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# Inside Journalism

Columbia College Chicago

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# INSIDE JOURNALISM

JUNE 1989

A Newsletter Published by the Journalism Department of Columbia College

## FOURTH PULITZER WINNER JOINS CC

*Peter Gorner makes science simple*

Peter Gorner, a Pulitzer Prize-winning writer for the Chicago Tribune, joined three other winners when he signed up to teach Science Writing in the journalism department this semester.

Preceding Peter were Pulitzer winners John White, the Sun-Times photographer who coordinates the photojournalism concentration; Bill Gaines, a Tribune reporter who teaches Investigative Reporting; and Jeff Lyon, a writer for the Tribune Sunday section, who coordinates Columbia's Science Writing and Reporting program and who introduced Peter to Columbia. Peter and Jeff shared a 1987 Pulitzer for the story, "Altered Fates: The Promise of Gene Therapy."

### SPECIALIZATION IS THE KEY

Peter says he likes teaching science writing, but adds that it is difficult to demonstrate all the complexities of the subject in one semester. He uses the



Peter Gorner

class as a seminar where students can critique each other's work.

"I want them to walk into their first newspaper job and be able to say they have a specialty, to be able to read some press releases and know whom to call and what to ask," says Peter.

Peter began his journalism career after winning a high school writing contest. At age 15, he joined the City News Bureau of Chicago. He speaks fondly of the experience saying, "I saw a world I'd never seen before. It taught me how to be a reporter and how to ask questions." Currently, five Columbia J-students work at CNB.

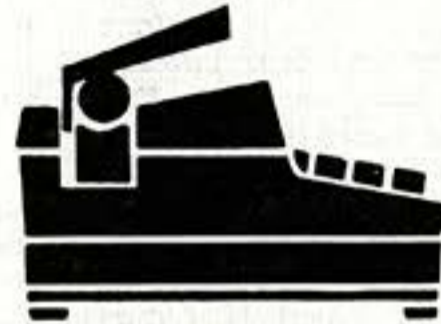
Peter, who came from a musical family, paid his way through college working in a band. One of his first jobs at the Tribune was as assistant music critic.

Fifteen years as a feature writer provided Peter with the knowledge to make the transition between music criticism and science writing and helped him cultivate the curiosity necessary to investigate new developments in science, along with the skills needed to research unfamiliar topics. "I was always specializing in science; it was a newly developing feature field. You had the time to really follow your interests."

### CREATING UNDERSTANDING

Many people fail to see the similarities between art and science, but Peter claims the two fields share great creativity. "There's not much difference in interviewing a great conductor and a brilliant physicist," he notes, "although the physicist may be easier to understand."

According to Peter, the last few years in science created new fears, from radon gas in the basement to oil spills off the coast of Alaska. He adds that technology has begun to develop beyond the capacity of the culture to accept it. "In order to get a science story on the front page it must be im-



portant, sensational, timely, scary and/or optimistic," he comments.

When interviewing, Peter's most effective technique is sharing the subjects' excitement about the topic. He then brings this vigor to his story and to his class.

Peter's student, Richard Rudnik, 25, a senior, comments, "You have to break down technical terms into something everyone can understand. This is true not only in science writing but in politics and others fields as well." Rudnik adds that it is professionals like Peter who help make Columbia's J-department so notable.

Peter's Tribune colleague and recent Pulitzer winner Clarence Page agrees, adding, "Peter is the best in the business."  
—Sheridan Chaney

## WOMEN IN COMMUNICATIONS

*National network of contacts*

When Columbia College organized its new student chapter of Women in Communications Inc. last March, it forged a link with one of the nation's most dynamic networks of communications professionals.

At the group's first meeting, more than 60 students from journalism, advertising, PR, radio, TV and film gathered to hear a panel from the Chicago professional chapter of WICI

describe these benefits of membership:

- §Link with a national network of contacts, including top professionals and industry leaders in every major city
- §Access to WICI Job Hotline

Jamie Mosley, a junior TV journalism major; and Treasurer Jeannine Haffner, a sophomore radio major.

The group, which is still taking applications for membership in Room

## NEWS THE USA TODAY WAY

Some people refer to USA Today as McPaper. Marcia Bollard might retort, "Well, how many times have Americans eaten at McDonalds?"

She does agree with some of the criticisms lodged against it, but overall, Marcia, now managing editor on USA Weekend, is a Gannett team player, she told Jim Ylisela's News Reporting class on April 25.

Marcia worked at a Rochester (N.Y.) newspaper for eight years before joining the USA Today prototype team in 1982. After the paper's launch she worked on the Life section and cover story department until she went to USA Weekend, the former Family Weekly Sunday supplement, when the paper purchased it in 1984.

### THINGS SHE LIKES

- The founder, Al Neuharth, had the guts to do something radically different, and stick by it when USA Today was first panned by its peers.

- She learned more about editing and writing from USA Today's condensed (and sometimes re-condensed) style than anywhere else.

- Thanks to intense pre-launch research, the paper is easy and fast to read.

### WHAT SHE DOESN'T LIKE

- USA Today had a tendency at first to hire mediocre writers, believing they'd be less upset by heavy editing than fine writers.

- Local papers criticized the national paper while revamping their own to look more like it.

### HER ADVICE TO J-STUDENTS

- Investigate computer database reporting (culling statistics and other information from online sources).

- While in school, learn something besides journalism.

- Be willing to start small and work hard.

Finally, Marcia defended USA Today's short-short story and advised students to learn it. "People today are bombarded with information, they just don't have time to sort through it all. It takes as much reporting to write a five-inch story as a longer one, more discipline and a creative knack for cramming lots of info into tight spaces." —Kathleen Flinn

§Subscription to The Professional Communicator magazine

§Invitations to attend all meetings and special events sponsored by student chapter and Chicago professional chapter

§Develop leadership skills and enhance resume by holding elected office in chapter

§Exchange ideas and career tips with other students; meet a variety of creative people, working to improve themselves, their community and their professions

At the second meeting in April, student officers for the 1989-90 academic year were elected. They are: President Marla Shone, a sophomore film major; Vice President/Program Chairman Lance Cummings, a freshman journalism major; Recording Secretary

W500L, is planning a wide variety of monthly programs that will introduce students to professional mentors who are committed to helping beginners boost their career prospects. Announcements of all WICI activities are posted in the journalism department.

—Carolyn Hulse  
WICI faculty advisor

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

*Where are they going?*

Through the years, Columbia's journalism department has graduated many students who went on to top-notch jobs in all genres of media. Here are where some of your undergraduate degree

friends from last year are, and where some of this year's crop are headed.

### CLASS OF 1988

Claudia Banks is now working as editorial assistant for the sports department of the Chicago Tribune.

Lee Bey, Kathleen Misovic and Yvette Shields are currently working as reporters for the City News Bureau in Chicago.

Shirley Henderson has been promoted from sales support representative to editorial assistant of the features department at the Chicago Tribune.

Claudia Lenart was recently promoted from staff writer for the Forest Park Review and Wednesday Journal to news editor of the Review.

Penny Mateck, former editor of the Columbia Chronicle, is a staff reporter for the Southtown Economist.

Elizabeth Owens, who interned for both Playboy and Advertising Age, is working as a reporter for Pioneer Press in Niles.

Letricia Riley is currently working as a copy editor at Encyclopedia Britannica.

### CLASS OF 1989

Boonie Booth has been accepted into both Northwestern and Columbia universities' master's of journalism programs and is likely to begin classes at Columbia this fall.

Brenda Herrmann, editor of Inside Journalism, received a fellowship to attend graduate school at Ithaca College (N.Y.) to study corporate TV.

Lynda Horton, president of the Journalism Club, has been hired as a reporter

## SMIKLE BOWS

Join me in congratulating Ken Smikle, advisor to the Columbia Chronicle, on the expansion of his publication, Target Market News, to monthly frequency. Ken has been developing this publication for more than a year and has published two pilot issues so far. He's hired a couple of Columbia J-students — Tanya Bonner and Carla Jones — to help him gear up to regular frequency.

Ken describes Target Market News as "the Advertising Age of the black consumer market." Regrettably, Ken won't have the time to work as advisor to the Chronicle next year. Best wishes, Ken! —Nat Lehrman

for the Associated Press, Chicago Bureau.

Kelli Kirkpatrick, J-workaide, has been accepted at Syracuse University (N.Y.), where she'll study for her master's in journalism.

Chris Langrill is an employee of Encyclopedia Britannica. He is planning to use his degree to move into the writing and editing department.

Norma Lawson is working as a video journalist in the operations department of Cable News Network in Atlanta. Norma graduated in January and was chosen when CNN visited Columbia's campus.

Debra Matei is preparing to go to law school but will first intern for the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

## NEW MAGAZINE DIRECTOR

*Don's good as gold*

The J-Department's magazine concentration will have a full-time director this fall. Don Gold, recent editor-in-

chief of Chicago Magazine, has agreed to coordinate the program, while also teaching magazine editing and advising department publications. Don has had a long and distinguished career as an editor and writer. Currently, he's co-authoring an autobiography of the New York Mets' star outfielder, Darryl Strawberry. His last book, "Zoo," was a profile of the Lincoln Park Zoo and he's written several other books as well.

His magazine stints have included high-level positions at *Downbeat*, a magazine of jazz, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Travel and Leisure*, and *Playboy* — where I worked with Don for nearly four years, and learned to respect and admire his extraordinary writing and editorial skills. I also found him to be a delightful person . . . one who'll make a lot of friends at CC.

The magazine program, which began less than two years ago, is moving into high gear. We've become known to some major magazine publishers who are interested in our students (see story about Whittle Publishing in May In-

side Journalism). At present, we have one of the most versatile curricula in the country. It includes not only magazine editing and writing, which are taught at most J-schools, but also Magazine Production, Photo Editing and Design for Editors (a course that teaches design principles to those without artistic talent). We also have put a foot into the magazine publishing door with a course on Advertising Sales.

There are several hundred trade and association magazines in the Chicago area, and jobs should be plentifully available to J-graduates with the proper training. Come see me this spring (and Don, this fall), if you're interested in a magazine editing career.

—Nat Lehrman  
chairman, J-department

## EDITOR'S ENCORE

*IJ's Brenda is off and running*

The J-department door swings open and in bursts *Inside Journalism* editor Brenda Herrmann. She pitches her

## TARGET PUBLICATIONS IMPORTANT TO J-STUDENTS

### THE TRADE SPECIFICS

*Catering to the niche markets*

There aren't many jacks-of-all-trades anymore, but an increasing numbers of trades for all jacks — trade magazines, that is. If you can think of an industry, a business, or just about any product, chances are there's a trade publication for it, from Nuclear News to The Goldsmith to Bakery magazine.

"A wise journalism graduate doesn't overlook the trades," says Mary Connors, Midwest editor for ADWEEK magazine. "You can move up farther, faster than in most newspapers or consumer magazines."

According to the American Newspaper Publishers Association, the average starting salary for graduating J-students at newspapers (100,000 circulation or less) is about \$13,870 while the Association of Business Publishers cites an average starting salary at trade publications at about \$16,120.

The trade business boomed in the late 70s and 80s, and has now evened off in terms of advertising revenue. But, as Jerry Koncel, editor-in-chief of American PaperMaker magazine points out, there are always jobs for journalism grads in the trade press, due to staff turnover and the number of trade publications: Standard Rate and Data Service lists nearly a thousand.

—Kathleen Flinn

### INSTRUCTOR OF ALL TRADES

*CC's Sarah Hoban and Specialty Magazines*

"Entry-level positions in the special interest field of magazine publishing hold a lot of opportunity and potential for J-students," says Sarah Hoban, editor of Student Lawyer, who also teaches the Columbia journalism department's Special Interest Magazines course.

"You may be more of an expert than you think," she tells her students. "There is scarcely a hobby or a talent that doesn't have a magazine published for its followers."

Sarah's course covers the editorial, design and production side of special interest magazine publishing. She says one interested in a career in magazine publishing should study all the elements, not just writing. "The staff on a special interest magazine can be just two people," she says. "To make yourself marketable, you need to have a working knowledge of each step from formation to publication. Get practice in layout, design and editing."

Sarah has been with Student Lawyer, a magazine aimed at law students who belong to the American Bar Association, for six years. She received her bachelor's in journalism from University of Illinois and entered Columbia's graduate program of photography in 1987. With this latest study, Sarah is even more capable in her field. "At first I did it more for personal reasons," she says, "but now I use it more in my professional duties."

—Debra Matei

headphones, books and leather jacket onto the nearest chair and disappears into the computer lab with a draft of the latest newsletter in her hands.

Brenda, 21, a senior broadcast journalism major, doesn't kid around when it comes to getting work done. Despite a full load of classes and continual duties as a J-department workaide, Brenda manages each month to get the newsletter edited and to the printer on schedule. Oftentimes, that means giving up Saturdays, but Brenda feels she'll reap the benefits later for the time she puts in now.

"Columbia is the type of school where you can either sink or swim," she says. "It's not a babysitting school. You can come here and improve your work, or you can come and get nothing."

J-department chairman Nat Lehrman adds, "In writing, there's no substitute for practice. Brenda knows that. She not only writes in class, but is aggressive about freelancing, internships and school publications. I measure her by much higher standards than the average student, and she matches up."

Brenda has freelanced for national publications such as *AsiAm* and *Campus Voice* and completed an internship for *Today's Chicago Woman*.

At 17, Brenda left home and, despite



Brenda Herrmann and her cat, Elvis

financial hardships, she finished an associate's degree in arts at Rock Valley College in Rockford, Ill. Then, Brenda came to Columbia to complete her undergraduate experience because "the people here aren't superficial." Brenda fits right in, and takes advantage of Columbia's hands-on approach to education.

This June, Brenda will graduate from Columbia with recognition as a Fischetti scholar and with one of the highest grade point averages in the department, nearly 3.9. But she doesn't want to leave academia just yet. Brenda begins work in June on her master's degree in cor-

## HELP WANTED

Editor and managing editor for this publication, *Inside Journalism*. Preferably, editor should be a senior, and managing editor a junior, majoring in journalism. Stipend and academic credit available for both students. Duties include working with chairman of journalism department to produce six issues of this newsletter per year. Excellent opportunity to sharpen writing and editing skills, accumulate clips for your book, and learn desk-top publishing while earning bucks and working in a highly visible spot. Contact Bobbi Rathert at ext. 366 or in Room W500-L.

porate TV at Ithaca College, NY., where she was recently awarded a fellowship.

Despite a fiery attitude that befits a full head of flowing red hair, Brenda is really a sensitive and funny person. She likes to pun around and talk endlessly about two guys: fiance Pvt. Mike Hyatt, a former Columbia student whom Brenda met at registration, and her idol, Elvis Costello.

Brenda recently appeared on stage with Elvis, who picked her from the crowd at a concert at Northwestern University. She even got to request a song. "I should've slipped my phone number in his pocket while we were standing there," she chides herself, "but I was so excited, I was fortunate I could even remember my own name!"

The people who know Brenda all talk about her unique qualities.

Magazine Article Writing instructor Michael Kiefer admires Brenda's "spit-in-the-eye attitude." English instructor Fred Gardaphe likes her bold writing style. Co-worker Peter Stenson says Brenda reminds him of the perfume commercial where the woman sings: "I can bring home the bacon. Fry it up in the pan . . . ." —Kelli Kirkpatrick

## DIANN BURNS WOWS CC CLASS

Channel 7 reporter and anchor Diann Burns visited CC this spring to clue J-students in on the life of a journalist. Diann, who has worked in both print and broadcast media, stresses the im-

portance of internships, hard work and aggressiveness.

Diann says it is important to apply for internships at newspapers, television and radio stations. "Don't be really picky," she says. "Whoever chooses you, take the offer because you may never get another chance like that again. Once you get your foot in the door, you'll get experience."

"Show some assertiveness. Don't get caught up in the fact that you're working for free. Work long hours and go there when you don't have to."

Another tip is to select a favorite reporter to tag along with. "You can learn so much just being around and watching veteran reporters and seeing how they get their facts, the way they operate and their rapport when they interview someone," she says.

She has extra advice for broadcast journalists. "Go out and get some experience in front of the camera. Practice being on the air. Act like you know what you're talking about and deliver it to your audience with confidence."

—Carla Jones

## INSIDE JOURNALISM

A newsletter produced by and for students of the journalism department

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