat Lehrman calls her his "managing editor" in recognition of her versatility and managerial talents.

She received her master's in counseling from Roosevelt University in February, but her work at Columbia has given her plenty of counseling experience.

"She was there for me when I was confused about which major I should go into," comments senior J-student Tina LaPorta. "She sat down and

talked with me, and I've been very happy with my decision."

"I enjoy working with people," Bobbi says. "I don't mind answering their questions and giving them advice on which classes to take. . . as long as they don't come back to me with the same questions over and over!"

Students aren't the only ones Bobbi lends a hand to. She makes life easier for full-time J-faculty members such as Carolyn Hulse.

"She understands what support systems need to be in place in order for faculty and staff to do their jobs effectively," says Carolyn.

"Besides, I like her sense of humor. She keeps everything light when it gets too heavy. She makes me laugh."

Bobbi, the third oldest of six children, was raised in Cresco, Iowa (pop. 3,000), located in the northeast corner of the state. To help finance her way through high school, she held a summer nanny job in the Chicago area. She was responsible for the care of six children under the age of six.

"The nanny job taught me patience and how to help people get through things they're having trouble with," she says.

After receiving her high school diploma, Bobbi went on to Barat College in Lake Forest, where she received her bachelor's in graphic arts. It was during her college years that she met Mary Bopp, her best friend and longtime roommate.

Following graduation, Bobbi and Mary "gathered up our life savings and took off to Denver, Colorado, where we attempted to make it on our own," tells Bobbi.

"After one summer, we had just a few dollars and we were stuck eating rice."

The return to Chicago came soon after. The pair experimented for six



Bobbi Rathert

years with their own design and silkscreen business and then both made the switch to Columbia College.

Bobbi was hired in the then-tiny journalism and advertising departments which were separate but operating from the same floor. Mary worked for Dean Lya Rosenblum.

"Working for [the late chair] Daryle Feldmeir was a good experience," Bobbi says. "He was a great guy and he knew a lot of people, but I don't think he had the same type of energy to put into the department that Nat has."

The advertising department broke away from the fifth floor three years ago, leaving the J-department by itself and Bobbi with the harness in her hands.

Through her years in the department, Bobbi says she's seen several changes take place, including the attitudes of journalism students who "now seem to be a lot more involved with their journalism activities than the students of the past."

Despite her constant dealings with both professional and student journalists, the media bug has not bitten Bobbi. "I only work here as an administrative person," she says. "Personally, I don't get into journalism."

— Jeff Copeland

STUDENT SHOWCASE

Arlene's no plane Jane

Arlene Furlong traveled nearly three million miles before she came to Columbia College.

Arlene, 28, a flight attendant for American Airlines and a Columbia College journalism student, enjoys her job, but after years of travel and adventure she is ready for an academic challenge.

"I've learned a lot from my job but it's not exactly cerebral," she says.

Her desire to become a journalist developed in high school, yet she didn't

pursue it because she felt she was not yet mature enough to reach for what she considered an unrealistic goal.

Instead she turned to a sensible career in business. She studied for two years at University of Illinois at Chicago and then worked for more than three years in an accounting firm. Deciding that this field wasn't her ticket, Arlene trained to become a flight attendant.

Now, after five years of travel and the job seniority to be able to coordinate her work schedule with a school program, Arlene is ready. The tall and slender redhead feels she's acquired the confidence, the knowledge and the self-discipline it takes to become a writer.

"It was time to stop being a spectator and start getting involved," she says.

She researched several colleges but decided on Columbia for two reasons: the faculty of working professionals and the smaller classes which allow for more teacher-student interaction.

Arlene describes herself as a "book-worm, although intellectually naive." She also says her job is perfect for studying human nature, giving her an insight that may help in her endeavor to become a journalist. "The job opened

my eyes to the problems of people in different parts of the country," she adds.

The 12- to 14-hour shifts, the jet lag and the explaining of unavoidable delays to her passengers makes for some "interesting" situations, Arlene says.

"I see so many people; the variance is amazing," she notes. "They are all caught up in their own little worlds."

Arlene, however, has no limit to her sky. In addition to maintaining a 4.0 grade average and a full load of classes, Arlene flies three or four days each week. And her once impossible dream seems a little closer—she just sold her first story to *Chicago After Hours*, a new entertainment magazine.

Her feet may be in the clouds, but her head is at ground level.—Debra Matei

PROS CONFER AT COLUMBIA

Four professional journalists visited Columbia College for the Lunch and Learn lecture, "Mayors, Wanna-Be's and the Media," at the Ferguson Theater on March 9.

The panelists, including Channel 5 anchor and part-time Columbia journalism instructor Renee Ferguson, found themselves defending the actions of the media during the recent primary election. Renee and Thomas



Hardy, political editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, admit that much election coverage is provided merely to fill air-time or column space when hard news isn't available. But the panelists felt that the audience wasn't annoyed by "man on the street" interviews used to fill time.

"The most energetic criticisms of election coverage tend to come from people directly involved in the election," says Mike Flannery, political reporter at Channel 2. "I sense that news consumers are more sophisticated and understand the conventions of TV journalism."

Steve Neal, political editor of the

INCREASE YOUR CLIPS

Remember reading a story in the *Columbia Chronicle* and thinking, "I'll bet I could have done a better job?"

Well, the *Chronicle* challenges you to prove it. By writing for the newspaper, students get the opportunity to meet the people in our school who make things happen, to collect articles with their bylines for their portfolio and to help the paper continue to improve.

Anyone with ambition, regardless of major or experience, is invited to try. If you have a story idea that you think should be covered, visit the *Chronicle* office, Room W802. See Matt, Anne Marie or Susan to plan your contribution—then just wait to see your clip book grow.

—Anne Marie Obiala

Chicago Sun-Times, says the audience infers from the news based on their own feelings. He says that zealous supporters of certain candidates are the most likely to declare reporting racist. "They tend to be air-headed when making their criticisms," he comments.

Renee believes the black community feels angry toward the media for what they believe is biased reporting but she defended the press, adding, "Journalists are human and can only try their best to be objective."

Thomas says the mayoral race is "not a campaign of racism." He qualified this by adding that race was used only as a motivator near the primary to get minorities to the polls.

Steve added that Acting Mayor Eugene Sawyer lost the election in part because he failed to overcome the actions that got him into office and because of a perception that he could not win.

According to Mike, recent polls showing Daley leading have hurt both Evans' and Vrdolyak's fund-raising efforts. Steve adds that polling can "cut a candidates legs off" if it shows him drastically behind during the final weeks.

Although Steve feels Vrdolyak, "a wild card," will not win the election, he says, "Debates are the best opportunity for underdog candidates. Having only one debate, or none, is doing a disservice to the people of Chicago."

ONLY A FEW DAYS LEFT...

Columbia students can win up to \$200 by creating a project to inform the community about the deadliness of AIDS. The contest is sponsored by the college as part of AIDS Awareness Week, which is the first week of May.

Students can enter in any of the following categories: electronic media, performance, print media, or visual. The top three entries in each category will win \$200, \$100 or \$50 and will be displayed in the Hokin Center. Every submitting student will receive a certificate of participation.

Winners will be judged on the basis of accuracy, artistic impression, clarity of expression, content and originality.

Entries should be submitted to the Dean of Student Services Office, M601, by April 11, 1989. Additional information can be obtained by calling extensions 360 or 220.

—Brenda Herrmann

One student in the audience criticized the media for turning elections into "football games" concerned only with the winner and not the issues.

Renee followed up, saying, "The public must make the effort to find where candidates stand. It is impossible for the electronic media to cover all the issues."—**Sheridan Chaney**

COMPUTER LAB BLAB

When Columbians wander into their journalism classes to find their old typewriters replaced with matte new IBM's, there's a mixed reaction. It's either a relieved, "Oh, thank God!" or a petrified, "Gasp! A computer! I don't know how to use a computer."

Usually, the latter comes from the faculty. Most students have been working with computers for a few years now and are glad to see the familiar word processing keyboard in front of them. Blame it on technology

OPEN LAB HOURS

(Clip 'n' save)

The computer lab in Room W501 will be open as follows:

Monday	1 to 5 p.m.
Tuesday	1 to 4 p.m.
Wednesday	1 to 4 p.m.
Thursday	2 to 4 p.m.
Friday	1 to 4 p.m.
Saturday	1 to 4 p.m.

Room W503 will be open on Tuesday evenings, 5 to 8.

A friendly attendant is always on hand to watch you struggle.

but most of us could probably learn a whole new computer program faster than we could learn to use a manual typewriter.

The J-department has replaced the typewriters in both W501 and W503 this year with IBM's and Word Perfect word processing software. When the labs are not being used as classrooms, they are open to students to come in and work. This is a big advantage to students who cannot afford to buy a personal computer and to those who want to learn about computing for career purposes.

If grades in the journalism department start to go up, we'll know why. After all, by using the computers, students can rearrange paragraphs without much effort and they can avoid most

spelling errors with a simple touch of the spell-check button.

Having two computer labs in the J-department is also a big plus for teachers. No more erasable typewriting paper that is difficult to read, no more arrows pointing to the paragraph that should be next, and no more handwritten papers.

Best of all, when J-students venture into real work situations, chances are almost 100 percent that they will be working on computers whether they are in editorial, broadcast or public relations work. The experience gained here in the lab can erase any computer fears students may have. (Don't worry, it's easy!) —**Brenda Herrmann**

GIVING P.J. THE BUSINESS

"Business journalism is not about math; it's not impossible to understand and people can actually become fascinated by it," says P.J. Bednarski, business reporter for the *Chicago Sun-Times* and part-time instructor in Columbia's J-department.

P.J.'s background ranges from a stint as the *Dayton Journal Herald's* entertainment columnist to the TV critic of *USA Today*—hardly the places one would expect to find a financial reporter.

He has been with the *Sun-Times*, where he began as a TV critic, since May 1983. The progression to his current beat was gradual. "My media work was becoming more and more business-oriented," he explains. "When the paper decided to do a business column, the transition, for me, was logical."

Being a freshman in the B-department was like being in school again, and he found the experience exhilarating. He learned his lessons well—he was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize last year.

"Business is a pretty good area to go into—there seems to be a growing demand for specialty reporters—niche markets that include business, science and health," P.J. says.

According to P.J., students interested in his type of work would benefit from taking classes such as business, economics, accounting and marketing. They also need to be naturally inquisitive about products people buy and

what the current trends are. Columbia offers an interdisciplinary program combining these subjects.

He advises students to look into publications such as those published by Crain Communications, because they are a haven for good business reporters.

P.J. was scheduled to teach *The Business Beat* this semester but, not enough students signed up for the course. The class will be offered again next semester.

P.J. is certainly not all business, however. In fact, he is one of the most interesting and popular instructors in the department. His students say he converses rather than lectures.

"It's like talking to a friend," says Bond Li, 21, a broadcast journalism junior and a student in P.J.'s Intro to Media Writing class last semester. "He doesn't give you the sun-dried song and dance about technicalities. He gives you insight as to what it is to be a print journalist."—**Carla Jones**

INSIDE JOURNALISM

A newsletter produced by and for students of the Journalism Department

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