

5-1-1989

Inside Journalism

Columbia College Chicago

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.colum.edu/inside_journalism



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Recommended Citation

Columbia College Chicago, "Inside Journalism" (1989). *Inside Journalism*. 9.
https://digitalcommons.colum.edu/inside_journalism/9

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Publications at Digital Commons @ Columbia College Chicago. It has been accepted for inclusion in Inside Journalism by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Columbia College Chicago. For more information, please contact drossetti@colum.edu.

INSIDE JOURNALISM

MAY 1989

A Newsletter Published by the Journalism Department of Columbia College

GOSSIP

Just the facts, Ma'am

Gossip. It's the irresistible thread that connects the nasty political jabs of Michael Sneed to the social palaver of Ann Gerber.

Rumor has it there's more to gossip than hearsay, however. Actually, gossip columns could be called fact sheets, because even small talk has to be true if the newspaper wants to maintain credibility and avoid lawsuits.

CHECK IT OUT

"We could do a full story on every item that goes into our column," says Hanke Gratteau, "INC." columnist for the *Chicago Tribune*. "That's how much work goes into it." Hanke spoke to students at Columbia College on April 12 about her work in journalism, including the field of gossip reporting. She and her partner, Kathy O'Malley, have been writing "INC.," a column about political and entertainment celebrities, for more than two years.

Sports celebrities also get their own column in the *Tribune*. Linda Kay and Mike Conklin let readers in on real locker room talk in their "Odds & INS" column. The range of material runs from lighthearted, as when they quoted Cubs jokes from "Alf," or very serious,

as when they revealed that Michael Jordan fathered an illegitimate child.

"We checked that out with at least ten sources," says Mike. "We have to be careful about getting those facts straight.."

"Once in a while I wish I were still a general assignments writer so I could go in-depth on the great scoops we get for the column," Mike continues. "But 'Odds & INS' does go in-depth," he says with a grin. "Sometimes we write as much as three or four sentences."

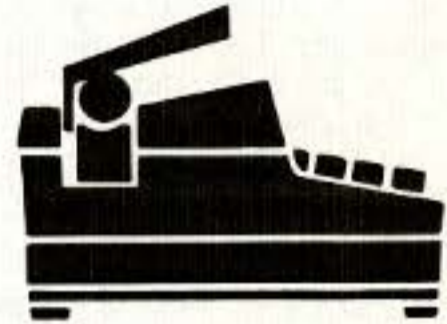
Not everyone considers "INC." and "Odds & INS" to be gossip columns because they aren't as sensational and opinionated as the true tattleale tabloid column, "Sneed."

Michael Sneed left "INC." and the *Tribune* behind two years ago when she began her namesake column at the *Sun-Times*. Most readers consider her more gossipy than the others, not because her sources are less reputable but because her style is cagier and snippier.

CELEB COLUMNISTS

What makes Michael, Hanke and Mike similar to each other is that they don't try to be celebrities. They are, in effect, flies on the wall.

"People don't recognize me on the street," comments Hanke, who resembles a quiet, congenial reporter more than the hard-driving co-author of one of the city's most widely-read



gossip columns. "Fame can interfere with the reporting. I don't want to be a celebrity. I'm not Kup."

Columnists like Irv Kupcinet and Ann Gerber, who report on area night life and social events, generally participate in the activities they report.

Kup is a 50-year newspaper legend. "It's harder than being a regular reporter," Kup says of his column. "It takes a lot of elements: good reporting, writing with humor and style, traveling around town covering events — that's why I put in 16-hour days."

"I think Kup is the end of a dying breed," says Cheryl Lavin, a former INCster who now co-authors the *Tribune* column, "Tales from the Front," with Laura Kavesh. "When his column stops, that type of format will be over. He is one of the few who has been able to create a wonderful job and a life for himself from his beat."

Like Kup, Ann Gerber has made gossip a lifelong career. Starting as a police reporter, Ann has written and edited for nearly every paper in the Lerner/Pulitzer chain.

Almost two years ago, Ann left *Skyline* to write the photo-filled society column, "On the Town," for the *Sun-Times*. "My column covers many charity events and people doing useful things," Ann says. "The chitchat is there to help make it more readable —



O'Malley and Gratteau



Kay and Conklin

otherwise it would be a dry listing of events."

"Each columnist has his own style," she notes. "We bring our life experience into what we write."

FIT TO PRINT

The writer's "life experience" would probably explain why some go for the jugular more than others, why some seem concerned with the right of privacy, and others feel that any celebrity's behavior is grist for the columnist's mill.

"Who is the slinky 42-year-old blonde attorney seen about town with a man half her age?" This is a "blind item" that stops short of naming names, but can be embarrassing to the principals, who will often be recognized by those close to them (like husbands and wives).

Bill Zwecker, the author of *Skyline's* "VIPeople," admits to using blind items, but with restraint. "I don't like to use them because they're frustrating to readers," he notes.

"I use them when they stand on their own — if the situations are unusual or funny, even without knowing the names of those involved," he explains. Bill joined *Skyline* in late 1987 and, as associate editor, helped to reshape it



Ann Gerber

Irv Kupcinet

after it was purchased by Pulitzer Newspapers.

"Some writers don't like the term gossip columnist because they feel it has a bad connotation," says Bill. "I don't mind the title, though. I think it's accurate."

Regardless of fame, style or interests, one common element these gossip columnists share is that all were reporters at one time or another in their careers. They are still reporters — some just for their columns and others for both their columns and outside writing. This is a relevant fact to all J-students at Columbia, especially those who would someday like to dish the dirt themselves. —Brenda Herrmann

J-GRADUATE SCHOOL

Like officers' candidate school, only longer

Five years ago, The CC Graduate Journalism Program was merely a gleam in the eye of late J-chairman Daryle Feldmeir. Soon there was a room full of computers donated by the Field Foundation. Today it's a bustling assembly of eager students battling out public affairs stories on these same computers.

"We had no idea how successful our students would be," says Eric Lund, director of the program.

Eric was instrumental in setting up the syllabus, which is unique in that it offers Chicago, Springfield and Washington, D.C., as classrooms for covering governmental institutions.

Students spend four weeks in the state capital, reporting on its government, and another four weeks in the nation's capital, covering federal affairs.

FAB GRADS

Joyce Kelly, a grad student and a copy clerk for the *Chicago Tribune*, says that the program has given her a great boost in her job. "I got my position because I said I was from Columbia's graduate program," says Joyce, who also has a summer internship coming up with Senator Alan Dixon.

Luella Leu, who graduated in 1988, is founding editor of the magazine, *MAFBO* (Minority and Female Business Owners) Advocate. She says the program prepared her to take on the responsibility of starting her own business. "I learned to cover politics and the government," says Luella. "I have confidence because of my training from Eric and Nick."

The Nick of "Eric and Nick" is Nick Shuman, associate director of the program and a veteran reporter and editor for Chicago's major dailies. He talks about his students with pride. "Because we provide hands-on experience, editors want our highly motivated students for jobs," he says.

Kerry O'Rourke, a current student who freelances for the *Tribune* and the *National Law Journal*, agrees. "I am writing for those two publications because I have learned to cover the government effectively," she explains.

Another student well on her way to

being a top reporter is April Rivera, who works as a stringer for the *Forest Park Review* and has freelanced for the *Chicago Reporter*.

Nor are broadcast journalism majors ignored in the graduate school. Robin Orvino is producer of a half-hour show on the Chicago Ethnic Channel and is going to Italy this summer to tape a documentary.

GETTING INVOLVED

Applicants to the program must submit examples of their writing, an essay, three letters of recommendation, and must arrange an interview with Eric and Nick. Full-time students can complete the program in 11 months.

Best of all, the program is practical. "The students are here to come out with a degree they can use to help them find employment," says Nick.

Employment successes for recent alumni include publications such as the *Syracuse (NY) Post-Standard*, *Redlands (CA) Daily Facts*, *AMA News* and *Pioneer Press*. These triumphs are the proof that this is a degree any reporter can use. —Mary Fleming

STUDENT SHOWCASE

Debra's Riddim 'n' blues

Not many students publish their own magazines, but Columbia J-student Debra Bass did for five years.

Debra, 30, is a senior and a John Fischetti scholar, who admits that without her CC journalism training, she could not have created *Riddim*, her innovative publication about reggae music.

"After postponing my education in 1980 because of financial problems, I knew I needed to apply what I had been taught," says Debra. "I needed to write."

In 1981, she gathered her savings and launched what she says was the only reggae magazine in the country. To get sponsors, she had to go door to door offering free advertisements for the first issue. To ensure delivery of the magazine, she took a full shopping cart of them on the El train and placed them in stores around Chicago.

The magazine was also distributed nationally with the help of her friends. After the first issue, Debra received requests for the magazine from around the United States and from Ghana,

West Germany and France. "My circulation grew from 10,000 the first year, to 30,000 in its last year," adds Debra.

Being editor and publisher of a fledgling magazine is a full-time job in itself but in addition to that, she needed another full-time job to support herself. As her schedule grew more and more hectic, Debra decided to suspend the publication temporarily.

Her need to write was not suspended, however, and she was asked to write articles for *Chicago Music Magazine* and *Jam Session*, two music publications whose editors were Riddim readers.

Debra returned to CC last year to complete work on her degree, her late mother's dream, which is now her own dream. "It takes education to make it in the real world," she says, "I have learned to set goals and stick to them."

In addition to freelancing and attending school full time, Debra works as a counter manager for Monet Jewelry at Carson's and rises at 3 o'clock every morning to type up news stories.

Her time limitations haven't kept her from competing for an Albert P. Weisman Scholarship at Columbia, applying to the University of California at Berkeley for a summer internship and assisting Black Ensemble Theatre with its newsletter.

Debra hasn't decided when she'll get her Riddim back but she does foresee graduate school within the next two years. With her drive, though, she'll be doing more than just studying... she'll probably be working eight jobs, freelancing to six publications, publishing her own four magazines.... —Mary Fleming

WHITTLE PEOPLE ARE BIG BUSINESS

Whittle Communications, the controversial media company that recently brought advertising into the classroom, is now creating a stir among Columbia College students: Whittle is courting CC J-students to become interns.

On March 20, two representatives from Whittle, Carole Simmons and Joan Thomas, visited the school to talk with students about Whittle internships, which pay \$250 per week and require relocation to Knoxville, Tenn. The company also leases furnished

apartments to their interns at a cost of \$45 per week for the summer internships, which run from June 5 to August 18.

Whittle employs some 900 people and has a readership of 3.5 million. Carole says a Whittle internship is the best thing that could happen to a J-student. "It's great training ground," she says. "Students write three to four stories a week and we also welcome their ideas for assignments."

What is unique about Whittle, and especially appealing to college students, is its diversity.

WHITTLE NEWSMAKERS

Whittle is a specialty magazine company with 42 publications. Early last year, the company developed *Special Reports*, six quarterly magazines which appear exclusively in doctors' waiting rooms. Each *Special Report* focuses on a different topic, such as sports or celebrities.

The controversy about this periodical is that publisher Christopher Whittle promised advertisers that doctors would remove all but two other publications from their office — in other words, *Special Reports* and its advertisers would have a near monopoly on the reading time of all the patients whose doctors subscribe. The idea was an initial success — the magazine sold out all ad space for its first two years and was the largest magazine launch in publishing history.

A more controversial move involving Whittle has been in the high school classroom. *Channel One*, a 12-minute news show, was beamed to six U.S. high schools in a pilot test. The show included ads, one of which was a Levi's ad that some parents and teachers found offensive. The company later withdrew the ad.

CATERING TO COLLEGES

Before it was big — and big it is: Time Inc recently shelled out \$185 million to buy half of the company — Whittle was called 13-30, a name which reflected the age of its readers. Whittle's young audience is another plus to students who wish to write for their peers. Some of Whittle's publications directed to students include *Campus Voice*, *GO! (Girls Only)* and *America* magazines. It also creates such niche publications as *OB/GYN Sampling*, *Veterinary Practice* magazine and *Skin Care*, a bi-monthly pamphlet sent to dermatology offices.

It may seem like a lot of small potatoes, but it all ends up in a big stew. Whittle projects revenues of \$185 million this year and has been growing an average of 32 percent each year. It also launches five new publications annually.

If all this intrigues you, talk to Carolyn Hulse about your qualifications to be an intern. Samples of Whittle publications are available from Bobbi Rathert, office 500L, or at your family doctor's office.

—Nedra Garvin/Brenda Herrmann

LOOKING GOOD AND BLOWING IT

(Or how not to be a TV journalist)

"I just have to look good; I don't have to be clear..." sings Don Henley in his song, "Dirty Laundry," that pokes fun at television news.

THE MYTH

It seems that too many broadcast journalism majors have seen "Broadcast News," the definitive film on network TV newscasting. The good-looking, albeit dense, William Hurt charac-

Psssst...

Hey, listen up! Do you want to learn to write resumes and cover letters? Brush up on your editing skills? Write with style? Have we got a deal for you!

Columbia College's Writing Center is offering seminars on all these things and more. Now how much would you expect to pay for a package like this? \$200? \$350? Wrong. They are absolutely, positively, unquestionably FREE. All you have to do is show up. All seminars are from 1 to 3 p.m. in the Writing Center, W702.

Tuesday, May 2 Writing Resumes, Cover Letters and Applications. Conducted by Kate McGovern, director of career services.

Wednesday, May 10 Editing/Proofreading Written Work. Conducted by Linda Bergmann of the English department, a writer and former non-fiction editor of *Chicago Review*.

Monday, May 15 Writing With Style. Conducted by Karen Lee Osborne, English department faculty and author of the award-winning novel, "Carlyle Simpson."

Thursday, May 18 Writing Grant Proposals. Conducted by Susan Ross, vice president for development, Spertus College.

ter garners a network anchor slot while the brilliant, less photogenic, Albert Brooks remains a behind-the-scenes writer.

Students harboring the notion that cosmetics are the omnipotent factors in television news pose a problem for Columbia's broadcast J-instructors. Bubbleheaded beauties and cleft-chinned studs think their looks will land them prominent anchor spots without their ever having to pick up a reporter's notebook. Even worse than the true beauties are the students who falsely believe they are attractive.

THE TRUTH

"It takes more than a pretty face to be a TV anchorperson," says Roger Schatz, who teaches TV News Performer and News: On Camera Reporting.

Roger grills his students about current and not-so-current events. "Who's the prime minister of Pakistan?" he fires. "Do you know who Francis Bacon is? He sure as hell isn't on the pop charts." Roger requires a well-written and edited script from his students weekly. His On Camera class stresses live reporting on breaking stories.

"A TV reporter has to be able to write in his head and think on his feet," he says. "Few stations hire reporters on the strength of a tape. They'll test you by sending you out to cover live stories."

Likewise, Ed Morris, chairman of the television department, often mentions a survey done by the Roper organization for the International Radio and TV Society of people who hire for the TV business. "Eighty-four percent of them say that writing is the most important quality they look for," says Ed.

Nat Lehrman, chairman of the J-department, couldn't agree more. "Our

Diann Burns to visit CC

Channel 7 reporter and weekend anchor Diann Burns will speak at Columbia College on Wednesday, April 26 in room W819. All CC students are invited for her presentation, which begins at 10:30 a.m. Questions will be invited from students.

Burns has been with WLS-TV for more than four years, prior to which she worked in Ohio as both a broadcast and print journalist.

Her appearance at CC is part of Nick Shuman's Front Page Interview class, which has presented speakers such as Gale Sayers, Dick Locher and Warner Saunders this semester.

broadcast majors need the same writing skills as our print majors," says Nat. "No matter what area of broadcast news they want to get into, they need to know how to report, write and edit copy."

Reneé Ferguson, Channel 5 anchor and reporter, knows that's no hype. Teaching her Writing TV News course with a hands-on approach, she leads her students through simple but catchy opens to stand-up bridges and closes. Reneé guarantees that her students will understand how to write TV news when they leave. "When you go into a news station to apply for a job, the first thing they are going to ask is, 'Can you write?'" she says.

"A good television reporter is a combination of things," adds Larry Yellen, managing editor for political coverage at Channel 7 news. "It includes talent, the ability to uncover facts and get to the bottom of a story, and the capability to communicate the story to the public effectively." Larry teaches Media Law & Ethics in the J-department, a re-

quired course for print and broadcast majors.

THE PROOF

On Chicago television alone, there is plenty of proof that Yellen's criteria for B-journalists represent the truth. One example is Pam Zekman. Head of the Channel 2 investigative team since 1981, Pam worked for ten years at Chicago's two metropolitan newspapers before turning to TV. Pam shared in two Pulitzer Prizes, and when she entered broadcast journalism, it was evident to the public that she could uncover facts and communicate a story in any medium.

From national news' Andrea Mitchell to local news' Hugh Hill, it is clear that these reporters know their business. Just as Vanna White knows how to smile and twirl, these TV journalists know how to report and write.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Broadcast journalism students who are watching news, instead of "Entertainment Tonight," should realize that their writing credentials and their ability to communicate will take them further in the industry than will a nose job.

—Brenda Herrmann/Kathleen Flinn

INSIDE JOURNALISM

A newsletter produced by and for students of the journalism department

COLUMBIA COLLEGE
CHICAGO
600 S. Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60605

EDITOR

Brenda Herrmann
MANAGING EDITOR
Mary Fleming
ASSOCIATE EDITORS
Kathleen Flinn
Nedra Garvin
Carla Jones
Debra Matei

ADMIN. EDITOR

Bobbi Rathert
FACULTY ADVISOR
Carolyn Hulse
CHAIRMAN
Nat Lehrman

May, 1989, Vol. 3, No. 5



Roger Schatz instructs a student in the art of anchoring.