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Inside Journalism

Columbia College Chicago

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INSIDE JOURNALISM

APRIL, 1990

A Newsletter Published by the Journalism Department of Columbia College

PULITZER WINNERS COME TO J-DEPARTMENT

Ten-day artist-in-residency for authors Neil and Susan Sheehan

Journalistic ethics, investigative reporting and the Vietnam War are just a few of the topics slated for discussion and debate during the j-department visit of two Pulitzer Prize-winning guest artists-in-residence.

Neil and Susan Sheehan will be on campus April 9 through 18 to participate in several class discussions and two panels, one on the war in Vietnam and the other on investigative reporting. Other prize-winning journalists will round out these in-depth discussions.

Neil was a key reporter during the Vietnam War, which is the subject of his 1988 Pulitzer winning book, "A

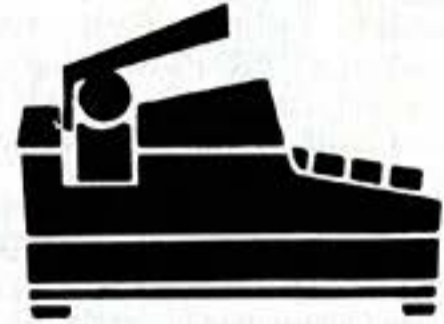
Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam."

The book, the result of 16 years of research, investigates the reasons Vann, a lieutenant colonel, left Vietnam after becoming disillusioned with American policy there. He later returned more powerful and with a different attitude.

But it goes beyond just telling Vann's story; it recounts for us, through one person's experience, the changing of America's attitude toward the war.

Neil was also instrumental in the publication of the Pentagon Papers in *The New York Times* in 1971, which won a Pulitzer Prize for the paper. These government documents, which detailed American involvement in Vietnam from 1945-1967, were given to him by a former Defense Department analyst. The papers were critical in turning American opinion against the war.

Susan, a staff writer for *The New Yorker* magazine, has written six books, among them the 1983 Pulitzer winner, "Is There No Place on Earth for



Me?," a multi-layered examination of mental illness.

In researching the book, Susan not only spent a great deal of time with a schizophrenic patient, but also did in-depth interviews with the patient's parents, doctors and friends. She researched the medical records of this patient during her stay at an asylum. Review of these records years later by drug experts provided Susan with additional insight.

The result, according to j-chairman Nat Lehrman, is a book of enormous depth and complexity.

Lehrman says the Sheehans can give j-students valuable instruction in the processes of writing, researching and interviewing in preparation for a story.

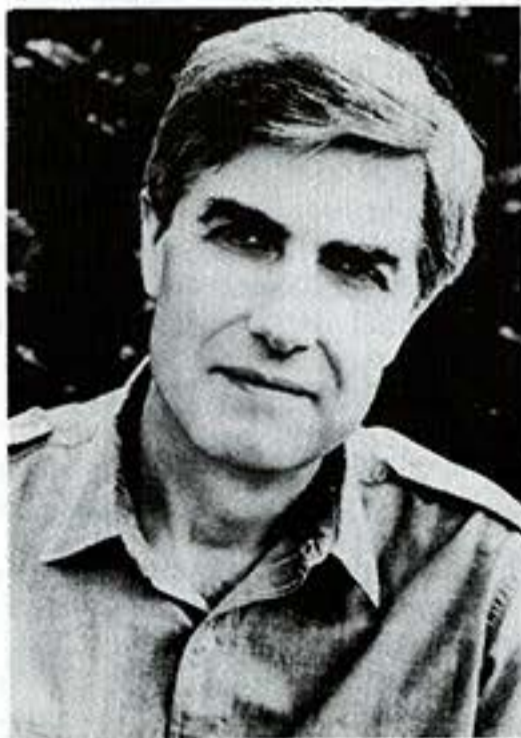
They are scheduled to speak several times during their stay at Columbia, and Lehrman hopes students will take advantage of these opportunities to learn from two such accomplished journalists.

"Serious j-students will show their dedication to their profession by being there," Lehrman says, for the class discussions and for the panels.

These are some of the events scheduled during the Sheehans' stay. All j-students are invited.

Monday, April 9, 10:30-11:50 a.m.—Nick Shuman's interview class. Neil and Susan talk about the art of interviewing, and answer questions from students. Rm. W817.

Tuesday, April 10, 5:30-7:30 p.m.—Panel on the aftermath of the



Neil Sheehan



Susan Sheehan

Vietnam War. Panelists include the Sheehans; CC's Dominic Pacyga, a historian of the 1960s and Paul Hoover, a conscientious objector and the author of *Saigon, Illinois*; and several other professors and writers involved in that time period. Hokin Auditorium.

Thursday, April 12, 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.—Dennis Culloton's Media Ethics and Law class. The Sheehans will speak about "ethics and conscience" in Rm. W309.

Monday, April 16, 10:30-11:50 a.m.—Michael Kiefer's magazine article writing class. Susan will talk to students about writing for magazines, Rm. W811.

Monday, April 16, 2:00-4:50 p.m.—Fred Gardaphe's writing in the disciplines class. Neil and Susan will talk about preparation for writing, Rm. W713.

Monday, April 16, 5:30-7:30 p.m.—Susan will address Women in Communications, Inc. about magazine writing, in the fifth floor faculty lounge.

Tuesday, April 17, 5:30-7:30 p.m.—Panel on investigative reporting. Panelists include the Sheehans; Bill Recktenwald, *The Chicago Tribune*; Pam Zeckman of Channel 2; Chuck Neubauer of *The Chicago Sun-Times*; and Mike Lyons, CC part-timer and chief investigator for the Better Government Association.

Wednesday, April 18, 3:00 p.m.—The Sheehans and Bill Kurtis, news anchor from Channel 2, will lead a discussion with students of how the TV camera influenced the war in Vietnam and subsequent conflicts.

—Jacqui Podzius

ROMANIA TO LEARN ABOUT FREE PRESS FROM J-STUDENT

J-student Vesna Bozic is helping to shape the future of Romanian journalism.

In an effort to bridge the gap between East and West, The Romanian Freedom Forum in Chicago is sponsoring a project to educate Romanians about a free press. Bozic is the first American and only student to embark on the Romanian adventure. She will teach at a university in Timisoara until June.

"The biggest job will be teaching responsibility to the students," Bozic

says. "The Romanian people have very strong opinions. You have to teach them that in a free society, even the enemy has its say."

Bozic heard about the program through a story in the *Chicago Reader* about Gabriel Nicolescou, editor of "Democratic Romania," which began publication in January.

Nicolescou has no doubts about a student's ability to teach Romanian students. He says Bozic has an advantage because she is closer in age to the students and might be able to communicate with them better in the initial phases of the project.

Of the project he says, "This is a very good tool for teaching American journalism to Romanian students. It will teach them how to organize material, express the messages they want to get out, and give them a better understanding of a high-quality journalistic tradition."

Although Bozic is the first to teach in Romania, the number of journalists to embark on this mission in the future may depend on "how much impact Vesna has," Nicolescou says.

—Cheryl Steffen

A MODEL JOURNALIST

Behind the covers with Michelle Reeves

The fast-paced profession of broadcast journalism requires a polished image. Although beauty is a bonus, talent and hard work make up the essential foundation every journalist needs. *Essence Magazine* Cover Girl Michelle Reeves has all of these virtues. A part-time model for seven years, Reeves sees modeling as an op-



Michelle Reeves

portunity for additional exposure to further her broadcast journalism career. "I still want to continue with journalism," says Reeves. "Maybe when the cover of *Essence* comes out, it'll open some more doors for me."

Reeves' foot is in the proverbial door already as host to Channel 19's "Eyes On The Future" program, a talk show oriented toward young adults.

"I write my own material for the program," she says. "We discuss issues such as rap music, economics in the black community and relationships."

Reeves also does announcements on radio stations WGCI and WVON for Operation Push's "Saturday Morning Forum."

At 23, it seems Reeves has been very lucky. But work without pay and a seemingly tireless devotion to her career has led her to these opportunities. Reeves has interned with Channel 2 and with Operation PUSH Magazine, where she is currently employed full-time.

"It's important to know somebody in the field," says Reeves. "It requires persistence and volunteerism to develop those contacts and get that experience. You must have a goal in mind, but you also must be flexible."

Reeves urges students to get involved in professional communications organizations, such as Women In Communications, Inc. The 1989 DePaul graduate advises students to create their own opportunities wherever possible.

"DePaul's journalism program is expanding, but they can't compete with Columbia in the sense that there's not a lot of practical experience in broadcasting. That's why I got involved with Channel 19."

If you haven't seen Reeves in *Ebony* or *Jet* already, look for her in the June or July issue of *Essence* this summer.

—Karen Zarker

NEW NEWS ON THE CHRONICLE

Same name, different faces

After a semester of front-page color and two co-editors, *The Columbia Chronicle* is changing again.

Replacing the editors, who graduated in January, is Mitch Hurst, last semester's managing editor. And replacing the electric-blue skyline is a



Mitch Hurst

simple black and white banner. Hurst, 28, says he and the other editors decided to change the look in order to give the paper "a more pulled away and conservative look." Instead of focusing on cosmetics, Hurst wants to focus on the paper's editorial content, something he says was ignored in the past. A key move toward better reporting, he says, was the change in the staff selection this semester. Potential staff members met with Hurst or *Chronicle* advisor Don Gold and showed them a writing sample. Only the best writers were approved to register for the newspaper workshop. "We screened people more closely," Hurst says, and as a result the paper has "good, solid writing." Looks are not the only thing Hurst and the staff are changing. They are also concerned with which college events receive coverage. "We are trying to stay on top," he says, especially of the fine arts departments, which "have gotten little coverage in the past. They never even had papers delivered to their departments." These changes at *The Chronicle* are not done singlehandedly, Hurst says, and he credits Gold with pushing the staff to be "better writers, and, in turn, making the paper better." But what Hurst believes will ultimately make the paper a success is not a new banner or a better range of events. Instead, he says, it will be because *The Chronicle* is totally "a team

effort. A bunch of people are involved. It is not a dictatorship."

—Jacqui Podzius

Mike Lyons Joins J-Department

...as new investigative reporting instructor

A regular, hard-hitting day for Investigative Reporter Mike Lyons usually involves bringing down corrupt government officials or fighting for justice for the underdog. So what does he do for fun? Lyons, a j-department instructor, teaches.

He says teaching is his hobby and j-students are the projects he molds each year. Teaching allows him interaction with "fresh minds that enable him to approach stories with a freshness he no longer has."

Students in his class are challenged by occasional discussions of investigative theory coupled with what Lyons calls "competitive exercises." "Helping students understand what is necessary for effective investigative report-



Mike Lyons

ing requires a different approach than teaching regular news reporting," says Lyons. "While theory is important, the real world of journalism differs from what is taught in journalism schools."

Lyons, as chief investigator of the Better Government Association (BGA), has been involved in such cases as the "Mirage" *Sun-Times* series, an investigation of the FBI, the George Dunne and Cecil Partee cases, and cases that have resulted in jail sentences for those involved. Lyons feels that investigative journalists are revolutionaries seeking to make the world a better place by exposing society's ills and hopefully finding a solution.

Lyons' supervision of each case brings him into contact with professionals in print and broadcast jour-

nalism, such as Mike Wallace (60 Minutes fame) and Phil Donahue.

"The techniques I use on a daily basis in doing stories are the same techniques discussed in class," says Lyons. He prefers talking about issues "in the concrete versus the abstract so students will master the skills expected by executive producers and editors."

Lyons says he has learned a tremendous amount from students through his teaching experiences on several Chicago campuses. "It is very difficult for an experienced, professional journalist to constantly conjure up brilliant new ideas, whereas students are remarkably capable of doing that. Students are my lines of communication to the outside world."

—Angelique Creer

ENCORE

Diann Burns returns to Columbia

According to Diann Burns, network news production will be replaced in the next five years by cable and syndication.

Burns, a WLS-TV anchor and general assignment reporter, recently spoke to Columbia students about life as a local broadcaster. She also discussed a myriad of journalism-related issues, from ethics to stress.

Stress is a danger, she says. "You must deal with it. Where you stop being good is where you lose control," Burns said. She told the audience that she uses physical activity to deal with her own stress, and encourages students to build a strong workout program.

This helps because you are constantly judged. "You're only as good as your last story," says Burns.

Even for students interested in



Diann Burns

MAYBE YOU CAN BE ONE OF THEM

It's Fischetti Scholarship time

Applications for the annual John C. Fischetti Scholarship are now available.

All j-students—including photojournalists, editorial cartoonists and artists—are encouraged to apply. Students must be enrolled full-time, and decisions will be based on grade point average, service to journalism (school publications, internships, etc.) and need.

To apply, pick up a Fischetti folder in the journalism office.

Applicants must include five samples of their best work, three letters of recommendation from teachers or employers, and an unofficial transcript. In addition, a 750 word essay is required.

Don't delay. Most winners are granted a substantial part of their tuition. Completed applications are due May 11.

—Sheridan Chaney

broadcast journalism, Burns emphasizes the benefit of newspaper experience, including internships.

"Newspapers teach two things," she says, "how to write and how to report." Burns adds that learning how to report is more important, because television is more concerned with the minute thirty story, not the deep report.

Burns also discussed minority hiring, indicating that future journalists shouldn't plan on getting a job just because they're minority members. She points out that the best reporter, minority or not, is the one who gets the job and keeps it.

Burns adds that being the best reporter sometimes means having an edge. Usually, the edge comes from understanding a wide range of subjects in addition to journalism. She encourages students to learn a foreign language, because in the future this may make the difference between getting a story or not.

Burns relates the tale of a journalist who, because of his knowledge of Spanish, was sent to cover the aftermath of an earthquake in Mexico City. Burns also mentioned the influence of beauty in news. "For some women it's a way to say I'm beautiful and I have brains, too."

She says she feels no TV personalities in Chicago will be successful in journalism if all they have going for them is cosmetics.

—Robert Padjen

ATTENTION ASPIRING AUTHORS

Have we got a course for you

If you've been mulling over an idea

for a book, a new j-department course may help you get the idea out of your head and onto a publisher's desk.

The course, How to Write a Non-Fiction Book, covers how to write a book proposal, who to contact in the publishing business and how to promote a published book.

Ada Khan, the instructor of the course, says "the problem with getting a book published is that most people don't know how to do it. Contacts have to be made to get it done the appropriate way."

It takes more than writing style or talent to get a book published. It also entails business sense and know-how.

Kahn's course is taught like a workshop and she will host a number of guest speakers to help students get the know-how.

One guest speaker, David Landman,



Ada Khan

a retired writer/editor from the University of Illinois, said during his visit that "filling a need is the basis for writing or publishing a non-fiction book. You have to ask yourself the question, 'Has it been done already? Is there a market for my topic?'"

While lecturing in Kahn's class, Landman admitted that the majority of publishers are based in New York, though publishers there "realize that Chicago is the center of the Midwest," so this part of the country is not completely overlooked.

Kahn also suggested students check **Writer's Market** and the **Literary Marketplace** for listings of publishers.

Kahn is the co-author of many books, including "The Encyclopedia of Phobias, Fears, and Anxieties." Her field of expertise lies in women's health issues. She is currently a consultant to the American Medical Writer's Association, where she helps writers prepare books and articles for publication.

Nine students are enrolled in the Thursday night class, which they recommend. One student says, "Everyone has a book in him. This is a great way to get it out. And on paper."

—Cheryl Steffen

INSIDE JOURNALISM

A newsletter produced by and for students of the journalism department

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