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Inside Journalism

Columbia College Chicago

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INSIDE JOURNALISM

MAY, 1991

A Newsletter Published by the Journalism Department of Columbia College

WHITHER MAYOR DALEY?

Mayor Sawyer's former press secretary looks in his crystal ball

A few weeks before the recent city-wide election, former mayoral press secretary Monroe Anderson visited an Interpretive Reporting class at Columbia and offered a controversial political analysis to j-students.

Anderson, who was an aide to former Mayor Eugene Sawyer, accused top advisors of the late Mayor Harold Washington and a cadre of alderman with promoting self-serving lies and confusion following Washington's death.

According to Anderson, Ernest Barefield, Jacky Grimshaw and city council members Tim Evans, Dorothy Tillman and Bobby Rush perpetrated "the big myth" when they convinced voters that Sawyer had sold out the Washington coalition to the white ethnic voting block.

Currently executive producer and talk-show host of "Common Ground," Anderson was previously a reporter for *Ebony Magazine*, *Newsweek* and the *Chicago Tribune*. He also taught journalism part-time at Columbia.

Anderson denied there ever was a plan to divide the black community, politically. Instead, he described the events that took place in the aftermath of Washington's death as the successful exploitation of an unsophisticated black electorate.

"The problem now is that African-Americans want [a fantasy candidate like] M.C. Hammer for mayor," Anderson said. He believes that the community should stop looking for a "messiah" or another Harold Washington.

Anderson urged black voters to build coalitions with other ethnic groups, because he feels they lack the necessary

numbers to elect an all-black party. Characterizing the Harold Washington party as a negative, reactionary element, Anderson recommended that blacks reverse their practice of protest voting.

Analyzing the April 2 election, Anderson concluded that "Richard Daley is beatable, but not this time around." He conceded that Daley had co-opted the support of the Hispanic community, but added that they "tend to follow the power."

"When Washington was a winner, they were with him," he noted. Anderson sees a lack of unity in Hispanic voters, though, and described them as more splintered than blacks.

Anderson doesn't foresee a string of mayoral terms in Daley's future. He doubts that the younger Daley will be able to tolerate criticism and dissension as well as his father, and therefore, may grow tired of the job.

Anderson predicted that Daley's undoing will be hastened by "the arrogance factor," and warns that, in time, over-confidence will crumble his well-constructed facade.

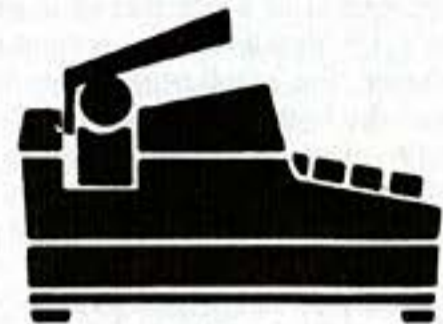
—Dianne Harmon

MARY ANN CHILDERS TALKS ABOUT ISRAEL

"It was the biggest story in the world and I wanted to be there for it," said Mary Ann Childers, who told Columbia students at a Women in Communications Inc. meeting about her experiences during the Persian Gulf war.

Childers, who co-anchors "Eyewitness News" for WLS-TV, spent three weeks in Israel, working around the clock to cover the story. She had 48 hours to prepare for her trip, and said that the worst part about it was the fatigue she felt during her stay.

Childers interviewed families and government officials during the day,



wrote and edited stories in the early evening and went on the air live for Chicago, while it was the middle of the night in Israel.

The eight-hour time difference between Israel and Chicago made it difficult to find time to sleep. Childers said that she and her crew slept a maximum of four hours a day, either in their hotel rooms or on the news bureau's floor.

According to Childers, networks didn't have the time or desire to link stories in the Persian Gulf to their audience in Chicago. Most networks, she felt, wanted to cover only the war's "big picture."



Mary Ann Childers kibitzes with Chairman Lehrman after addressing Columbia j-students at a WICI meeting in March.

Along with Chicagoans serving in the war, many people living in Israel had family in Chicago or had once lived there themselves. Childers set her focus on stories that had personal meaning to Chicagoans, as well as those that illustrated how the people in Israel were living under the threat of attack by Iraq.

Each time an alarm sounded, warning people of a possible chemical attack, Childers and her crew would seek shelter. The Israeli people were told to seal the highest room in their houses with plastic and masking tape and use it as a shelter in case of a chemical attack.

"They [Iraq] had four hundred pound explosives, and we had plastic and masking tape," Childers said.

Childers' husband, Jay Levine, covered the war from Saudi Arabia for CBS. Childers said she didn't fear for her safety, but panicked when she heard that a missile had fallen on military barracks two kilometers from where her husband was reporting.

According to Childers, Israel wanted the world to know about its contribution to the Gulf war. They wanted their stories told, but did not want information spread through the air waves that could help Hussein. Military censorship was applied to information about geographic locations and military strategy.

The Israeli government called upon "real people," such as college professors and students, doctors and archaeologists, to censor the press. Childers said she didn't think the press objected to what the Israelis were doing.

"The objection was to the fact that it was mandatory censorship," Childers said.

—Karen Sobus

THE REJECTION BLUES

Dealing with the stress of job hunting

With graduation just around the

corner, the hunt for that first "real job" has become an increasing worry for many j-students. The last semester of school is often tainted with disappointment from job rejections and less-than-perfect interviews.

Trying to cope with the stress and anxiety of rejection is enough to send even the most confident j-student into severe fits of depression.

"I was rejected after I interviewed for my first job in the real world of journalism as a copy clerk at the *Chicago Tribune*," says j-student Tanya Bon-

the real world," says Jan Grekoff, assistant director of Columbia's Placement Office. "It's not glamorous. There's relatively low pay, long hours and boring assignment work in entry level journalism."

However, Grekoff adds that rejection can lead to discovery. "It's common for j-students to experience extreme depression after realizing that journalism may not be the career choice for them. This may be a sign telling you to find another career."

According to *Managing Your Career: The College Edition of the National Business Employment Weekly*,

studies have shown that the anxiety of not being hired can cause dangerous symptoms such as headaches, nausea and insomnia, in addition to feelings of failure, low self-esteem and loss of confidence. Over time, this torment added to the extra burden of working a job or raising a family can lead to serious illnesses.

"I find it hard to deal with rejection," says Mary Grant, a senior j-student and mother of three children, "especially when I have my family to be concerned about."

It is also common for women and j-students to experience depression far more often than others who are seeking employment.

"Those who feel they have little control or power feel there's no use in trying if they will always be discriminated against," says Dr. Harriette Richard, a psychologist teaching at Columbia.

But Dr. Richard also notes that this particular group can experience a type of depression contrary to rejection.

"Sometimes if a student is hired they'll question, 'Why did I get it? Was it to fill a quota or to be a token?' The guilt of knowing that you weren't chosen on your own personal and professional merits can create a false sense of identity and accomplishment," Richard notes.



Columbia college's magazine, "Chicago Arts & Communication," is nearing publication. Above is a brochure used to promote the magazine to advertisers and retailers. Look for your copy in June.

ner. "I didn't get it and I was disappointed."

While the reasons for rejection are well known to j-students —intense competition, low-paying job offers and lack of qualifying skills —many j-students still enter the field with unrealistic goals in mind.

"Many j-students find it difficult in

While there is no miracle formula for surviving rejection, there are several techniques j-students can use to make their experiences less stressful.

Grekoﬀ advises that students who have been rejected first find out why they weren't hired. "Any individual, regardless of background, has to do a reality check," she says. "There may be other reasons [for rejection] that aren't exactly clear to you."

Secondly, talk about the situation. Find a classmate or visit a counselor and blow oﬀ a little steam. You may find that the problems you are experiencing are more common than you think.

Lastly, when you feel you're at the end of your rope, study the situation. Try to determine what went wrong and devise a plan to correct it. Grekoﬀ cautions j-students to break the problem down into steps, so it can be approached with less fear.

And remember, when the going gets tough, the tough **KEEP ON** going.

Here are a few more tips to help you handle rejection:

- Organize a job-search group with your classmates
- Take a workshop or seminar to improve presentation skills
- Join a professional association to network and find support
- Redesign your package to market yourself more eﬀectively
- Keep in contact with prospective employers
- Enjoy short, periodic escapes to compose yourself and take a break
- Keep yourself up-to-date with job/career boards
- Be realistic when setting up goals for yourself
- Monitor your diet and exercise regularly, to reduce fatigue and stress.

—Deborah Hinton

ANOTHER J-DEPARTMENT SUCCESS STORY...

Mary Johnson, managing editor of the *Columbia Chronicle* and senior j-student, has recently accepted a full-time job oﬀer from the *Chicago Sun-Times* following her graduation.

Johnson worked since June of 1990



The *Chicago Sun-Times*' newest employee, Columbia senior Mary Johnson.

as an intern for the *Sun-Times* until she was hired three months later as a general assignment reporter on a part-time basis. She estimates that she has worked on at least 100 stories while at the *Sun-Times*.

In February, Johnson was given the opportunity to work on a daily series of articles for the *Sun-Times* commemorating Black History Month. The series, titled "How Far Have We Come?," covered various issues including entertainment, black history, class structure and the economic situation in the black community today.

Johnson is looking forward to her career at the paper. "The *Sun-Times* is like home to me," she says. "It's where I want to be and where I want to grow."

—Julie Sacharski

NEW INSTRUCTOR "DISCHES" IT OUT AT COLUMBIA

Columbia TV department instructor Jim Disch brings the attitude and professionalism he uses in his job as assistant news director at WGN-TV with him when he comes to Columbia to teach. "I deal with my students as if they were reporters," says Disch. "We deal with each other as colleagues." It is perhaps this method of teaching that explains Disch's popularity and credibility with his students.

Disch teaches TV News Production and TV News Practicum at Columbia, and feels that the best way for the stu-

dents to learn is to get their feet wet, so he has them produce half-hour news shows in class. "Students put together packages," explains Disch. "Students in the Production course have studio sessions, whereas the Practicum course is devoted to reporting."

This way, technicians and writers can each benefit from the other's talent and experience, blending together the two concentrations, using both to develop a quality product. Senior broadcast major Mary Grant said enthusiastically, "I wrote a paper during my freshman year in my 'Introduction to Media Writing' course, and I've recently turned this same piece into a story for the "600 South program." "600 South" is Columbia College's TV news show.

Disch is a perfect example of how print journalism often goes hand in hand with broadcast, creating the need to be familiar with both. Although he has been in broadcast journalism for 20 years, he got his start in print at an afternoon daily called *Chicago's American*. Now, he says, "Broadcast is more challenging. Television acts as a catalyst. Film footage stirs the emotions better than radio or print can."

—Annesa Lacey

WHERE THE BOYS ARE

What a sad state of affairs. I was trying to convince myself that my first semester in Columbia's journalism program was some sort of weird, fluke aberration. I had walked into my first class in my new school and had found myself totally alone in my masculinity. Next class, same thing; I was practically the only guy in the class. My last class of the day was an improvement—four guys and a male teacher. Within two weeks three of the guys dropped the class. So much for our fledgling brotherhood.

I suppose worse things can happen to a guy than being surrounded by women in three hour blocks, but still, once the novelty wore off, I started to get concerned.

What exactly had I got myself into? A softball buddy of mine had the nerve to major in fashion design in college and was subsequently drummed off the team, out of the bar, and is currently working as a seamstress for one of those effeminate French designers who use only one name.

I was nervous as hell that the profession I had chosen was somehow earning a name for itself as some sort of "sissy career field," and before I got in any deeper, I decided to look into it. Sure enough, the numbers are there: out of 333 total journalism majors, 256 of them wear dresses on occasion. Assuming the absence of transvestites, that's almost a five to one ratio, girls to guys. Wow. Those numbers would have John Wayne mumbling to his male alter ego. Thank heavens I'm twice the man the Duke ever was.

I started asking questions. J-instructor Carolyn Hulse told me that it was no big deal; it was just a sign of the inroads that women are making in every field. O.K., I'll buy that; women are making great strides in just about every field today except locker room reporting. But while that may help to explain the overabundance of women, it says nothing about the lack of men.

I couldn't avoid the obvious question; has writing somehow been castrated? Has it become, God forbid, an effete thing to do? Are people looking at the Truman Capotes and ignoring the Ernest Hemingways?

Are they assuming Bob Greene speaks for journalists and throwing out Royko? Why else would men suddenly be avoiding journalism classes? In high school, writing was as gauche as reading something that you didn't have to. But I thought people outgrew that the way they outgrew drinking warm six packs of Olympia in alleys.

I wrestled with my conscience for a while, trying to decide if I had the inner fortitude to ignore public opinion and pursue my journalism career anyway. Before I could come to a decision, I talked with some people in the fiction writing department. Stop the presses! Their classes were chock full of guys. Guys with longer hair than most girls, and guys with earrings in both ears, but guys nonetheless.

So it isn't the writing aspect that is scaring off guys, it is the journalism aspect.

Somehow, somehow, journalists have been labeled as losers.

For every Woodward or Bernstein, there are thousands of schmendricks out there chasing ambulances for the City News Bureau. For every Bill Kurtis or Tom Brokaw, there are scores of people fact-checking, copy editing and rewriting—hardly jobs for the power

hungry, glory-seeking men of the '80s and '90s.

In simpler times, maybe this wasn't a problem. But in the '80s, with Ronnie Reagan playing absentee father to big business, getting a good quote lost out to getting ahead. The so called "ME" decade, besides putting this country in the dumpster, spawned a whole generation whose personal philosophy is one of personal gain. Turning a quick buck was all that mattered, and everybody knows you don't get rich at City News. So males found a different tree to urinate on, staking their claim in the only world that mattered any more — high finance.

Journalism schools were left empty as men crowded into big business. Talented writers went into public relations or advertising, where there was money to be made. They were getting paid lots of money to write fluff, and damned if they were going to let a little talent nudge them off their seats on the gravy train.

The chain of events is easy to follow; with the door open and the classrooms empty, women stepped up and met the challenge, cutting down all the trees that men had been peeing on for years.

I'm not saying that today's women are any different than the men they took over for. As a rule, women today can and usually are just as greedy, selfish and career-happy as their male counterparts. However, they seem to be channeling their energy and drive into journalism, more than capably filling the gap left by men deserting a sinking ship in droves for dollar bill-greener pastures.

So I guess that's that, then. Until newspapers and magazines can offer the financial rewards available in big business, the ego-inflated, image conscience, money hungry men of the '80s and '90s will continue to shun media careers and go after the big buck.

I think eventually we'll come around. War correspondents like Arthur Kent were accorded hero status for bravely broadcasting while SCUD missiles whistled overhead, a mere 38 miles from their inflated heads. The combination of the glamour and the big money those fellows make may be enough to lure the male ego back into journalism.

I fear that it will be too late, though. Men will be unnecessary baggage by then. Lou Grant's cigars and whiskey-

laced coffee in the morning will be replaced by Virginia Slims and a bottle of Pouilly Fuissé, and men will be relegated to fetching Perrier and picking up pants-suits from the cleaners. Don't say I didn't warn you.

—Steve Crescenzo

I.J. BITS

Two editors of *Inside Journalism*, one former and one current, are making great strides in their respective journalism careers:

Jacqui Podzius, the former IJ editor who graduated with honors in January, has received the prestigious Pulliam Fellowship, a salaried summer position at one of the five major Pulliam-owned dailies. Podzius will most likely be going to one of the two major Indianapolis dailies.

Julie Sacharski, who took over for Podzius this spring as editor of IJ, has received an internship at the *Chicago Tribune*, where she'll be working on the employee publication, *The Trib*. Sacharski will be researching feature story ideas, writing news stories and putting together employee profiles.

—Steve Crescenzo

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